



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK  
READING, MA.  
PK  
2023 MAY 17 AM 8:53

### Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

#### Community Planning and Development Commission

Date: 2023-01-09

Time: 7:30 PM

Building: Town Hall

Location: Hybrid Meeting – Zoom and Select Board Meeting Room

Address: 16 Lowell Street

Session: Open Session

Purpose: Hybrid Meeting

Version: Final

Attendees: Members: Heather Clish, Chair; Pamela Adrian, John Weston, Tony D'Arezzo – Associate

#### Members - Not Present:

Catrina Meyer

#### Others Present:

Community Development Director Andrew MacNichol, Ethan Dively, Iuria Glassfried, Nicole Lambert, Mark Novak, Matt Rawding, Narcissa-Christine Lyons, Carlo Bacci

**Minutes Respectfully Submitted By:** Mary Benedetto

---

### Topics of Discussion:

#### MEETING HELD IN THE SELECT BOARD ROOM AND REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

Ms. Clish called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM.

#### Executive Session: Discuss strategy with respect to GC Fodera Contracting, Inc., v. CPDC (459 Main Street Litigation)

Ms. Adrian made a motion that the CPDC enter Executive Session under Purpose 3 to discuss strategy with respect to GC Fodera Contracting, Inc. v. CPDC 459 Main Street litigation and to include Community Development Director Andrew MacNichol. Mr. D'Arezzo seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.

At 8:31 PM, the CPDC returned to Open Session.

#### Continued Public Hearing, Minor Site Plan Review Birch Meadow

Mr. Mark Novak with Activitas attended remotely to update the Commission on the plans. Based on concerns about turning movements at the new entrance, based on conversations with the Town Engineer they have added additional striped no parking areas to increase sight lines out onto Birch Meadow Drive.

In the parking lot and walkway there were concerns with the amount of light, so in both locations they have reduced lights in the parking lot from 14 to 9 lights and at the central spine walkway from 21 down to 16 lights while still maintaining a safe level of foot candles in all areas.



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

Ms. Adrian asked why the requested benches aren't being put forth at this time. Mr. Novak responded that it is due to budgetary challenges, with \$1.5mn approved thus far but with the current budget they have removed all site furnishings in this Phase of the plan with the exception of some picnic tables and necessary bollards. They are including them still as an added alternate, so if funds become available they can be added back in with no issue.

Mr D'Arezzo requested to know about how much an individual bench costs. Mr. Novak indicated that a typical parks and rec style steel bench with good longevity would be in the range of \$2500. Mr. Weston commented that it was interesting to invest in lighting at this time instead of street furniture. Mr. Novak stated that Parks felt that site furnishings are something that can more easily be added out of their budget in the future, while major siteworks and lighting are not. Ms. Clish agreed with Mr. Weston and Mr. Novak that it seems like a shame that park benches aren't included at this time in the project given their small scale within the larger project budget. Mr. Novak stated there were a number of items that had to be trimmed back due to budgetary challenges including an asphalt berm curb instead of granite, but it is being carried forward as a line item in the event the budget becomes available.

Mr. Weston stated that it was challenging to hear that the Town wasn't going to hold itself to its own standard of vertical granite curb, after requiring private citizens to be at that standard. Mr. Novak agreed that he considers the curb crucial as well and will continue to advocate for it.

Mr. Weston brought up that though it's good the entrance was discussed with the Town Engineer and the Recreation Department, but he was still concerned about the entrance's location so close to the school and wanted to confirm that the Principal or staff from Coolidge be brought into the discussion and make certain it works for the school. There was a discussion about where crossing guards are located near the schools. The Commission members discussed a memo from the Police department regarding the new intersection and the request from Police for curbing bump outs, though otherwise approving of the entrance.

Mr. Weston pointed out that if a large reason for having this second entrance is for visiting school busses, those busses will be coming from the highway, and he questioned whether busses will be able to make a left into the parking lot from Birch Meadow Drive.

