

Minutes of the CLRPC Meeting of February 23, 2018

Pursuant to a notice filed with the Town Clerk, the Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee (CLRPC) met at 8:00 a.m. on February 23, 2018 in the first floor meeting room, 141 Keyes Road, Concord, MA.

Members Present:

Gary Kleiman, Co-Chair

Elise Woodward, Co-Chair

Nick Pappas

Peggy Briggs

Sharyn Lenhart

Peter Hunter

Wade Rubinstein

Judy Zaunbrecher

Tory Lambert

John Boynton (remotely)

Marcia Rasmussen, DPLM Director

Elizabeth Hughes, Town Planner

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Woodward at 8:00 a.m., who stated that the meeting was being recorded. Ms. Woodward informed everyone that Mr. Boynton was participating remotely by telephone.

Minutes from January 12th & 26th & February 9th

Mr. Lambert provided a couple of typographical edits. Ms. Woodward noted an email from Tanya Gailus, 62 Prescott Road requesting edits to statements Ms. Gailus made at the meeting. Ms. Zaunbrecher moved to approve the minutes of January 12th as amended. Mr. Rubinstein seconded with all voting in favor.

Mr. Lambert provided a couple of typographical edits. Mr. Hunter moved to approve the minutes of January 26th as amended. Ms. Lenhart seconded with all voting in favor.

Ms. Zaunbrecher noted she was not at the February 9th meeting and Mr. Lambert provided a couple of typographical edits. Mr. Pappas moved to approve the minutes of February 9th as amended. Ms. Zaunbrecher seconded with all voting in favor.

Check in on Process and Schedule

Ms. Woodward thanked Committee members for their thoughtful and thorough comments. Mr. Kleiman noted comments received after Monday have not been incorporated yet. Ms. Woodward informed members that they will be receiving the full draft later today with instructions on how to submit comments by March 1st.

Mr. Pappas asked Mr. Kleiman if he could forward the comments that have yet to be incorporated. Mr. Kleiman agreed. Ms. Woodward noted that Ms. Rasmussen would be editing the document over the weekend and the draft would be posted to the web page March 5th.

Mr. Boynton asked for clarification that if comments were previously submitted, but are not included, members do not need to resubmit those comments. Ms. Woodward stated that is correct. Mr. Hunter questioned the format that comments should be in. Ms. Woodward clarified.

Review Draft Long Range Plan Sections

Ms. Woodward thanked Mr. Kleiman for preparing a list of discussion topics, noting they are comments and goals received from Committee members. She noted that a discussion of all of the goals may need to happen at a future meeting. Mr. Kleiman thought that some of the goals would be discussed as part of the topic discussion today. Mr. Kleiman gave an overview of how he developed the list of discussion topics.

The Committee discussed Topic 1, Regulations versus Incentives. Mr. Kleiman commented on different examples provided to approach this topic and gave his perspective as a Planning Board member. Ms. Woodward noted comments received by the Historical Commission regarding the difficulties with the Demolition Review Bylaw and how regulation versus incentives might be helpful.

Mr. Boynton commented on the risk that regulations could have, such as the effect of devaluing residential and commercial properties, and suggested looking for ways to spread the cost of implementing regulations. Ms. Woodward summarized Mr. Boynton's comments for the audience in case they had difficulty hearing him.

Mr. Kleiman gave an overview of his memo and commented on how the Plan was trying to recognize the cost burden of various actions, including zoning regulations. Ms. Briggs suggested that if a property owner sees a lower property value due to a regulation, they should see a lower tax burden and the same would be true if a regulation increases a property value. Mr. Kleiman suggested that the Plan needs to include language on the impact of valuation, but it needs to address the role of regulatory and incentive options as a complement to each other.

The Committee discussed the role of tax incentives, adoption of regulations and reviewing these through the community filters. Mr. Pappas commented on Mr. Boynton's memo and the example of devaluation on a property's value.

Ms. Lenhart highlighted comments she has heard from seniors regarding wanting to age in place in their homes and whether there could be more flexibility for having an apartment in their homes. The Committee discussed the zoning options available for accessory apartments by right and the impacts of effectively creating two-family zoning. Ms. Hughes clarified the current allowed use in the Zoning Bylaw. Ms. Zaunbrecher felt that the community needs to recognize where the cost and benefits lie.

