Meeting of the Planning Board  
Tuesday, December 17, 2019 

The 12th meeting of the Milton Planning Board for FY2020 was called to order at 7:20 p.m. in the Blute Conference Room of Milton Town Hall following an executive session with Town Counsel.

Present: Planning Board Members Cheryl Tougias (Chair), Denise Swenson (Secretary), April Anderson, Richard Boehler and Kathleen O’Donnell; Planning Director William Clark, Assistant Town Planner Allyson Quinn and Sr. Administrative Clerk Julia Getman.

1. Administrative Items: Ms. Tougias confirmed upcoming meetings for January 9th and 23rd. The approval of minutes was deferred. On a motion by Ms. Swenson, seconded by Ms. O’Donnell, the Board voted to submit language supporting the appointment of a committee to consider adopting historic districts in Milton to the Select Board, 5/0/0.

Town Counsel Kevin Freytag of Murphy, Hesse, Toomey & Lehane, L.L.P. joined the discussion to address draft language on a Milton Village overlay zoning article. The regulatory power of the Historical Commission in zoning decisions for Milton Village and the process of establishing a historic district were discussed. Mr. Freytag stated that the Commission played an advisory role but that he would research the legal role of the Commission under an established historic district. District improvement incentives and funding were considered.

2. Citizen’s Speak:
Ms. Swenson provided a 23(b)(3) disclosure that she and Steve Gentile were in the same neighborhood group.

Mr. Gentile, 85 Adams St., thanked the Board for their work on the Village zoning. He discussed how Boston housing shortages affect the Village and the importance of maintaining open lines of communication to support a common set of values. He stated that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council’s (MAPC) study of the district includes core values but is not “Milton-derived,” and discussed the unique features and assets of Milton. He believed that Village residents had been presented with a “formula” that speaks to the state level and that zoning proposals should be driven by the community. He mentioned a level of uncertainty for the future of homeowners and concerns about height restrictions and traffic. He believed residents were generally pleased to see zoning efforts unfolding in the Village and mentioned the need for flexibility as well as “patience and understanding” in developing appropriate zoning proposals.

Apolonio Serrano, also of 85 Adams St., noted the importance of neighborhood communication and attention towards the potential impacts of the overlay, which he believed was being “imposed.” He said he had been warned that if the overlay was not passed, the existing zoning could lead to worse development. He believed the overlay plans were “unrealistic” and too big for the village and would add to parking problems, which he believed had not been considered. He said that the residents of the neighborhood should play a larger role in the process, that mixed use may encourage unwanted retail operations and that the Town should look more toward advantages for the community and not the maximum benefit for developers.

Mr. Clark arrived 7:47 p.m.

Ellen Anselone, 22 Morton Rd., a member of the Historic Commission and Fire Safety Building Committee, said that she works with developers often and urged the Milton Village Neighborhood
Association (MVNA) to collaborate with the Planning Board to drive zoning initiatives before outside developers are able to dictate the process.

3. New Business:

Wolcott Woods Affordable Housing Zoning Amendment Discussion:

Edward Corcoran, representing Northland Residential, discussed affordable housing needs and practices and said he had met with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and members of the Affordable Housing Trust to address the off-site affordable housing requirement of six affordable units. He proposed an amendment to the Great Estates bylaw to make minimum unit sizes less arbitrary and more compliant with Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) standards. Off-site affordable housing was to be deed-restricted single family homes or two-unit homes that could be owner-occupied or rented and maintained by a third party.

Public Feedback

Julie Creamer, 58 Frothingham St., Chair of the Affordable Housing Trust, supported the proposed amendment. She said she had discussed the efforts of the AHT with DHCD and was happy that Northland had agreed to six affordable units despite the option of having five. She believed that offsite units would provide more affordable housing options because the development was age restricted.

On a motion by Mr. Boehler, seconded by Ms. Anderson, the Board voted to submit the amendments to the Select Board for consideration at the May Town Meeting, 5/0/0.

497 Blue Hills Parkway/Ice House 40B Comprehensive Permit Application:

Ms. O’Donnell, a former member of the Board of Appeals, discussed a letter she had drafted on behalf of the Planning Board to be submitted to the Select Board addressing the site appropriateness of the proposal for 42 market rate and 14 affordable condominium units on the two-acre site. She addressed discrepancies and inaccuracies on the application, including language on existing site conditions, pricing, lot coverage, open space calculations, parking ratios, local amenities and historical significance. She noted the lack of required architectural renderings and discussed the “extreme” efforts made by the community to develop the existing Parkway PUD mixed-use zoning. The character of area, including architectural styles and setbacks, Parkway protections and the proposed building dimensions were discussed. Photographs of other 40B projects by the developer were considered. It was noted that open space and the natural features of the area, including access to DCR land and Popes Pond, had not been considered in the application. Public feedback to the Select Board was encouraged. The discussion was continued to January 9th.

