



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Community Planning and Development Commission

Date: 2024-7-15

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

Attendees: **Members In person:** John Weston, Chair; Thomas Armstrong, Associate; Heather Clish; John Arena; Hillary Mateev

Members Not Present: Gaetano Manganiello

Others Present in person: Community Development Director Andrew MacNichol; Senior Planner Olivia Knightly; Tony D'Arezzo; Heather Dudko.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted By: Olivia Knightly

Topics of Discussion: Public hearing for a special permit for a free-standing sign at 431 Main Street, Chase Bank; MBTA Communities 3A Discussion.

MEETING HELD IN THE SELECT BOARD ROOM AND REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

Mr. Weston called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Mr. Weston welcomed the new CPDC member, John Arena.

The Community Development Director, Andrew MacNichol, gave an overview of the hybrid meeting procedures.

Continued Public Hearing, Definitive Subdivision Application, 0 Harold Ave (0 Van Norden Road)

Mr. MacNichol stated that the applicant is still working through the proof plan process.

Ms. Clish moved to continue the definitive subdivision public hearing for 0 Harold Ave to September 9. Ms. Mateev seconded the motion, and it was approved 5-0-0. (Clish, Mateev, Weston, Arena, Armstrong)

Continued Public Hearing, Major Modification to a Definitive Subdivision, Grandview Road Extension

Mr. MacNichol stated that the applicant is still working through the details of their application.

Ms. Clish moved to continue the definitive subdivision public hearing for the Grandview Road Extension to August 12. Ms. Mateev seconded the motion, and it was approved 5-0-0. (Clish, Mateev, Weston, Arena, Armstrong)



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Mr. Arena asked the Commission how the duration of the application extensions is determined. Mr. Weston stated that the applicant may request a specific date, or in the instance that the CPDC agenda is full then the applicant will be scheduled on the following agenda. Mr. Weston continued that in some instances the timeframe of applications will be taken into consideration, if applicable. Mr. MacNichol stated that this is not the case here, but generally with written agreements and continuances application deadlines are extended. However, on occasion the Commission will request a specific extension date. Ms. Clish stated that the Commission has done this in the past to ensure that the timeframe supports the application.

Public Hearing, Special Permit for a free-standing sign under Business-B, 431 Main Street – Chase Bank

Mr. Armstrong read the Legal Notice into record.

Heather Dudko was present in person to represent the applicant, Chase Bank. Ms. Dudko is a sign consultant from Philadelphia Sign Company, the sign installer for Chase Bank.

Ms. Dudko stated that she was before the Commission in April for Chase Bank signage that did not require a special permit.

Ms. Dudko stated that the special permit under consideration by the Commission is for a monument sign at the new Chase Bank Branch located on Main Street. It is proposed at 12sf on a brick base, 4' 2" overall height, halo illumination, with a 5' setback from Main Street and a 20' setback from Washington Street. The sign would be perpendicular to Main Street toward the corner of Main and Washington. Ms. Dudko stated that Business-B ground signs are permitted by special permit. She said that she surveyed the area for other ground signage to determine appropriateness of the proposed sign.

Ms. Dudko stated that the bank is a new branch to Reading so the applicant is looking to maximize exposure for potential new customers. She stated that two wall signs were previously approved, one located on the front of the building and one on the rear elevation.

Mr. Weston stated that halo lit signage is permitted, and defined halo lit as having opaque letters. However, the Chase Bank sign plan states that the letters are to be translucent. Ms. Dudko confirmed and asked Ms. Knightly whether a rendering was received with more specific language indicating halo lighting. Ms. Knightly confirmed that there is language on one of the recent plan submittals indicating halo lighting, but that the plan did not label the lettering as opaque. Mr. Weston stated that it should be made clear that opaque letters are a requirement.

Ms. Dudko stated that the drawings can be changed to note specifically that an opaque base will be used. She recalled that the letters on the approved building signage are not acrylic but metal. Ms. Clish stated that if the lettering used is acrylic then it cannot let any light through. Ms. Dudko stated that for consistency they can recommend to the applicant to use the same metal lettering material that is being used on the building signage. Ms. Clish confirmed that if the lettering is metal and opaque then that would be supported.

Mr. Weston inquired whether Ms. Dudko feels that metal is an appropriate material to have on a ground sign monument. Ms. Dudko confirmed that the sign letting will be opaque regardless of the material used, whether metal or acrylic.

Ms. Dudko stated that the lettering that will be illuminated has an area of about five to six square feet. The Committee reviewed an example photo of Chase Bank signage with opaque



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letting that was provided by Ms. Dudko. Ms. Clish stated that she had concerns after viewing the photo, as the sign logo does not appear totally opaque.

