



Town of Reading Meeting Minutes

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Board - Committee - Commission - Council:

Community Planning and Development Commission

Date: 2024-9-16

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:** Tom Armstrong, Associate; Heather Clish, Secretary; Hillary Mateev; John Arena

Members Present on Zoom: John Weston, Chair;

Members Not Present: Gaetano Manganiello

Others Present in person: Andrew MacNichol, Community Development Director; Olivia Knightly, Senior Planner; Lynn Arena; Melissa Murphy; Nancy Twomey; Angela Binda; Jeffrey Dietz; Zoran Vidovic; Jason Clarke; Tim Mathieu; Chris Calebrese; Jianing Gao; Lin Chabra; Mark Logsdon; Rich Caraviello; Genady Pilyavsky; Bill Donahue; Linda Snow Dockser; Brian Curry; Judy Shannon; Bob Holmes; Christie Modre; Virginia Pierce; John Sullivan; Diana Halsey; Samantha Woods; Ed Woods; Lee D'Argenio; Bobbie Botticello; Tony Aufiero; Rita Resca; Laura Stella; Michael Holmes; Sheila Crusco; Dan Moresco; Tara Gregory; Karen and Manuel German; Gregory Wolf

Present on Zoom: Cy Caouette; Steve Matrullo; Solis; Kathleen; Steph; Debbie; Ann; P Sullivan; Maz; Peter Macaulay; John Welth; Evan Ginny; Chris Haley, Reading Select Board; Sally; Katelyn; Richard; Gina; Jaren Herrick, Reading Select Board; Nancy D; Sarah's iPhone; ftouserk; Kate and John Goldlust; Jennifer Killeen; Nancy Graham; Narcissa-Christine Lyons; Roseann Novello; Lori Gisetto; Joyce Mandell; Marie; Garrett Alpha-Cobb; Richard J Zembruski; Sally; Elissa Willia; Midge Record; Rheta; John Anderson; Linda; Lorraine Willwerth; Sarah's iPhone; Sue Nohl; Rhonda Holt; Jack; David Talbot; RJ; M Tucker; John Li; Bob Ferrari; John Nolan; Tara's iPhone; Sarah's iPhone; Bob Holmes; Kyle Vangel; Ken; Richard Caraviello; Joyce Mandell

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 7:06 PM.

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



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MBTA Communities Public Hearing, Zoning Bylaw Amendments for November Town Meeting

Ms. Clish read the Notice of Public Hearing into record.

Mr. MacNichol reviewed the purpose of the public hearing process and the meeting intention, which is to finalize the geographies that will be included in the MBTA Communities proposal, to determine the appropriate allowances, and to review bylaw sections.

Mr. MacNichol provided a presentation to the board and to those in attendance detailing the two concepts under consideration. The first concept includes the Downtown Smart Growth District (DSGD) and A-80 expansion area, an existing multifamily zoning district that includes the Gazebo Circle and Summit Towers development and adds the Reading Commons area. The second concept is titled the BUS-A conversion plan, utilizing Downtown with South Main Street and a portion of North Main Street.

Mr. MacNichol stated that to meet compliance metrics the Downtown area will need to be amended from 20 units per acre to 30 units per acre. Mr. Arena asked if this was known and not applied or if it was previously unknown. Mr. MacNichol stated that there was a lack of clarification on whether the 40% station area minimum requirement applied to land area or unit capacity, and it was found that it applies to both.

Mr. MacNichol stated that only two recent projects have been built under 50 units per acre and only one project has been built under 40 units per acre so 30 units per acre is not an unprecedented density for the Downtown. Mr. Arena asked if Gazebo Place and Summit Towers are already compliant, and Mr. MacNichol stated these areas help to meet unit capacity and density requirements as they are proposed at 30 units per acre and they currently exist at 18 units per acre. Mr. Weston clarified this density again and Mr. MacNichol stated that upzoning is necessary for compliance.

Mr. MacNichol stated that because Reading Commons was a 40B Development and built at a 25% affordability rate, the law only allows a 12.5% affordability rate so an increase in density may not result in an increase in affordable units at this location.

Mr. MacNichol reviewed the proposed zoning controls for the A-80 expansion concept and the Business-D Conversion concept.