Mr. Weston also questioned how quickly the later Phases of this project will actually come to fruition. He pointed out that when the original Imagination Station was taken down it was expected to be replaced in a few years and now it's been 18 or 20 years. Given that kind of follow-up he stated that it is hard to be okay with what is being left for the next phase. For example, the leaving of the light poles. Ms. Clish clarified that he is specifically asking for relocation of the utility pole(s) that are on the softball field and Mr. Weston confirmed yes.

Ms. Clish agreed with him that any unsafe items should be addressed in this phase and not left for later. Mr. Weston detailed that the pedestrian path there should not have light poles within a few feet of the path and there should be a clear zone for the path. Mr. Novak asked how those light poles are different from a street tree and Mr. Weston agreed that street trees are also not a great design for the same safety reasons.

Ms. Clish stated that the fact that the utility poles are currently wrapped in padding because they're on the softball field is a good indication that they're in the wrong spot. Mr. Novak countered that it's not necessarily a small cost to move them, because of associated items with moving the poles and that their electrical engineer advised them it would be a significant cost.



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

Mr. Weston questioned the utility of the lights along the spine and said he would rather have the new light poles moved into the next phase and to have all the day time uses moved into this phase, like street furniture, etc. He views the lights as having marginal utility. Mr. Novak countered that there are often nighttime sporting events. Mr. Weston countered that the stadium lighting should be enough to illuminate the area. Mr. Novak disagreed but Mr. Weston and Ms. Clish stated that it is definitely enough light to see with the stadium lights on because there are lots of kids hanging out there and the extra lighting isn't necessary then. While it does limit use when there aren't athletic events, there relatively speaking aren't as many people around.

Ms. Clish asked to see an analysis of the trade-off between lighting and the other items. Ms. Clish asked for clarification if the poles were tall or shorter and Mr. Novak clarified that they are shorter. Mr. D'Arezzo asked some clarifying questions about the lighting plan and Mr. Novak stated that while he didn't know the exact height, the poles are 12-14 ft off the ground, not bollards. Mr. D'Arezzo went through a series of clarifying questions about the current light levels without additional lights—as indicated in the provided lighting plan. Mr. Novak stated that the plan for the new lights and the existing conditions are based on foot-candles and trying to achieve an average lighting level in the new plan. Ms. Clish asked about lighting plans for when those lights will be turned on, if there will be a schedule. Mr. Novak clarified they are full cut off lights, LED, dark sky compliant, with no glare or other spotlighting. Mr. Weston stated that the difference is that it is currently a dark park so it will be quite a change for nearby residents. Mr. Weston argued that they don't need an average of one foot-candle in the park, maybe closer to a half foot candle to be closer to security lighting. Ms. Clish questioned if they even need full sidewalk lighting in the location. Ms. Adrian clarified with Ms. Clish that they were really wanting bollard height lights that wouldn't disturb the neighbors. Mr. Novak indicated that the bollard level heights are more like a college campus than a park and while it was clear to him that the Commissioners believe the current lighting plan is providing too much light, but a bollard level plan would require many more lights to get the same level of lighting shown in their lighting plan. Mr. Novak said that though they believe there is light from the stadium lights but if you go out there with a light meter it's not registering as light. But the Commission members reiterated that the lighting plan could be revisited.

Mr. Novak inquired if the Town had maximum illumination requirements and none in attendance knew. Mr. Novak gave examples of another town that had requirements. Mr. Novak stated that thinking about it from a liability perspective not having adequate lighting could be challenging.

There was a discussion of other cities' lighting guidelines and that one foot-candle—as was specified in the current lighting plan—is perhaps too high.

Mr. Novak confirmed the lights will be on timers and will not be on all night long, with hours of operation to be determined.

Ms. Clish again asked Mr. MacNichol if there is still a task force around the traffic in that area and having it brought to the PTTTF and the school principals and Mr. Weston concurred. The Commissioners discussed if they were ready to condition their approval or if they wanted to continue discussing.

