



Office of
THE PLANNING BOARD
272 Main Street
Townsend, Massachusetts 01469
978-597-1700 X1722 planning@townsendma.gov

RECEIVED
MAY 23 2023
TOWN OF TOWNSEND
TOWN CLERK

Laura Shifrin, Chair (2025)
Carol Hoffses, Member (2026)

Robert Therrien, Clerk (2024)

Andrew Shepherd, Member (2028)
vacancy, Member (2027)

PLANNING BOARD'S meeting minutes
May 8, 2023, 6:30 PM Selectmen's Chambers

272 Main Street, Townsend Massachusetts also, via ZOOM for convenience

Please note that while an option for remote attendance and/or participation is being provided as a courtesy to the public, the meeting will not be suspended or terminated if technical problems interrupt the virtual broadcast, unless otherwise required to by law. Members of the public with an interest in a specific agenda item should make plans for in-person attendance.

I. PRELIMINARIES – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN:

1.1 Call the meeting to order and roll call.

Chair Laura Shifrin called the meeting to order at 6:34pm. Members present: Robert Therrien (in person), Andrew Shepherd (in person), Laura Shifrin (in person). Absent with notice was Carol Hoffses. Other's present: Planning Board admin, Elizabeth Faxon (remote), Selectman, Charles Sexton-Diranian (in person), Natalie Call, Townsend Housing Authority (in person), Karen Chapman, MRPC (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission) (in person), Jonathan Vos, MRPC (remote), Todd Melanson, Townsend Board of Water Commissioners (in person), David Funaiolo, Zoning Board of Appeals, David Vigeant, Water Superintendent, Courtney Borelli, Hartley Pleshaw, TCAM (Townsend Community Access Media) Host.

1.2 Pledge of Allegiance. Conducted with expressed appreciation for veterans and emergency service first responders.

1.3 Chairman's Additions or Deletions. None noted.

1.4 Welcome Planning Board member elect, Andrew Shepherd. Welcome extended with enthusiasm.

1.5 Reorganization of the Planning Board. R. Therrien made a motion to elect A. Shepherd as Clerk of the Planning Board. L. Shifrin seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion carried. A. Shepherd made a motion to nominate Carol Hoffses as Vice Chair of the Planning Board. R. Terrien seconded the motion. All in favor. The motion carried subject to acceptance. A. Shepherd made a motion for Laura Shifrin to be Chair of the Planning Board. R. Therrien seconded the motion. All in Favor.



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II. APPOINTMENTS AND HEARINGS – VOTES MAY BE TAKEN:

2.1 (6:45) Montachusett Regional Planning Commission - mission of compliance with multifamily zoning districts statute under Section 3A of the Zoning Act (hereafter “MBTA (Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority) Communities”)

Representatives from Montachusett Regional Planning Commission will present the MBTA project scope, services, and timeline in support of Townsend’s required compliance with M.G. L. Chapter 40A Section 3A multi-family zoning as-of-right in Massachusetts Bay Transportation Association (MBTA) communities. These services are provided through a District Local Technical Assistance grant.

Karen Chapman, planning director at MRPC, and Jonathan Vos, principal planner at MRPC attended the meeting. Jonathan presented an overview of the Townsend MBTA communities compliance mission project that MRPC and Townsend would be collaborating on under a DLTA (District Local Technical Assistance) grant. Mr. Vos noted that this is a continuation of the initial work of the Town upon submitting an interim action compliance and action plan in 2022. This multi-family zoning compliance work is required by the State upon passage of Section 3A of the Zoning Act. The requirements are as follows: have a zoning bylaw that provides for at least one district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right. A district of reasonable size shall have a minimum gross density of 15 units/acre and having at least one district. If Townsend does not comply with the requirements, by 2025 it shall not be eligible for funds from the housing choice initiative, the local capital projects fund or the MassWorks infrastructure program.

The State has promulgated guidelines to help MBTA communities ascertain their compliance. The presentation included the specific requirements for Townsend. Mr. Sexton-Diranian stated that Townsend will soon have transit service with a bus route now being established running from Town Hall to Fitchburg intermodal train station. This will facilitate reasonable public access to the downtown and bike lanes and rail trail.

