



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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By Town Clerk GP at 9:10 am, Sep 10, 2024

Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Community Planning and Development Commission

Date: 2024-5-6

Time: 7:00 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 Approved

Attendees: **Members In person:** John Weston, Chair; Tony D’Arezzo, Vice Chair; Tom Armstrong, Associate; Heather Clish; Mark Wetzel

Members Not Present: Hillary Mateev

Others Present in person: Community Development Director Andrew MacNichol, Heather Dudko, Chris Dimattei, Colleen Dimattei

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Olivia Knightly

Topics of Discussion:

MEETING HELD IN THE SELECT BOARD ROOM AND REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

Mr. Weston called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Mr. MacNichol gave an overview of the hybrid meeting procedures.

Sign permit Application, Chase Bank, 431 Main Street

Ms. Heather Dudko with Philadelphia Sign Company described the proposed signage for Chase Bank. Mr. MacNichol stated that all area requirements of the signage were met. Mr. Weston asked if additional signage was proposed, and Mr. MacNichol said that the wall signage was the only sign being proposed at this time and that additional signage may be proposed in the future.

Mr. D’Arezzo informed the board that the vice president for Chase Bank Real Estate is a close friend but he has no financial interest through this relationship.

Ms. Clish asked what the materials are being used for the sign letters and Ms. Dudko responded that they are aluminum with acrylic base. Ms. Clish asked if the lettering is opaque and whether light will be visible through them if illuminated. Ms. Dudko stated that the lettering is halo lit from the back and will not shine through the letters. Mr. MacNichol stated that it can be conditioned that the applicant should confirm the lettering will be opaque.

Mr. Wetzel asked about how the lights will be controlled. Ms. Dudko stated that the lights are intended to be on 24/7 to illuminate the ATM on site, but that Chase Bank is willing to abide by any restrictions that may exist for lighting in the Business B district. Mr. MacNichol stated that the ATM vestibule is located on the South side of the building by the main entrance. Mr. D’Arezzo suggested that the north side lighting be turned off at 11 pm or midnight because of abutting residential uses.



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Mr. Weston stated that the plans indicate aluminum painted lettering around the building, ensuring the opacity of the lettering.

Mr. MacNichol conditioned the north side façade signage to be shut off at 11 pm and for all sign lettering to be opaque.

Mr. D'Arezzo made a motion to approve the Certificate of Appropriateness for the Chase Bank sign application, as conditioned. Ms. Clish seconded the motion, and it was approved 4-0-0. (D'Arezzo, Clish, Wetzel, Weston)

Continued Public Hearing, Definitive Subdivision Application 0 Harold Ave, Zero Harold Ave LLC

Mr. Weston stated that the applicant requested to be continued to the Monday June 10 agenda.

Mr. MacNichol said that the applicant will be working to prepare a compliant proof plan for a waiver discussion. He added that town counsel and staff believe this is the appropriate step to address before discussing site access.

Mr. D'Arezzo asked if the design will be approved or conditionally approved before access is resolved. Mr. MacNichol said that his recommendation is to wait until the proof is resolved but the board can make conditions as necessary.

Mr. D'Arezzo made a motion to continue the public hearing for the Definitive Subdivision Application for 0 Harold Ave to Monday June 10. Ms. Clish seconded the motion, and it was approved 4-0-0. (D'Arezzo, Clish, Wetzel, Weston)

MBTA Communities Discussion

Mr. MacNichol stated that the engagement process is gearing up after the recent Town Meeting where he requested \$75,000 to supplement consultant services. He stated that through Town Meeting the funding was increased to \$150,000 with the interest to study any impacts to sewer, traffic, and schools. He stated that in terms of a study these efforts require an area to be identified and focused on before an in-depth study can be conducted. Mr. MacNichol stated that other communities have conducted economic analyses to look at new growth rates and this may be the type of study that the town pursues but he will continue to strategize the best use of the funding allocated. He finished by saying that impact studies can be limited in capacity and findings in the short term.

Mr. Wetzel stated that with the allocated funding becoming available on July 1 that leaves around three months to conduct analysis and that we should focus on the best plan or plans and how this can be communicated to the public instead of addressing every unexpected detail.

Mr. Weston stated that two discussions occurred at Town Meeting, one about impacts and the other about wanting to ensure that resources were available to explore the different concepts. He stated that this is a lot of work to complete and proposed a full build out analysis of existing and proposed zoning could be beneficial.

Ms. Clish stated that a feasibility study for increasing affordability requirements was suggested at Town Meeting, and that she is not sure what the impacts will inform when reviewing the concepts. She stated that she heard concerns about completing the concept scenarios and drafting these through a robust public process. Mr. MacNichol stated that the



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affordability analysis is within the grant budget scope already and will be contingent on the concept area that is decided on.

Mr. Armstrong joined the board in person at this time.

Ms. Clish asked whether impacts and infrastructure capacity are considered in their concept submitted to the state. Mr. MacNichol responded that zoning must allow for family households and school children and that there is no requirement to study or build sewer infrastructure, but this is something that the Town engineering department is proactive about. He added that demand can be determined when looking closer at trends and neighborhoods and this can be incorporated into the capital planning process.

Mr. Weston opened for public comment.

Chris and Colleen Dimattei of 172 High Street stated that the state does not want towns to use impacts as justification for not complying and that it is in the Town's best interest to use the funding to meet the requirements of the law. Mr. Dimattei added that we need to prepare something to present to Town Meeting Members in November before the town becomes non-compliant. He stated that because the law is as of right, the town may not be able to condition development to fix infrastructure limitations.