Mr. Arena asked if the 12.5% affordability rate was a state regulation and Mr. MacNichol said that the state requires 10% but the Town received approval for 12.5%.

Ms. Clish asked for clarification on the asterisk shown in the table of zoning controls for BUS-D and Mr. MacNichol stated that the asterisk indicates potential higher setbacks for parcels that directly abut residential uses.

Mr. Arena asked why the proposed DSGD changes are not shown in the A-80 concept and Mr. MacNichol said that for compliance's sake they need to maximize the downtown unit capacity without going beyond what has been built historically. Mr. Arena asked what the impact would be if the proposed changes to rear and side setbacks were left as they exist today, and Mr. MacNichol stated that it would reduce the unit capacity by about 100.

Mr. MacNichol reviewed the proposed density and controls for the proposed concepts and compared the proposal with recent development in Reading.



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Mr. Arena mentioned previous zoning discussions that have occurred at Town Meeting that aimed to achieve balance amongst setbacks and zoning controls. Mr. MacNichol agreed and conveyed that this is trying to be achieved in the current proposals. Mr. MacNichol continued to present an overview of the proposed bylaw amendment changes.

Ms. Clish asked if the DSGD meets compliance in each proposed scenario and Mr. MacNichol said that in each concept the Downtown will need to be upzoned, but maybe to a lesser degree with Main Street.

The board discussed how to proceed during the meeting and Mr. Weston said that the board should focus on reviewing the DSGD concept controls and development potential and then review the partner areas.

Mr. Arena asked about three parcels on Woburn Street and Mr. MacNichol showed the board these parcels on a map, noting that they are primarily of commercial use. Mr. MacNichol said that they were discussed during the public engagement process and that they could be included to the Downtown concept to increase unit capacity. He added that any split lots on the east side of the DSGD would be unsplit. Ms. Clish stated that the DSGD was initially an overlay district over a business district which resulted in some of the split lots.

Mr. MacNichol said that as they establish parameters Downtown, they should provide landscaping, seek appropriate parking, and keep commercial space options viable. He added that they should consider building characteristics and massing as well as energy efficiency and other needs to be accommodated.

Mr. Armstrong asked if they would reach compliance in the Downtown if the three Woburn Street parcels were included and lots were unsplit. Mr. MacNichol said that they would provide some unit capacity but not a substantial amount.

Mr. Arena asked if increasing the total area also increases the number of units required and Mr. MacNichol responded that we need to ensure that as area acreage increases the district density does not fall below compliance. Mr. Arena asked if increased setbacks and landscape requirements reduce unit capacity and Mr. MacNichol confirmed yes and added that landscape area can be considered setback area. Ms. Clish stated that these controls are all related and impact each other, she continued to ask what would happen if rear setbacks are not reduced to zero and that she prefers to maintain landscaping requirements. Mr. MacNichol said that flexible setbacks can be required for parcels that directly abut residential uses.

The board continued to discuss setbacks and potential flexible setback allowances. Mr. MacNichol stated that the setback requirement can be managed up to 30 feet and the challenge is to achieve the necessary density while maintaining setbacks. He continued to state that if the by right density remains at 30 DUA then there may be more flexibility with setbacks and parking requirements, but if the by right density is set to 20 then this flexibility lessens. Mr. Weston stated that the setbacks, landscaping, and parking are the criteria that are the most important to the community than actual maximum density.

Mr. Weston said that based on the conversation the board would look to keep the setback at 15 feet and the density at 30 DUA with some flexibility in these numbers to achieve unit capacity. Mr. MacNichol stated that the intention is to keep all controls level.

The had a brief discussion about parking requirements in the Downtown and Main Street areas.



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Mr. Armstrong asked for clarification about the correction of split lots and the board discussed this briefly. The board determined not to amend any of the map geographies at this time.

Mr. Weston stated that he is not interested in amending tier three of the tiered density schedule and Mr. MacNichol stated that they will keep tier three as it exists and make modifications to the lower levels of the density schedule.

Mr. Weston opened for public comment. Ms. Clish stated that the public will have another opportunity to comment at the following public hearing on Thursday September 19.