Mr. Therrien requested a community workshop with the assistance of the Board of Selectmen to gather input from all Town departments, Boards and Committees regarding the selection of areas to fit the MBTA high density multi-family zoning requirement. Mr. Vos stated that the majority of the DLTA work will be to work with Townsend to develop the most suitable Zoning District in whatever form that takes for the community to be compliant with the State MBTA communities’ requirements, but also meet the needs of the community without causing too much disruption to the existing character of the Community.



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Examples of Dense Development across Massachusetts were in the presentation. The housing density data of Townsend was presented, as were the next steps which included the following:

- Evaluate parcels and current or future land use in Townsend for sites to include within any MBTA Zone.
- Determine what type of zoning mechanism to use to become MBTA Compliant (Smart Growth, Overlay, Etc.)
- Use compliance model to test proposed parcels and zones.

Chair Shifrin inquired about how the parcels will be selected for compliance model testing. MRPC stated this will be an ongoing conversation between the Town and MRPC to select viable parcels. It was noted that Town owned property is not eligible. Mr. Melanson asked for clarification on the following related to water;

Are there any allowances for communities that are septic and not publicly sewered to reduce the density requirements? If not, he would like to ensure that the Water Department be noticed at all meetings so that the restrictions on distances from municipal wells of septic systems will be considered in all discussions.

Mr. Therrien stated that the burden on the Town is to create the zoning for the multifamily districts and not to create the infrastructure required to service this development. Mr. Melanson responded that selection of the district is important with full consideration of protection of the aquifer and water resources. Chair Shifrin said she intended to work on a viable and feasible bylaw.

Selectman Sexton-Diranian stated that the Housing Production Plan was recently updated with forward thought regarding MBTA communities and Section 3A incorporated. He asked MRPC to review this document and take this under their guide.

Karen Chapman then reviewed the scope of services and timeline. She explained the compliance mapping model used by MRPC to vet parcels which includes auto elimination of environmentally sensitive areas, aquifer protection areas, town owned land open space. She continued, once data is collected, and housing production plan information is reviewed, a community meeting will be held to make decisions on the area for the MBTA community multi-family zoning district(s).

Karen mentioned additional technical assistance to the DLTA, including Mass Housing partnership (MHP), is available. Karen added that once the potential multi-family housing areas are determined, MRPC will draft the zoning bylaw which will be drafted interactively with the Townsend Zoning Bylaws. MRPC will use a model bylaw to draft Townsend's multifamily zoning bylaw with recommendation of creating an overlay district



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form of zoning for this compliance. Karen recommended this zoning because it allows for the option of using the underlying zoning or the overlay criteria.

The affordable housing status of Townsend was briefly discussed. Selectman Sexton-Diranian noted that Townsend has been actively working on the current low inventory for affordable units.

There was a brief discussion on the opportunity cost of abiding by the MBTA legislation. The highlighting of what state grant resources we would no longer have access to and a question more broadly about how much Townsend receives from these sources. No one in the room fully answered the question, but Selectman Sexton-Diranian highlighted that they were valuable resources and how the Town intends to use these sources to fund public transit to the commuter rail in town.

Karen encouraged the Board to contact Citizen Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), which provides support and education for communities, Board members and employees. Karen asked for the community meeting in June, and the Board agreed that the library/senior center would be a good venue. The suggestion was made for a 5:30 pm start. The request was made for Beth Faxon to be copied on correspondence to move information to the Board.

III. BUSINESS: - VOTES MAY BE TAKEN:

3.1 2023 Annual Town meeting & Special Town meeting review. The Planning Board submitted one Warrant article with proposed amendments to zoning Bylaw site plan review special permit which passed at Annual Town meeting.

3.2 ZBA (Zoning Board of Appeals) (Zoning Board of Appeals) referral request 22 Main Street application. Mr. Therrien made a motion to offer the following comment on this mandatory referral "we agree with the Applicant getting a variance for the handicap parking spot located as per the plans and by doing so the Applicant are following the conditions of the Planning Board permit." Chair Shifrin wrote the wording on the form and signed. All in favor. The motion carried.

3.3 Report on MBTA legislation submitted by Robert Therrien, Planning Board member. The Chair extended appreciation for the comprehensive 5-page report submitted to the Planning Board by Mr. Therrien who then added that the information the Board received during tonight's kickoff meeting is an update to his report. He is satisfied that the points he raised in his report are being addressed by MRPC under the DLTA grant.

