Meeting of the Planning Board  
Monday, December 2, 2019

The 10th meeting of the Milton Planning Board for FY2020 was called to order at 6:35 p.m. in room 210 of Milton High School.

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

Absent: Planning Board Chair Cheryl Tougias.

1. Administrative Items: Ms. Swenson opened the meeting and invited members of the public to speak on the zoning articles to be presented that evening at Town Meeting. Ms. O’Donnell gave an overview of three articles:

1. Article 7: “To see if the Town will vote to amend Chapter 10 of the General Bylaws, known as the Zoning Bylaws, by adding a new subsection E. to Section VIII. To be entitled “Planning Board Associate Member…”

2. Article 8: “To see if the Town will vote to amend Chapter 11 of the General Bylaws by adding a new Section 4. Planning Board Associate Member is hereby established per Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40A Section 9 of the Zoning Act…”

3. Article 9: “To see if the Town will vote to amend Chapter 10 of the General Bylaws, known as the Zoning Bylaws, by striking Section IV B. “Wetlands Regulations” in its entirety; and to act on anything relating thereto.”

Public Comment:

Tim Kernan, 642 Brush Hill Rd., member of the Brush Hill Neighborhood Association, read a letter from the Milton Coalition of Neighborhood Associations, prepared after its November 19th meeting, which expressed unanimous opposition to articles 7 and 8. He discussed the “deep and lasting impacts” of special permits and the need for those issuing them to be “directly accountable to the voters.” He mentioned pending state legislation that would relax the impediments and restrictions required of developers, thereby “eroding the role a neighborhood group plays in molding development plans.”

Bob Sweeney, 156 Whittier Rd., a member of the Indian Cliffs Neighborhood Association, expressed opposition to articles 7 and 8 and believed that Town Meeting members would vote against them as they had previously at Town Meeting. He considered appointing an associate to be “undemocratic” and said that it would diminish the role of the voting public. He believed that there was no need for an associate and that articles 7 and 8 should be dropped. He said he would be more comfortable with the idea if the associate was elected.

Hale Smith, 1632 Canton Ave., President of the Blue Hills Neighborhood Association, said that there is a perception within the community that the Board places greater emphasis on accommodating developers’ needs than on the best interests of affected neighborhoods.
Mike O’Neill, 36 High St., a member of the Milton Village Neighborhood Association, expressed opposition to articles 7 and 8 and said that an elected official would be preferable to an appointed one.

Ms. Anderson stated that the Board had had “robust” discussions about the appointment of an associate and had spent many hours working with the developer of Wolcott Woods to come to a consensus on what was best for the community.

Ms. O’Donnell noted that an associate would engage only in special permit deliberations and would not be permanently appointed. She mentioned the challenges of holding special elections and noted that the Board of Appeals, which oversees 40B developments, has appointed members. She said that unforeseen obstacles such as illness or emergencies impede the special permit process and mentioned that engaging an associate would be an “option, not a mandate.”

Mr. Boehler stated his belief that the option to engage an associate would most likely not be used and said that the Town Government Study Committee had supported the articles.

It was noted that the articles could not be revisited for 2 years if they were voted down at Town Meeting. The Board discussed sending the articles back to the Planning Board for further study. Ms. Swenson noted that several emails opposing the articles had been sent to the Board.

On a motion by Ms. Swenson, seconded by Ms. Anderson, the Board voted to send articles 7 and 8 back to the Planning Board for further study, 4/0/0.

Mr. Kernan mentioned that neighborhood groups were unaware of some of the issues surrounding the articles and asked that the Board share information more freely.

3. On a motion by Mr. Boehler, seconded by Ms. O’Donnell, the meeting was adjourned to Town Meeting at 7:01 pm.

Denise Swenson, Secretary