Andrew Gregory, 111 Pleasant Street, Town Meeting Member, expressed support for the more expansive plan along Main Street and thanked the Chair for stating the board's focus on a least objectionable plan for Town Meeting.

Garrett Alpha-Cobb, North Main Street, asked the board what is expected in the North Main Street area, whether this would include commercial, mixed-use, or residential uses and stated that he views the retail spaces there currently as assets to the area. Mr. MacNichol stated multi-family residential development and mixed use would be allowed by right up to 3 to 4 stories.

Virginia Pierce, Coolidge Road, stated that the setbacks are unclear and emphasized concern for the proposed zero-foot and five-foot setbacks. Mr. MacNichol responded that there have been new buildings with zero-foot setbacks and that the discussion tonight was to maintain a 30-foot setback requirement all around.

Angela Binda, Orchard Park Drive, said that she thought the MBTA Communities concept was going to be an overlay district and asked if it would be incorporated into the 40R district as an overlay. Ms. Clish stated that the 40R district is an overlay as it exists and the proposed MBTA district would be changed as an overlay. Ms. Clish continued to say that the A-80 district is an underlying zoning district and that an overlay may cause contradictions with the underlying zoning. Mr. MacNichol echoed this and stated that the underlying zoning for the A-80 and Main Street Business district will be amended to reflect the proposed allowances.

Ms. Clish clarified the difference between base zoning and overlay zoning. Mr. MacNichol stated that the town would not lose control by using underlying zoning or overlay zoning.

Ms. Binda asked if the original conditions of 40-R would be altered and if the state funding will be impacted. Mr. MacNichol stated that we would not be losing any funding, but we will look to increase allowances and potentially seek a higher designation and increased zoning incentive payment. Ms. Binda asked why there is an affordability maximum, and Ms. Clish stated that this is a requirement established within the law and that by using the downtown smart growth district the town can maintain the existing higher affordability requirements, but a 12.5% affordability requirement is required in other proposed zoning districts.

John Sullivan, 23 Weston Road, stated in response to Ms. Binda's questions that the affordability cap exists because it could be set high enough to be financially unviable and would prevent the building of affordable housing. Mr. Sullivan encouraged the board not to use the existing developments (A-80 concept) for MBTA compliance and emphasized that the town should be looking to expand housing for those who are cost burdened.

Katelyn Lloyd, 46 Pinevale, asked if South Main Street would be redeveloped instead of seeing new development. Mr. MacNichol said that this is correct as most of Main Street is



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already built on. Ms. Malloy asked if the board is not looking to seek new development in this area. Mr. MacNichol responded that development is ongoing and can be facilitated to achieve compliance that fits the Main Street area. Ms. Lloyd asked why South Main is the most impacted by development and Mr. MacNichol stated that the Downtown and Main Street facilitate development forms that are more visible and that it is not segmented to South Main Street alone.

Ms. Clish stated that while the board was deliberating on which concepts to bring forward to a public hearing, they discussed South Main Street being an area that is subject to a lot of development and that MBTA Communities may be a mechanism to see development happen more intentionally. Mr. Weston stated that the board is not contemplating density that is greater than what exists now on South Main Street.

Lorraine Willwerth, 26 Green Street, stated that at Town Meeting it was voted to have the Main Street design guidelines changed to reflect what exists today. She referenced increasing density and development that has impacted the Downtown. Mr. Weston responded that the board would not be reducing the setbacks that were voted on in 2019 or undoing anything. Ms. Clish clarified the setbacks under consideration.

Brian Curry, Haverhill Street, asked how we can present a plan for the town to vote on if the board is unsure whether the State cannot change the zoning in the future. Mr. Weston stated that the state cannot change our zoning after the fact but if the town does not comply then they will compel communities to comply. Ms. Clish stated that the state government cannot force zoning on a town.

Mark Logsdon, 36 Grand Street, Town Meeting member, expressed support for the Main Street concept, stating that he grew up in Reading and moved back to town and would like others to have the same opportunity. Mr. Logsdon said that attracting younger families to the community will make Reading more competitive and he expressed support for intentional rezoning that creates possibilities for development.

Chris Calabrese, 17 Debra Drive, expressed support for growth in the town and Downtown areas. He stated that there are opportunities for intentional growth and connectivity downtown to reduce vehicle traffic.