3.4 Discuss modifications to 145-54.1 Age-restricted development bylaw. Modifications were proposed prior to the Fall town meeting 2022 and the Board decided to postpone moving the proposal forward after significant level of concerns were raised at the second public



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hearing. Mr. Melanson raised concerns regarding the impact of higher density housing on the aquifers. The Chair would like more information and some proposed wording that can be incorporated into the ARD bylaw from the Water Department. The Board would like the Admin. to request the Water Department suggest proper verbiage that may be inserted into the Bylaw to address this concern. Chair Shifrin noted that the checks and balances are in place between the Water Department, Conservation Commission, and the Board of health and if the three cannot be satisfied, then development cannot occur. The Board would like to invite Mr. Melanson back to discuss wording for this proposed amendment. Chair Shifrin stated with the addition of the water department wording, the Board would like the proposed amendments ready for the 2023 Fall Town meeting.

3.5 Recommendations for the Townsend Housing authority regarding proposed zoning bylaw modifications. The draft minutes from the April 10, 2023, Planning Board meeting are in process. Contained in them are bulletized discussion points that can be conveyed to the Housing Authority about the cluster development section of the proposed bylaw modifications packet.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE: - VOTES MAY BE TAKEN

4.1 Review volunteer response forms received. Announce Planning Board vacancies. The Board received a volunteer response form from Michael Virostko for the associate member vacancy. Michael was a seated full member and would now like to continue in the role of associate member. R. Therrien moved to recommend the appointment of Michael Virostko to Associate member. A. Shepherd seconded the motion. A request was made to extend this appointment with a term to expire on June 30, 2024. All in favor. The motion carried.

Another volunteer response form was received for the Planning Board vacancy. The individual has not responded to outreach.

4.2 from Board of Selectmen re: Reorganization of the Board of Selectmen. It was noted that Charles Sexton-Diranian is Chair, Joseph Shank is Vice Chair and Theresa Morse is Clerk.

4.3 from Conservation Commission re: Notice of public hearing - Townsend Wetlands regulations Ch. 150 proposed changes. The Board was notified that the Conservation Commission is amending regulations, and comments are welcome. Admin suggested addition of project eligibility within the stormwater management bylaw in the regulations. Board members were informed that the Conservation Commission is meeting Wednesday May 10, 2023, and this work will be on the agenda.



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4.4 from MRPC: Public comment period Draft FY24 UPWP (Unified Planning Work Program) & Transportation Improvement Plan. Both Plans are published and linked on the Planning Board webpage. These documents are in the public comment period. The Town received notification from MRPC that the project solicited by Townsend jointly with Pepperell and Groton was not selected for inclusion in the FY24 UPWP.

4.5 0 Bayberry Hill Road Parcel ID 17-2-0 removal from Ch 61 B. Information for the Board. The Board of Selectmen acted on this right of first refusal.

4.6 Townsend MART (Montachusett Regional Transit Authority) shuttle update. Mr. Sexton-Diranian updated the status of this project. He said the budget approved at the Town meeting included an allocation for this new transportation service and the first year will be at no charge to the user. The ridership will be researched during the inaugural year, reviewed, and the use cost determined using that data. Mr. Sexton-Diranian is working with the MART marketing team on pushing the information out to the Townspeople, schedule, bust stops, etc. The shuttle will run between Town Hall and Fitchburg Intermodal rail station. A grant is being sought to formalize a bus stop and parking area behind the Town Hall.

4.7 Notices from other towns. Read during the meeting. Two notices from Decision from the Pepperell ZBA for accessory apartments. Chair Shifrin asked if these accessory units are classified as affordable. Admin will research this.

Next meetings were noted as May 22, 2023, June 12, 2023, and June 26, 2023.

R. Therrien motioned to adjourn at 8:32pm. A. Shepherd seconded. All in favor. The motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Faxon
Planning Board Admin.

Approved on: May 22, 2023

Items on file:

1. Townsend MBTA Compliance DLTA presentation by Jonathan Vos, MRPC Principal Planner.
2. MART Bus stop schedule.
3. Report on MBTA legislation by Robert Therrien.
4. ZBA (Zoning Board of Appeals) referral request 22 Main Street application.
5. DLTA Townsend MBTA communities' compliance mission scope of services, timeline, and contract with MRPC.