



Town of Danvers
Planning Board

Danvers Town Hall
One Sylvan Street
Danvers, MA 01923
www.danvers.govoffice.com

James Sears, Chairman
Margaret Zilinsky
Kristine Cheetham
William Prentiss
Aaron Henry
John Farmer, Associate
Member

Daniel J. Toomey Hearing Room
June 10, 2014
7:00 p.m.
MINUTES

Chairman James Sears called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Planning Board members James Sears, Aaron Henry, Margaret Zilinsky, Kristine Cheetham and William Prentiss were present. Planner Kate Day was also present.

STAFF BRIEFING

Day told the Board that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) approached her with the proposal that the Town apply for a grant being offered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for their Priority Development Funds (PDF). It seems Governor Patrick wants to add affordable housing units in the Commonwealth, and the administration has put its resources behind the DHCD. Day said that the Planning Board had a great working partnership with the MAPC when they worked on the Tapleyville and Waterfront Village District rezoning. The MAPC was more than willing to do a downtown analysis, but they did not have the funds. She told the Board that they have applied to the DHCD for a \$15,000 grant being offered. If they are awarded the funds, the Town can then hire the MAPC for an analysis of rezoning for the downtown area. The application was sent out yesterday. She told the Board that if they are successful, they will get the project, but a lengthy debate for rezoning will begin.

Prentiss said the Planning Board would like to see the study go down as far as Purchase Street. The good news is that we can begin the re-zoning process, the bad news is that it will once again mean a lot of work.

Henry felt if the Planning Board was going to talk about density, this would be the area where it would happen. He said that they could tie this to the development of a Rail Trail Part 2.

Day told the Board that they should know if awarded the grant around the end of June.

Zilinsky asked the Board if they knew how the drive-through at the Dunkin Donuts on Newbury Street was working. She went by, and there was only one car in the drive-through. Prentiss said that the peak times are in the morning and then again around 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. He felt there was not much congestion with the drive-through. Cheetham suggested going by the site on a Saturday to see the amount of use for the drive-through.

Zilinsky said that she was just curious how the site was working.

Day said that she had received positive comments about the design of the site. She told the Board that the Dunkin Donuts was asked to remove a POD storage trailer that was on the site, which they did.

MINUTES

May 27, 2014

MOTION: Zilinsky moved to approve the minutes of May 27, 2014. Henry seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Joint meeting of the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust and the Planning Board to discuss a draft Housing Production Plan, presentation of the plan by Lynne Sweet of LDS Consulting Group.

As consultant Lynne Sweet of LDS was unable to make the planned presentation on the Housing Production Plan, the Board decided to hold a brief discussion, to be resumed on June 24th when Sweet is again available to present the plan.

Henry shared his comments concerning the Housing Production Plan with the Board. He told the Board that he was not thrilled about being in the position of approving the plan the first time they saw it. He met with Susan Fletcher and Gardner Trask of the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust and felt it was a clarifying meeting. He has written a Housing Production Plan, as well as managed a consultant. He felt that LDS did a great job with the body of the plan. He felt that the timeframe set forth was a bit ambitious. The plan is about building units, and he felt the plan was light in describing how they were going to build these units. He stated that the Town is close to the safe harbor and getting back up to having 10% affordable housing. He had concerns about how much the plan said they are going to build. He really did not feel there was meat and bones as to how the Town is going to build ten units per year for ten years. Henry said he works for a Town that has a CPA. Lexington has everything set forth on the list in this Housing Production Plan, and they cannot get to even building two to three units per year. He asked how they were going to marshal the resources it was going to take to build these units. He cautioned the Board that he felt it was a very ambitious goal, and he did not have the confidence that this can be completed.

Cheetham stated the Board had a problem approving one unit this year because the role of the Housing Trust was not clearly written down. She doesn't see the Trust executing the strategies of what can be done in Danvers. She would like to see if the Planning Board is the arm of implementing for the Danvers Affordable Housing Trust.

Fletcher told the Board that a lot of possibilities were listed because the Trust is not sure of what is going to come around. The Trust is not going to be the developer; they partner with them. She said that they did not know that John Kavanaugh was going to come up with Conifer Commons. They were a party to that development, and our \$100,000 funding helped with DHCD and tax credits. That particular development was 90 units. She told the Board that they cannot predict when these developments are going to happen, which is why they listed all the possibilities. If the Trust is going to pursue something, the project should be in our plan.

Fletcher said she was happy they were moving forward with the downtown zoning. She told the Board that sometimes they accumulate affordable housing one unit at a time. They are tied to non-profit developers on a regular basis, and they want to assist them. She said that they look at themselves as a partner agency.