98 Adams St. / Swift Hat Shop Informational Presentation

Michael Roberts, a resident of 100 Adams St., and owner of the historic Swift Hat Shop, discussed the history of the site and past efforts to preserve it. He discussed his role in developing 36 Central Avenue and the obstacles existing zoning posed to revitalization. He discussed his role in helping to get the Central Ave. overlay passed and a similar project he had completed in Cohasset that had had positive results.

Architect Stephen Chung gave a presentation on plans for a 9-unit condo development for the site which would include a ground-level coffee shop in the preserved Hat Shop. The 14,000 SF, 4.5 story design included a 5th floor top floor to enclose a stair stack above the roof line. The scale, massing and context of surrounding buildings were considered, and examples of municipal buildings in other towns that had
successfully been preserved and adjusted for modern use were considered. Challenges to the site, including parking and topography, were addressed. Mr. Chung presented different architectural renderings for the site, encouraged feedback, and emphasized that the design plans were conceptual. It was noted that neighbors favored preserving the Hat Shop and that the condos may include affordable units.

Public Comment:

Steve Gentile, 85 Adams St., asked about the structural integrity of the Hat Shop and how it would withstand construction. Ms. Tougias replied that the Historical Commission considers the Hat Shop to be historically significant and were intent on preserving or rebuilding the shop on-site. She said the Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) supports the plans and would consider changing height restrictions only on that side of Adams St. in order to preserve the shop, with established design guidelines in place.

Liz Miller of 15 Cape Cod Lane, an MPIC member, stated that the MPIC had been asked to consider certain building materials and architectural styles in order to assess community preferences and that multiple meetings would be held on the matter. She expressed support for the proposal as well as plans for an overlay and establishment of a historic district, and believed that historic structures would be more vulnerable without the overlay.

Meredith Hall, 41 Russell St., a member of the Historical Commission, discussed the uniqueness of different parcels, which posed challenges to an overlay. She addressed the differences in scale between the east and west sides of Adams St. and questioned whether individual parcels rather than a wide overlay should be considered. She expressed concerns about massing, believed height restrictions to be “critical,” and said the Historical Commission would like a stronger advisory role, particularly in the design review process. She said the Commission was considering the proposal to establish a historic district and would work with the Planning and Select Boards to help implement it.

Melinda Collins, 170 Hillside St., a member of the Affordable Housing Trust, supported affordable housing in what is considered a “smart growth” area. She mentioned the importance of Milton maintaining control of its development and believed incorporating affordable housing to be “commendable.” She discussed Milton’s lack of affordable single family ‘starter homes,’ noting that the Town invests in the Home Consortium for providing funding for starter homes in other towns. She considered diverse housing stock to be healthy for the community and said that the AHT was working on a housing production plan to be presented in January, which will include Planning and Select Board input as well as feedback from community members. The challenges and requirements of meeting the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) in Milton under Chapter 40B were discussed.

Frank Scroth, 39 Avalon Rd., asked about Milton’s affordable housing status. Ms. Collins replied that 948 units were needed to meet SHI requirements.

John Ferrucci, 10 Saw Mill Pond Rd., Hingham, owner of commercial properties at 71 and 75 Adams St. and 26 High St., supported the overlay and believed the area would be revitalized with the passage of overlay zoning. He believed the area had “great potential” and that the historical character of village should be maintained.

Brian Bunn, 139 Adams St, Chair of the Milton Hill Neighborhood Association, said that the potential for development inspired his move to the area. He believed there was support for the overlay but that the support of the neighborhood was essential to a passing vote at Town meeting. He suggested forming a working group for Town representatives to engage with neighbors, and mentioned concerns about scale...
and community character. He said there was uncertainty about the types of commercial establishments that might arise and supported those that might attract pedestrians. He expressed concerns about parking and traffic, and encouraged community engagement and communication.

Ms. Swenson disclosed her membership in the same neighborhood coalition as Mr. Bunn.

Community outreach strategies were discussed.

Ms. Miller stated that the MPIC held open meetings and encouraged public engagement. Ms. Tougias mentioned engaging the MAPC to provide a fiscal analysis.

Paul Kelly, 86 Nahanton Ave., owner of the commercial building at 11 High St., said he supported the overlay and believed it would positively affect his property value. He noted that there were both pros and cons to establishing a historic district and agreed that the area needed revitalization. He supported the idea of a working group.

Ms. Tougias read email from real estate developer Matt Zoller supporting the overlay.

Ms. O’Donnell addressed comments provided by Alexander Whiteside, a member of the Bylaw Review Committee. Concerns about parking, setbacks, affordable housing, the size of the overlay, site-specific zoning, and issues with existing zoning were discussed.

Ms. Swenson said she does not oppose an overlay, but believed that more time was needed for language adjustments and public feedback before the article goes before Town Meeting. The Board considered the steps that had been taken thus far to develop the language and considered the option to adjust it after the January 8th closing of the warrant.

On a motion by Ms. O’Donnell, seconded by Ms. Anderson, the Board voted to submit the Milton Village overlay district language to the Select Board for inclusion on the warrant, 4/1/0, with Ms. Swenson opposed.

On a motion by Ms. Swenson, seconded by Mr. Boehler, the meeting was adjourned at 10:55 pm.

Denise Swenson, Secretary