Mr. Weston advised the Committee that their review should ensure that the signage should not have negative impacts to abutting residential uses, commercial properties, or traffic. Mr. Arena voiced concerns for traffic visibility and potential impacts to line of sight that may be caused by the sign. Mr. Weston agreed and referenced the site plan, indicating the location of the stop line and crosswalk in relation to the sidewalk.

The board discussed the site plan, clarifying the lot lines presented in red.

Mr. Weston stated that the location of the sign would likely not be an infringement to line of sight for traffic on Main Street or Washington Street. Ms. Clish agreed. Mr. Arena asked if it is a subjective assessment of the board or whether there are safety guidelines that the board must consider when reviewing applications. Mr. Weston responded that the board primarily uses observation and common sense.

Mr. MacNichol stated that he reviewed the approved landscape plan for the site, observing that a Sugar Maple tree was proposed. He stated that the applicant should ensure the tree does not infringe upon sign visibility. Mr. Area inquired whether the tree is existing or one that will be planted. Mr. MacNichol confirmed that the tree is going to be planted. Ms. Clish stated it is up to the proponent to ensure visibility from the south is maintained, as the tree will not impact visibility from the north, but regardless the tree must stay.

Mr. Armstrong inquired whether there would be signage to the McDonald's side of the Chase Bank. Ms. Dudko said there will be no additional signage aside from the wall signage that had previously been approved.

Member of the public Tony D'Arezzo notified the board that as this is a special permit it is within the board's purview to assign a time that the sign would need to be turned off at night. Ms. Clish asked if there were times assigned to the other lighting on the building. Mr. MacNichol said that the northern side of the building fronting Washington Street abuts future residential use and is conditioned to be turned off at 11 PM. Mr. Weston stated that he does not have a preference for when the sign gets turned off but is aware that the sign is going to be facing future residential properties.

Ms. Mateev asked what the output of the light in the proposed sign will be. Ms. Dudko did not know. Mr. MacNichol stated that 7100 kw white lighting is indicated in the original submittal but was unsure if this will be amended to accommodate the halo lighting. He continued to say that it could be conditioned for the specs to be updated on the Special Permit.

Mr. Weston asked whether there is a draft certificate or special permit document for the board to review and approve. Mr. MacNichol reviewed the draft certificate with the board and noted that he included a condition for the applicant to confirm the lights wattage specifications and that a condition can be added for shut off times.

Ms. Clish asked if the special permit could contain a condition where the sign be put on a dimmer which could modify the lighting based on neighborhood impact. Mr. MacNichol stated that he is not sure any of the signs can be temperature controlled. Ms. Dudko said that other signs she has worked on have been put on a dimmer before. Ms. Mateev said that this may help to reduce impact. Ms. Clish agreed that this would provide flexibility. Ms. Clish asked Ms. Dudko what her recommendation is for the potential lighting element. Ms. Dudko stated that there is technology to dim the sign based on the weather or time of day.



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She continued to say that the applicant is not averse to shutting off the sign at a set time, however there is a 24-hour light that will remain on for the ATM located on-site.

Mr. Weston said that the existing area lighting would likely allow you to see the sign even when it is turned off. Ms. Mateev asked if the sign should be conditioned to turn off at 11:00 PM, which is consistent with the previously approved wall signage. The board agreed to add this as a condition.

The board informed Mr. Arena of the standard procedure for the special permit and certificate of appropriateness, noting that this is usually provided in the meeting packet prior to the meeting.

Mr. Weston recommended removing a proposed condition in the draft special permit that related to the prior special permit that was granted.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the special permit and certificate of appropriateness for the free-standing monument sign at 431 Main Street, Chase Bank. Ms. Mateev seconded the motion, and it was approved (4-0-1). Mr. Armstrong abstained. (Clish, Mateev, Weston, Arena)

Mr. Weston informed the board that CPDC is usually reorganized in July or August and stated that the board could have a discussion if desired. He mentioned that he has been chair over the past year, and historically the secretary has been nominated for the chair position, but that is not an option this year. Mr. Weston added that he is not eager to stay on as Chair but would do so and asked the other members to think about this for discussion next time. Ms. Clish suggested that because CPDC is in the middle of a big project that she would consider nominating Mr. Weston to remain as Chair until the MBTA Communities process is complete.

MBTA (3A) Communities Discussion

Mr. MacNichol provided an update of the process and the purpose of rescheduling the July 10 meeting to July 31. Overall, the Town decided to reschedule this meeting in consideration of the new evolved concepts that will be pushed out. The agenda for the meeting is to give a brief presentation and then to break out into roundtable discussions with facilitated discussions to get more direct and actionable feedback in anticipation of the Town Meeting. Mr. MacNichol stated that an affordability analysis will be coming soon as well as additional maps and materials from consultants.