Ms. Woodward noted Ms. Zaunbrecher's comments reflected one of the fundamental tensions in the Plan and asked how the Committee might want to address this tension. Mr. Boynton suggested there be a lens that anytime regulations are considered, the Town should look at the potential cost or valuation impact and whether it is being equitably applied and distributed within the community. Ms. Zaunbrecher thought this lens should be used to assess both regulations and incentives. Mr. Kleiman agreed this should be looked at, but noted that it is not always possible to distribute things equitably. The Committee agreed.

Ms. Rasmussen noted Ms. Zaunbrecher's comment regarding identifying the costs, determine how to distribute those costs and evaluating the effectiveness of the regulations or incentive. She believes this last step is important because we don't always achieve what we hope to with those various programs.

Mr. Kleiman thought there is a role for incentives, but there is also a role for regulations because they are often more effective and incentives can complement regulations. Ms. Woodward stated that the Plan, as a decision making document, should be asking for the anticipated value in measuring effectiveness.

The Committee discussed Discussion Topic #2 regarding emphasis on preservation of 20th century housing. Mr. Boynton clarified his comments on the topic and questioned whether promoting these 20th century structures as historic in this topic section is appropriate. Ms. Woodward summarized Mr. Boynton's comments for the audience in case they had difficulty hearing him.

The Committee discussed the style and scale of the 20th neighborhoods, the importance of preserving continuous neighborhoods, and the value in preserving 20th century smaller homes as a method of preserving diversity. The Committee discussed whether it was possible to have both goals and what is the criteria for preservation or not since that can possibly reduce the value of homes. Ms. Briggs noted she was in favor of expanding the historic districts. Mr. Pappas commented on the economics of maintaining some of these structures over the long term. Ms. Woodward stated the Plan needs to be clear on what is trying to be achieved.

Mr. Kleiman commented on individual property rights and the collective right of the neighborhood as a whole, noting there are two different rationales for the role of preservation, regulations and incentives. Ms. Lenhart thought there were also differences in the cost of a renovation done by a developer and a smaller architectural firm and how that affects the cost of the home. The Committee agreed that the Plan needs to look at all of the various solutions.

The Committee discussed Discussion Topic #3 of role of the Town versus private sector in marketing the Town and establishing retail uses.

The Committee discussed the Town taking on this role and how the Town needs to look for way to provide an environment that encourages businesses and historic organization to work together on fostering economic vitality. The Committee discussed the Harvard Square Business Association and Business Improvement District (BID) example and agreed they were worth looking into. Ms. Briggs questioned whether a BID could have some control over tenancy and forming a committee to look at this might be helpful. Mr. Pappas thought a BID would need to include businesses and historic institutions. Mr. Lambert suggested that there needs to be a difference between business development and branding. The Committee agreed there was an opportunity for a BID, a branding campaign and opportunity for mapping.

The Committee discussed Discussion Topic #4 up-zoning to 5-10 acre. Mr. Pappas commented that if this were to happen, the Town needs to be clear on why it is doing it. The Committee agreed that this should be included in the mix as an option. The Committee discussed the option of rezoning Chapter land and thought this should be something to investigate. Mr. Boynton suggested this might be a place to look at an incentive on property taxes if an owner voluntarily limits development potential for single dwelling or cluster developments.

Mr. Kleiman believes that if this idea is something the Town wishes to investigate, then we will need to look at the cost to the Town and how to distribute that cost equitably. The Committee agreed that this idea should be added to the mix.

Ms. Woodward summarized Mr. Boynton's comments for the audience in case they had difficulty hearing him.

Mr. Pappas added that the Committee should also think about the transportation implications with cluster developments. The Committee agreed that the Plan should include these forward looking notions to consider when larger parcels go up for sale.

The Committee discussed Discussion Topic #5 Implication of adding workforce house and the related economics of mansionization.

Ms. Woodward suggested that the Plan not include the word mansionization as she considers it judgmental. Mr. Pappas felt that the issue of workforce housing needs to include ancillary things such as child care. Ms. Woodward questioned whether a more affordable category of housing would mean the workers in town be able to afford to live in town and if businesses wanted to move to Town, would they be able to find workers. The Committee agreed that this topic was directly linked to transportation.