Sarah Fuller, 24 Pinevale Ave, echoed Katelyn Floyd's comment. Ms. Fuller asked if the South Main Street concept would impact the 10 Pinevale development, and Mr. MacNichol confirmed it would not. She continued to ask if the proposed concept overlays the wetlands behind the Pinevale neighborhood. Mr. MacNichol stated that the lots on Pinevale would become unsplit and that the zoning can go over the wetlands but that these areas may not be buildable and are subject to wetland regulations. She inquired about split lots and Mr. MacNichol described the purpose of un-splitting lots between the BUS-A and S-15 districts. Ms. Fuller said that all areas of Reading should be considered in the plan.

Bobbie Botticello, Chapel Hill Drive, asked if the commercial parcels along North Main Street are considered in the plan. Ms. Clish stated that the zoning would allow multi-family residential or mixed-use residential in these areas should they ever be redeveloped. Mr. MacNichol further defined multi-family residential use. Ms. Botticello stated that the North Main area is not walkable to the train station and Ms. Clish stated that 40% of unit capacity must be within half a mile of the train station and Mr. MacNichol stated this is accomplished using downtown. Ms. Botticello asked if the new Killam school will be able to accommodate future students and Mr. MacNichol responded that population growth and demographic trends have been reviewed for the new school building.



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Tim Matthew, 20 Briarwood Avenue, expressed support for the A-80 proposal as a reasonable first step for the community. Mr. Matthew stated that new construction is unaffordable for renters and that many are struggling with the cost of living. He asked the board to consider the implications for the community if they select a more expansive concept. He stated that the Main Street concept creates more opportunities for development to occur, versus A-80 which is a good first step.

Genady Pilyavsky, 3 Paramount Avenue, stated that a huge expense for the town is school age children and large single-family homes which create additional tax burden for the town. Mr. Pilyavsky stated that multifamily housing residents subsidize the town's tax base and expressed his support for the Main Street concept.

Mark Dockser, Beaver Road, stated that the community needs more affordable housing options. He stated that the Main Street plan does the best job achieving this and takes credit for development that has occurred and continues to occur. Mr. Dockser added that expanding the concept to include north and south main street lessens the burden and that the board may need to increase density to over 30 DUA for compliance. He finished by saying that the town should be in control of development.

Rick Schaffer, 67 Woburn Street, stated that developers will make new housing inaccessible and asked if there is a way to require some of the housing stock created under this process to be for ownership and create affordable housing options. Mr. MacNichol stated that there are other housing tools that should be explored outside of the MBTA Communities act and that high housing costs are due to the shortage of housing available. Mr. MacNichol continued to say that there is a need for housing at a regional level and that there are other strategies that the town can take advantage of in addition to MBTA communities.

Dave Talbot, 75 Linden Street, asked if the DSGD concept can be expanded to include the MET development, a dense 40B, across from the train depot on Prescott Street. Mr. MacNichol stated that the unit capacity and density needs are not going to have a substantial factor in compliance, but it can be under consideration. Mr. Arena asked the unit count, Mr. MacNichol responded that it is 72 units.

Dan Moresco, 58 Hancock Street, stated that the community is not affordable to those who are raised in the community and want to move back. He asked the board to consider the Main Street concept which offers missing-middle housing opportunities in a controlled manner.

Greg Wolf, 4 Summit Drive, supports the Main Street concept and stated that younger generations prefer living in mixed-use housing and that zoning adopted now should be done with future generations in mind. Mr. Wolf asked if an increased tax base will help to support infrastructure and local costs. Mr. MacNichol said that new growth is a benefit to town, and additional funds can help to mitigate the associated impacts. Mr. Wolf asked if an increase in housing supply will make housing prices more affordable. Ms. Clish stated that this is the intention behind the law, and Mr. MacNichol said that communities that have seen an increase in housing stock have seen prices stabilize or decline.

Tara Gregory, Pleasant Street, Precinct 2 Town Meeting Member, urged CPDC to recommend the South Main Street proposal to Town Meeting. They stated that the proposal helps to promote the type of housing that fits within the size, scale, and aesthetic of the existing neighborhoods. They added that growth along the corridor creates opportunity for mixed use development, transit connectivity, and new tax revenue and expressed that paper compliance does not meet the spirit of the law and limits future growth.