Mr. Weston provided a review of the MBTA Communities process to date for new board members Mr. Arena and Mr. Manganiello (not present).

The board had comments about several maps which were difficult to see due to the colors used.

Mr. Arena asked if the industrial proposal has received support. Mr. Weston stated that this concept, due to its large size, has received some modification to reduce the overall area included but remains larger than what most of the public would like to see. Mr. Armstrong added that he feels the community wants to see development happen at a slower rate, and that large scale development, particularly in the industrial zone, will likely be built at a quicker pace.



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Mr. Weston stated that he does not want the board to deliberate on the concepts at this time and instead would like to take time to think about how the concepts can be presented at the upcoming forum.

Mr. Arena inquired if a concept can be amended after it is approved at Town Meeting. Mr. Weston advised that there are other Towns that have already adopted the MBTA Communities Act with conditions included. Mr. MacNichol advised that zoning is a living document, and subsequent amendments will be subject to the Town Meeting process and Attorney General review to determine if compliance is impacted. Mr. Weston stated that all zoning changes must go through the state for approval. Mr. Arena followed up his question by saying that this legislation is unprecedented but that there is some sense of comfort in knowing that there is an opportunity to revisit the zoning in the future if desired. Ms. Clish responded that there is nothing that states the law is permanent and reiterated that the Town would still have to ensure any zoning changes in the future would maintain Reading's compliance with MBTA Communities.

Mr. Arena asked if after a compliant plan is submitted and approved if a subsequent compliant revision can be made, and whether this would be considered a new submittal. Mr. MacNichol said that he could ask the state about this inquiry. The board discussed and speculated about how the state may respond to this question. Mr. Weston stated that there is flexibility when changing zoning, but the way that the state views the permanence of MBTA decisions is important.

Ms. Clish asked about the timeframe of board decisions after the meeting on July 31. Mr. MacNichol responded that there is no specific MBTA communities forum in August yet but depending on the feedback received staff will determine whether more workshopping is necessary or whether they can begin to write a bylaw. He added that staff are looking to submit a draft bylaw to the state in September for feedback before November Town Meeting and that the public hearing process needs to be closed by the warrant date. Ms. Clish asked if the CPDC will be making a recommendation at their next meeting after the public hearing.

The board discussed the maps and how they can be improved before the public forum to be easier to read.

Mr. Weston expressed positive feedback on the zoning scenarios explorer online tool and how it is helpful in viewing potential future development. He added that this visualization of the zoning is more informative than static maps and should be brought into discussion at the upcoming forum. Mr. MacNichol said that this tool will be helpful for the community to see what is allowed today in comparison to the proposed controls.

Ms. Clish asked if there is a compliant scenario that uses Downtown only. Mr. MacNichol said that the only way this would be feasible is if multifamily is allowed at a four-story level rather than the three stories allowed today to meet the density and unit capacity requirements. He added that four stories do not seem to align with the goal of having minimal impact on commercial uses downtown, and there is no intention to go to five stories, so this was removed as a potential concept.

Ms. Clish provided recommendations for the forum on July 31 and suggested that the board look into any potential conflict of interest that could arise if the MBTA proposal rezones any amount of land greater or less than 10% of the total town area. Mr. Weston added that CPDC members who live within the areas being rezoned must disclose this information to the Select Board and that members don't necessarily need to recuse themselves but should make this known at any future meetings.



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The board reviewed the June 10, 2024, meeting minutes and provided corrections.

Ms. Clish made a motion to approve the minutes, Ms. Mateev seconded the motion, and it was approved (4-0-1) Armstrong, Clish, Weston, Mateev. Mr. Arena abstained.

Adjournment

Ms. Mateev made a motion to adjourn at 8:28 PM. Ms. Clish seconded, and it was approved 5-0-0 (Mateev, Weston, Clish, Armstrong, Arena).

Documents Reviewed at the Meeting:

- Chase Bank
 - Notice of Public Hearing, dated 7/15/24
 - Sign Permit Application, dated 5/9/24
 - Revised Monument Proposal Plan Set, dated 6/26/24
 - Example photo of monument, dated 7/8/24
 - Draft Certificate of Appropriateness/Special Permit
- MBTA Communities (3A)
 - MBTA Communities Initial Compliance Analysis, completed by RKG Associates Inc., dated 7/8/24
- Draft meeting minutes from June 10, 2024, CPDC Meeting