Ms. Clish made the formal request to have the appropriate people at the School District evaluate these plans in conjunction with the Police Department.



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

Ms. Clish made the formal request to evaluate what it will take to move the poles in the softball field and possible trade-offs.

Mr. D'Arezzo made the formal request to have the Conservation Committee comment on the lighting in the parking lot.

Mr. MacNichol stated that earlier in the evening Mr. Carlo Bacci commented that benches could be donated in memoriam. There was no other public comment.

Mr. Novak stated that they needed to get the plans out to bid by February so they might have to put them out to bid without CPDC approval.

Mr. Weston stated that these are not new comments and were previously requested so none of this is new including the concerns about the new curb cut entrance. Mr. Novak stated that the school had indicated that additional striping was enough. Mr. Weston indicated that the police didn't agree with the comments so more coordination needs to take place. Mr. MacNichol stated that he believed Public Safety was actually okay with the plans. There was a discussion between Commission members regarding the language on the memo from the Police Department. Mr. MacNichol stated that the Traffic Safety Officer feels that the plan works, as indicated by the discussion in the PTTTF meeting.

Mr. Novak asked the Commissioners what happens if the analysis comes in and it's a budget buster to move the utility poles. Mr. Weston stated that they could work on it, they're not going to torpedo the project, but they want to make sure the concerns of all groups has been addressed. Ms. Clish summarized that the Commission is comfortable sacrificing the night time path lighting in exchange for moving the utility poles if they are of similar cost. Mr. Weston added that while looking at the cost for the path lighting they should revisit the overall candle levels.

***Ms. Adrian made a motion to continue the public hearing on the Birch Meadow Minor Site Plan Review to February 6, 2023 at 8pm. Mr. D'Arezzo seconded the motion and it was approved 4-0-0.***

### **Continued Public Hearing, 40R Plan Review** **25 Haven Street, 25 Haven Street LLC**

Ms. Adrian read a letter from the applicant regarding their request for a continuance.

***Ms. Adrian made a motion to continue the public hearing for the 40R plan review for 25 Haven Street to February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at 8:30pm. Mr. D'Arezzo seconded it.***

Mr. D'Arezzo requested clarification on the extension of the 120-day period and Mr. MacNichol explained that the period runs for 30 days after the hearing to allow time for all the necessary legal processes. Ms. Clish agreed with Mr. D'Arezzo's concerns that the applicant could return at the next meeting with revised plans and expect a quick decision from the Commission. Ms. Adrian brought up that there may be a change of ownership on the property. Mr. MacNichol acknowledged their concerns. Ms. Clish requested the 120-day period be moved to the meeting after the resumed public hearing.

***The motion was approved 4-0-0.***

### **Other Business**

**Housing Production Plan Update**



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

Ms. Nicole Lambert from Anser Advisory made a presentation (with slides) covering progress on the HPP including findings from the public engagement survey.

Mr. D'Arezzo asked for clarification about the annual income and estimated mortgage payments various incomes could afford on one of the slides. Ms. Lambert clarified that the monthly payment included taxes, debt, and insurance as 30% of annual income.

Mr. D'Arezzo asked what congregate housing was and Ms. Lambert explained it is a residence where multiple unrelated people live together in one unit. Ms. Clish asked if one house that is congregate housing counts as only one unit on the housing inventory, which is correct. Mr. Weston discussed the tension and definition differences between SHI needs, the MBTA Communities needs, and then creating actually affordable places for people to live.

Mr. Weston asked where the Town stands on the SHI and if the census data is out. Mr. MacNichol indicated new census data is expected to be released in May of this year and that the SHI is above 10% so the Town is in safe harbor but that is a fluid number both in numerator and denominator. Mr. MacNichol said that the SHI is released every 2 years but that the numbers shown in the presentation are based on the Town's internal tracking.