Mr. D'Arezzo asked if the Town could require site plan review for multifamily housing if it is by right and Mr. MacNichol responded yes saying the board can condition certain elements to a degree and that development impact fees are an upcoming solution to infrastructure limitations.

Ms. Dimattei added that the number one concern in people's minds is the impact on infrastructure. Mr. Dimattei asked how much can be required through the site plan review process. Mr. Wetzel stated that the town cannot allow something to be built that is not safe and developers are required to accommodate infrastructure. Mr. Weston stated that site plan review as a process allows for negotiation when something does not fit the zoning. Mr. Wetzel added that connection fees help to regulate infrastructure needs and additionally stated that it would be beneficial to have advantages, disadvantages, infrastructure and economic impacts to review, as well as visuals for each concept.

Mr. MacNichol reviewed the tentative schedule to meet the November Town meeting warrant date of September 24 and plans to hold public engagement events to narrow down the options to one preferred concept.

The board asked for clarification about what the term "form" is in reference to. Mr. MacNichol stated that there will be controls and dimensional requirements that enforce the type of form allowed in each concept area.

Mr. MacNichol continued to discuss the remaining timeline and intention for anticipated meetings and forums, as well as expectations for what materials the consultants will produce.

Mr. MacNichol reviewed the current iteration of the concepts with the board including concept allowances and geographies. The board provided comment during review of the document and had a discussion.

Mr. Dimattei provided a public comment, stating that he met with Bradley Jones the state representative for Reading about MBTA Communities. He said their discussion was about



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community pushback, and they discussed ways that communities can lessen the law's requirements.

Mr. Wetzel asked about affordability opportunities and if affordability requirements can be more than 10% of total units. Mr. MacNichol said it cannot be more than 10% of units or less than 80% of Area Median Income and added that the affordability metric depends on the area and the determined controls.

Ms. Clish asked if the Town could pursue two-family zoning in the future to create more opportunities for housing if the Town decides to pursue minimum compliance. Mr. MacNichol stated that after the Town complies with MBTA Communities there should be a broader conversation about what is needed for local housing policy, as MBTA Communities is just one piece of this.

Mr. D'Arezzo stated that if we allow 15+ units per acre this does not necessarily mean people will build the maximum allowed units on a lot. He added that in the downtown area the lot sizes are smaller so this will allow fewer units.

Mr. Dimattei provided public comment that affordability will be limited if there are fewer units produced and added that he is concerned about the character of single-family neighborhoods changing due to the construction of multiple units on a lot. Mr. D'Arezzo stated that this is already possible through 40B development.

Mr. Weston stated that Reading has historically made zoning choices that limited the commercial district area resulting in impacts to single family zoning. Mr. Dimattei agreed that zoning has been prohibitive, but this is a reason why many have chosen to live in Town, and continued to suggest that Town Meeting Members should attend public forums. Mr. MacNichol stated that they have been informed of the meetings and Ms. Clish recommended emailing all Town Meeting Members.

Mr. Wetzel stated that he reviewed the Housing Production Plan and that there are other strategies that need to be implemented in partnership with the MBTA Communities requirements to make town more affordable.

Mr. Weston expressed awareness regarding a lawsuit in Rockport regarding their MBTA zone being located in a less affluent section of Town, creating disproportionate impacts, he added that the Reading administration is conscious of and trying to prevent any disproportionate impacts that may arise through the zoning.

Mr. Dimattei asked if it would be possible to zone over existing developments. Mr. MacNichol responded that some of the existing developments would likely not be accepted as compliant, but the zoning can be used to try and match what is existing today in other areas of Town. Mr. Weston said that these developments are unlikely to be redeveloped because they are so new.

Reading Center for Active Living (ReCALC)

Mr. MacNichol provided a summary to the board of ReCALC efforts to date, stating that three potential locations have been determined including the Pleasant Street Center, Symonds Way, and Oakland Road. He added that CPDC has been asked for high level comments by the ReCALC committee.

Mr. Weston stated that the Oakland Road area is a community area and that it would be a fitting location. He added that there are some challenges, including the ledge and water



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runoff. He stated that Downtown would limit their space opportunities, and it would be best to have the center in a location where not everyone has to drive. Mr. Wetzel stated that traffic by Oakland Road is a concern and that the site is challenging, and he believes Symonds Way may be a better site.

Ms. Clish stated that she was on the Symonds Way Exploratory Committee who recommended a series of improvements over time. She added that there are very few locations around Town that could host new sports fields. Ms. Clish asked for clarification on the purpose of the Reading Center for Active Living and whether it would be age restricted for seniors or a community center for all ages. Mr. MacNichol stated that there needs to be more clarity from the Committee because it is not a decision for CPDC to make.

The board continued to discuss the proposed locations and uses of the facility.

Downtown Parking Update

Mr. MacNichol provided an update on the parking meters with anticipated installation in mid to late May with an activation date of June. He added that next steps are to start a parking benefit district which can use revenue to revitalize downtown.

Mr. Wetzel asked which lots are included. Mr. MacNichol stated that upper Haven and the CVS lot are included and will also maintain some private parking which will be enforced, as well as Brandy Court.

Mr. MacNichol added that street parking will remain as free two-hour parking and the kiosks at the lots will help to promote turnover.

The board briefly discussed ongoing planning work and relevant projects happening in Town, Mr. MacNichol discussed timelines and provided an update.

Adjournment

Ms. Clish made a motion to adjourn, and it was seconded by Mr. D'Arezzo. It was approved 4-0-0.

Documents Reviewed at the Meeting:

- **ReCALC**
 - Presentation on Site Selection and Cost Estimates, dated 3-27-24
 - Summary Report, dated 2-28-24
- **431 Main Street, Chase Bank**
 - Sign Permit Application
 - Sign Proposal Plans