John Alden said that they push partnering because of their funding and their concern that they do not have a stream of money coming into the Trust, so they have to be careful. He told the Board if they partner with a developer, they do not have wage control. The units they have been making affordable have been averaging about \$35,000 per unit. The Trust is trying to grapple at open opportunities. A lot of units come from regulatory boards like the Planning Board. The Cherry Street project was a perfect opportunity to obtain a unit, but the rules did not enforce it. Alden stated that this is part of the unknowns. He felt they should change the rules that force issues that allow the Trust to do what we are supposed to do.

Henry thought another implementation item is the assumption that the Town grows by six percent. Henry says he tracks the single unit growth out of the building department for the Town of Lexington so he knows how they grew for the year. This way he knows that Lexington is on track. He thinks six percent growth would be outstanding, but it may not happen.

Prentiss said that they touched on something mentioned earlier about the gaps in the Town Meeting as to how they crafted their design on the regulatory side. He asked the Trust if they have picked up on anything else. He said that when the Planning Board gives their recommendations to Town Meeting about zoning law changes, they get them from everyone, not just their own Board. He felt the Trust could have input as to where they see gaps.

Alden told the Board that after the Jones Boys project was approved at the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting, they went back to the Trust and said that they needed to review where they see loopholes.

Prentiss pointed out that this was not the reason the two Boards were meeting this evening.

Alden said that the downtown is a huge project.

Fletcher said that she knew the Planning Board did workshops to discuss zoning changes. She told the Board that the Trust would love to be involved in the process.

Day stated that in order to fix the downtown, they would have to do an overlay. She pointed out that they are getting multi-families by findings and variances. The By-laws do not allow them a pass. She told the Board that Town Counsel said that they cannot reach in through the zoning bylaw and tell the ZBA what to do. They need to create a mechanism that encourages multi-families in the downtown. By encouraging multi-families, by right, five units and up will fall within that multi-family affordability provision. Day said that they need to fix the fact that people cannot do these things in zones where you want them to, like the Jones Brothers location. They want to make it achievable, but tie it to the provision.

Henry said that this may not stop people from doing it. It is hard setting forth that you want one type of housing over here, but not over there. Henry stated that they have had great conversations with the ZBA.

Day pointed out that the developer of 78 Holten Street, Peter Pantazelos, had to give up a unit for a small project while a larger project did not have to give an affordable unit.

Prentiss pointed out that this brings up the density issue, and this is when you get pushback from people.

Zilinsky said that density shakes up everyone. She felt the tenor of Town Meeting this year seemed different. They did not seem as concerned about multi-family density.

Prentiss pointed out that Tapleyville was a small area. The Danversport rezoning was emotional because of timing.

Day pointed out that Town Meeting re-zoning discussion strategically followed the development of 78 Holten Street. People loved that project after it was completed, and had a tangible example of mixed-use development to consider as an example.

Prentiss felt the downtown area has been rejuvenated. The Dunkin Donuts has a nice look.

Zilinsky felt the density issue will come up downtown, but it may not be as vocal as Danversport.

Fletcher pointed out that we are one of the downtowns that have two large areas that offer day and night free parking. Fletcher felt it should be easier for Danvers when you consider cities like Beverly and Salem that build condominiums downtown and have metered parking.

Zilinsky said that she was surprised that Jones Boys employees used the municipal public lot.

Day said that they owe a shout out to the selectmen since they were supportive of the rezoning. It offered a comfort level that carried through to FinCom.

Diane Langlais said she keeps hearing affordable housing. She hopes that the downtown is not going to be all affordable housing. She felt there are a lot of empty nesters like herself that are looking forward to moving downtown. She does not see the downtown area looking a lot better. She sees other communities putting condominiums above store fronts for foot traffic for people to spend money.

Henry said that from a development and financial point to do downtown redevelopment with land costs realistically is hard without adding height and density

Fletcher pointed out that working people qualify for affordable housing.

Langlais said that she does not want these areas turning into some sort of cluster. She is all for affordable housing being distributed throughout Danvers. She, herself, cannot get affordable housing. She felt that a lot of people in her shoes could be left out if you are trying to get 15 units in the downtown area. She asked the Board not to make all the affordable units downtown, and they assured her that this was not their intent.

Prentiss said they were talking about the trade off by increasing the density, and that is where the balance has to be.

Henry felt the downtown overlay only gives the private merchants the ability to do these types of projects in exchange for the project not hurting us on the SHI. The bigger problem is when they put subdivisions on line that have come through the Town which have not added to affordable housing.

Day stated, to Henry's point, the Whipple Hill subdivision being planned at the St. Mary's Cemetery should be coming before the Board. The Town has not exercised its right to purchase this property and this project could produce 20 homes. She also told the Board that the Hunt property is in tax title, and the present developer has walked away from the project. They thought they had someone that was interested in developing the site, but are not sure. That property is a big question mark. She said that the Conifer Commons can be updated in the Housing Production Plan since they are on line.

Day felt Sweet did a great job with the plan. There were a lot of resources to work with.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION: Prentiss moved to adjourn. Henry seconded the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Francine T. Butler

The Planning Board approved these minutes on June 24, 2014.