Mr. Weston asked about the proposed strategies and the survey responses. The types of housing listed with as highest priority slide and that multifamily units are not in people's list of preferred type of development. Ms. Clish pointed out that people did say they support mixed-use buildings, but that is as close as they get to support for multifamily housing. ADU and in-law apartments show up on the list and as a strategy. Mr. Weston stated that the strategies are going to be an uphill battle because when asking the Town about types of development they prefer to see, it's clearly not the same as the types that will be instrumental to the strategies. Ms. Clish concurred that the standard pattern of development in the Commonwealth doesn't get to what is necessary for affordability.

Ms. Clish asked how the survey was constructed and some specifics about if multifamily, townhomes, etc. were asked as styles of development in the survey. Mr. MacNichol stated that more information was gathered than presented here at the high level and detailed some of the other items asked. Ms. Clish asked how senior housing counts as units of housing, by unit or by bedroom. Mr. MacNichol said that senior housing counts as by unit, which is different than assisted living, which is not counted by units. Mr. Weston asked some clarifying questions.

Mr. D'Arezzo asked about places in Reading that are 55+ age restricted, including a place over on Salem street by REI and Mr. MacNichol added Reading Woods has some 55+ but is not fully restricted, maybe 200 of the units are age restricted.

Mr. Weston asked who would be coordinating all the strategies and Ms. Clish asked what the Town would be doing with the strategies and prioritizing them. Mr. MacNichol indicated that the strategies are a group effort, not just Planning, and some priorities will come up as development happens, and they intend to coordinate with the regional group as well.

There was a discussion amongst Commission members about housing options vs. the necessary path to compliance and the survey results vs. what is needed to comply.

Mr. MacNichol stated CPDC could vote tonight to accept the draft plan as it is due to DHCD by Feb 14. Mr. D'Arezzo stated he didn't believe the draft plan was in the document package. Mr. MacNichol stated he would then continue the discussion and approval to the



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

next CPDC meeting. Mr. MacNichol detailed some changes needed to the plan before it's finalized and that he would send the draft plan out to the Commission members immediately. Mr. D'Arezzo requested that the Plan be listed as an agenda item at the next meeting since they will need to vote to approve it.

### MBTA Communities Update

Mr. MacNichol updated the Commission that staff finally got the updated technical data from the external tool. They had them analyze the DSGD 40R, Bus A, A-40, and A-80 zones within a ½ mile of the train depot. Mr. MacNichol presented the Commission with the detailed results of that analysis by zoning type. Mr. MacNichol stated that he believed he can get the compliance by amending the 40R and A-40 zones. Mr. Weston asked where the A-40 zone is, and it is NE of downtown. Mr. MacNichol stated that he would prefer to work within the existing zones, rather than expand them, as the density is calculated based on the zone area so expanding them doesn't necessarily buy you anything and could actually lower the density calculation.

Mr. Weston indicated that he and others share the view that it doesn't necessarily make sense to entice more residential into the Bus-A area or parts of downtown that are the key business areas, other than tweaking the existing zoning. Seeing the half mile circle around the train station and that the majority is single-family homes, he questioned if there is some kind of overlay or zoning change we could make in that area to allow 3 family or other smaller apartment buildings in that area. Mr. MacNichol indicated he was open to ideas to create a tiered type of zoning in that area based on lot size and allowable development, although it would need to be detailed and necessarily more complex. The Town has until the end of 2024 to comply and Mr. MacNichol will be reapplying for more technical assistance. Mr. MacNichol reiterated that making changes to the existing areas that allow multifamily development will get close to the required number of units but there likely will still be a gap and that staff will need to further play around with tweaking lot sizes and FAR to see if they can bridge that gap.