The Committee discussed the issue of creating more workforce housing and the stress that may put on child care needs, the schools and the aging population.

The Committee discussed Discussion Topic #6 on Fiscal Planning. Mr. Kleiman questioned whether the items in the list need to be included. The Co-Chairs asked that members look at the fiscal planning section with these topics in mind and with their respective board or committee.

Mr. Kleiman felt it was important for the Committee to consider the financial implications of the growth options. The Committee agreed. Mr. Boynton thought this is one of those fundamental challenges in the Plan: “you are trying to keep taxes in check, but you want to maintain the current high level of services and add new things.” Ms. Woodward noted the history of the Town budget and the three to four percent increase annually to maintain the Town services. Mr. Kleiman questioned how the Plan should address this fundamental issue.

The Committee discussed the current methods for educating citizens on the fiscal implication of Town Meeting articles, but there also needs to be education of boards, committees and citizens on the overall fiscal impacts to the Town when land is taken off the tax rolls.

Ms. Woodward encouraged members when they get the Draft to look at the goals to make sure they are framed in the best way and look at the glossary to make sure things are included.

Public Comment

Tom Tarpey, 59 Westvale Drive and Finance Committee member, commented that on the topic of encouraging the production of more affordable housing, the language should be changed to reflect the enablement of a net increase of 4 or 5 units of affordable housing.

Tanya Gailus, 62 Prescott Road, offered a different perspective on tension of individual rights and communities benefits.

India Hoeschen-Stein, 167 Elsinore Street, provided some of her experience of living on Elsinore street and the changes in the neighborhood. She disagreed with Mr. Boynton’s comments about mansionization and strongly believes these houses in this neighborhood still offer a value to young families to live or stay in Concord. She provided photos of an example of the demolition of a smaller home. Ms. Woodward noted the challenge of the Committee and the need to develop in the Plan action items for the Town to consider where there is a tension of individual property owner’s rights to sell their property for the highest price.

Ms. Hoeschen-Stein suggested developing an action items to address this issue with an understanding of people's individual property right to make a profit on the selling their property. She questioned how the Plan would look at the impact of these larger homes on energy consumption. Ms. Woodward commented on the sustainability filter on future decision making and educating and encouraging citizens on lowering their carbon footprints. Mr. Kleiman noted that in Section 5 there will be a series of checklists to see if a proposal fits in the sustainability filter.

Janet Benvenuti, 35 Jonas Brown Circle, suggested that BID include neighbors so they are included in the conversations. She thought citizens are not aware of all of the local charitable organizations and the Town should think about ways to educate newcomers on what the total shortfall amount is in social support. Ms. Woodward noted that the Hugh Cargill Trust has asked the Plan to make a prediction on the future emergency tax relief needs in the face of the changing demographics.

Ms. Benvenuti noted that at the February 9th meeting Land Use Section 5 was not available and asked to receive a copy. Ms. Woodward said it was previously posted to the web site, but had been taken down. Ms. Woodward will email that section to her and Ms. Gailus.

Lori Gill Pazaris, 1376 Old Marlboro Road, questioned whether the Committee was going to add the MAGIC vulnerability assessment to the Plan in regards to groundwater withdrawal and structures located in the floodplain. Mr. Kleiman stated that the Plan would include these items.

Mark Gailus, 62 Prescott Road, supports the notion of a net production of affordable housing and commented on the topic of mansionization in reference to Mr. Boynton's memo. Mr. Gailus noted there are a lot of costs associated with property values that are being manipulated by developers so owners think values are going down and they will sell to that developer. Ms. Woodward asked if Mr. Gailus had a suggestion on how to deal with this. Mr. Gailus suggested that more rich data and true information in graphic form can be posted to the Town's web site so the public can see the truth in what is happening in property values.

Ms. Gailus suggested that if a property owner gets a card from a developer with misleading information, the owner can bring it to the attention of the Planning Division who can send a letter to the developer telling them not to do that.

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.

List of documents presented which are on file in the Planning Division Office at 141 Keyes Road, Concord, MA:

- John Boynton's memo – Dynamics of Mansionization 2-20-18
- Discussion Topics for the February 23, 2018 Meeting
- Draft January 12th, January 26th and February 9th Meeting Minutes
- Section 4 – All Section Goals List 2-22-18

Respectfully submitted,

John Boynton, Clerk