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Richard Caraviello, 15 Sailor Tom's Way, stated that he would like to maintain the charm of the town and rezoning would impact this. He added that town resources are stressed, and he expressed support for minimal compliance, encouraging the board to recommend the A-80 concept.

Charles Smith, 186 High Street, stated his support for minimal compliance while also creating some low-income housing that will preserve historic homes and neighborhoods.

Rhonda Holt, 46 Fairview Ave, stated that the A-80 expansion concept allows the town to make thoughtful zoning decisions. She stated that the town doesn't need MBTA Communities to achieve its housing goals. She added that mixed-use cannot be required and commercial retail space may be lost.

Mr. Weston recommended the board discuss the concepts under review and determine the focus of the subsequent Thursday meeting.

Marrienne Downing, 13 Heather Drive, asked if everything involving MBTA Communities will be finalized by the Select Board vote on September 24. Mr. MacNichol stated that they may review the bylaw language, but everything will be finalized by the warrant report.

The board had a discussion about the proposed controls and setbacks of the Downtown area to achieve compliance and provided guidance to planning staff for development of the Bylaws.

Mr. Arena asked if the state always reviews zoning changes and Mr. MacNichol said that the state always reviews zoning for approval and if the town amended the plan for compliance, they would review it and ensure consistency with 3A. Mr. Weston said that the state will not accept future changes that reduce the number of units for compliance.

The board had a discussion about the map geographies and agreed to maintain the maps that were decided upon previously. The board continued to discuss un-splitting the lots along South Main Street and Ms. Clish stated that she would be interested to know how many properties are impacted by the 30-foot extension and need to be unsplit to understand how many properties will have a change in allowable use. Mr. Weston mentioned that the board should look to buffer properties that are abutting residential uses. Ms. Clish agreed that if lots are unsplit it will be critical to do this. Mr. MacNichol said that a 30-foot buffer from the Business-A district could be applied to determine the general area that is captured.

Mr. Armstrong asked if the board could include a clause that states a combining of lots is not approved if it will produce more units or if it will produce a greater mass unless it is allowed by right. Mr. Weston said that the board cannot control the sale of land or prohibit the combining of properties or splitting them up. Mr. MacNichol added that no matter how many lots are conjoined the 60% lot coverage limit cannot be exceeded without a variance.

The board discussed the compliance metrics for Downtown and Main Street.

Mr. Weston said that losing the commercial node on North Main Street is a concern and asked if the mixed-use zoning on South Main Street will be included in the Northern area. Mr. MacNichol said that it would.

Mr. Weston suggested the board take a vote and move forward with the Main Street proposal. Mr. Arena asked what would happen with the A-80 proposal and Mr. Weston said that if additional capacity is needed, that some of the A-80 areas could be utilized. Mr.



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Arena recommended that the A-80 proposal is brought to Town Meeting as an alternative and a "break the glass approach". Mr. Armstrong stated his preference for bringing one concept only. Mr. Weston said that both concepts would need to be put on the warrant. The board discussed the logistics of bringing two concepts to Town Meeting.

John Sullivan asked why only two concepts are being considered and why the previous concepts are also not under consideration. Ms. Clish stated that two concepts were eliminated before the public hearing process and that four concepts are too many to bring to town meeting.

The board had a brief discussion about the ADU law and then continued to discuss presenting two concepts at Town Meeting.

Mr. MacNichol stated that staff will review the two bylaws and make changes as discussed.

Ms. Clish made a motion to continue the public hearing until Thursday, September 19 at 7:00 pm, and it was seconded by Ms. Mateev. It was approved 5-0-0 (Arena, Armstrong, Clish, Mateev, Weston)

Adjournment

Ms. Clish made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 pm and it was seconded by Ms. Mateev. It was approved 5-0-0 (Arena, Armstrong, Clish, Mateev, Weston)

Documents Reviewed at the Meeting:

- Zoning Concept Maps:
 - A-80 Expansion Zoning Map
 - BUS-A Conversion Zoning Map
- Reading MBTA Communities Initial Compliance Analysis, dated September 12, 2024
- Presentation from Planning Staff, dated September 16, 2024