Ms. Adrian questioned if it matters what is currently built on the land and Mr. MacNichol indicated that all that matters is what it is zoned for, not what is currently built on a parcel. Mr. D'Arezzo requested Mr. MacNichol send out the writeup he had worked up a few months ago of an overlay mocking up a 3 unit development on a 5,000 sq ft lot with certain parameters including specific parking minimums, with the parking minimums being the limiting factor. He increased the coverage, decreased the setbacks, and tweaked the parking. Mr. D'Arezzo gave the example of a project the Commission had seen recently that was 4 units on an 8,000 sq ft lot for comparison. Ms. Clish stated she was interested in this analysis. Mr. D'Arezzo and Ms. Clish discussed some details of Mr. D'Arezzo's analysis of lot sizes in the area and Ms. Clish stated her preference for the area to be looked at holistically including green space if the area was entirely built up the way it could be zoned for. There was a discussion amongst Commission members about other communities that have been exempted from MBTA Communities and the varying requirements of the mandate.

Mr. Weston summarized that though Reading is doing well at creating housing and working to meet affordability goals that it's clearly not enough and that the changes that will be required to meet the MBTA communities will result in an urban form that is different than what it has looked like for the last 30 years but the tradeoff should be increased affordability.

Mr. MacNichol brought up that he has concerns about major changes not passing the Town Meeting. Mr. Weston pointed out that they have already been through that with 40R and that maybe that may not even pass so he feels that they should be looking at a broader



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

range of ways to get to compliance. People aren't in agreement about if further development should even be focused on downtown, but this process is going to force the conversation on a tight deadline. Commission members discussed other communities and their respective station locations.

Mr. MacNichol indicated the Town will be submitting the action plan and that he intends to dig into the data results and do more analysis to test various scenarios.

Ms. Adrian asked if eminent domain would ever come into play. Mr. Weston answered that the Town would have to have an active redevelopment plan and that Reading has never been in that game. Ms. Clish clarified that once it's zoned, that market forces are at work and the sales price and changes to the property would come from market actors, not the town. Ms. Adrian stated that most of the questions she has been getting from her neighbors about this are if the Town would then seize anyone's land to develop it. The Commission members clarified for her that while the Town could in the future develop a project and go through Town meeting to eminent domain someone's land, that scenario is very unlikely in the current climate of Town development and Town meeting.

Mr. Weston stated that after this, developers will come in and start knocking on doors because they want to build multifamily on formerly single family lots, which is definitely the hope of the administration. Mr. D'Arezzo gave the example of being an elderly resident who hasn't kept up their house and rather than having to rehab it to sell, you could sell it to a developer to tear down. Ms. Clish said that their goal would be to allow three families to coexist next to single families through the design guidelines, as they do now.

Mr. MacNichol brought up form-based code and that it could provide a way to guarantee the form they want regardless of how many units are inside. Ms. Clish asked some follow-up questions about next steps and Mr. MacNichol stated he would be submitting the Action Plan and continue to work up scenarios.

### Other Updates

Mr. MacNichol provided the following updates.

The Town received a \$2million earmark for the MVP Maillet project and may now incorporate a culvert update.

An ACR grant for the community garden was received.

Staff submitted a MACP TAP application to supplement the Net Zero Plan.

There are a few subdivision and site plans in the making.

### Adjournment

***Ms. Adrian made a motion to adjourn at 11:09 PM. Mr. Weston seconded and it was approved 4-0-0.***

Documents Reviewed at the Meeting:

- CPDC Agenda 1/9/23
- Minor Site Plan Review Birch Meadow
  - Memo from Traffic Safety Officer, dated 12/19/22
  - Memo Re: Police Comments, dated 1/4/23



## Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

- Memo Re: Conservation Commission Comments, dated 1/4/23
- Architectural Site Plans, dated 11/30/22
- Lighting Plan, dated 11/11/22
- Letter requesting continuance for 25 Haven St
- Town of Reading Housing Production Plan Presentation By Anser Advisory
- Technical Memorandum on MBTA Communities
- Summary Presentation of Technical Analysis for MBTA Communities