



PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Tuesday, June 14, 2022 at 6:00 PM

Town Hall - 41 South Main Street Randolph, MA 02368

MINUTES

In accordance with Governor Baker's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20, relating to the 2020 COVID 19 emergency, the Planning Board shall meet remotely to avoid group congregation.

A. Call to Order - Roll Call

Called to order by the chair at 6:06pm

PRESENT

Steve Monteiro
Tony Plizga
Nereyda Santos
Peter Taveira

ABSENT

Alexandra Alexopoulos

B. Chairperson Comments

Chairperson Plizga comments that the Board will be joined by the Historic Commission at 6:30pm for discussion of Master Plan Initiatives

C. Approval of Minutes

1. Minutes of May 24, 2022

Motion made by Taveira, Seconded by Monteiro to accept as presented.

Voting Yea: Monteiro, Plizga, Santos, Taveira

D. Public Speaks

None present

E. Old/Unfinished Business

1. Draft Project Review Checklist (revised)

A brief discussion was held regarding the latest edits to the form with instructions to the Planner to finalize the document.

2. Master Plan Initiatives

Planning Board was joined by members of the Randolph Historic Commission: Henry Cook, Mary West and Lynne Feingold

Chairperson Plizga indicates that a number of objectives on the Comprehensive Master Plan of 2017 are of joint interest to the Planning Board and Historic Commission. As such, it makes sense for the two groups to come together and form a unified response to the items.

Planner provides a brief summary of the development of the Master Plan Implementation Committee, their goals and approach to facilitating the advancement of the Master Plan objectives.

Brief discussion about how the two boards have a positive relationship and interact regarding proposed projects and building renovations. If a structure is greater than 100 years old, it requires a specific review by Historic Commission. Even if it's not, Planning Board typically seeks input from the Commission before approving any modifications to some buildings. An example is the renovation to the former Randolph Savings Bank (now Envision) when the Board sought input from the Commission regarding proposed changes to windows in the structure.

Notation is made that the Planning Board has developed a Project Review Checklist to help guide their decision making. In the checklist is consideration of the age of any existing structure to be renovated as well as the age of any structure abutting the parcel for development. This could help the Board to protect natural, cultural and historic resources as suggested in the Master Plan.

Discussion regarding the Master Plan objective to consider amending zoning ordinances regarding front yard setbacks for new structures if they abut an historic structure that may not have the minimum required setback (25 feet). Chairperson Plizga proposed some amending language to Zoning Ordinance 200-28A to allow for relief of the 25 foot setback to equal that of the historic structure but not less than 10 feet..

Notations are made that there are ordinances regarding a Historic District (The Elms Historic District) which wouldn't be subject to this amendment and that there is a specific Demolition Delay Ordinance that provides a process for review and approval of any modification to a structure greater than 100 years old. These are all separate ordinances and review processes, neither of which involve the Planning Board.

Discussion regarding ensuring that any proposed amendment not create conflict in any other ordinance (zoning or general). Need to review the definition of "historic structure" and everywhere the age of a structure is referenced. Members are specifically interested in reviewing the definition of "structure" to determine if that includes a stone wall for example. Under Mass Historical, a wall could be considered a structure while a building is an enclosed structure for housing people or animals. There is a concurrence to use the word BUILDING in any proposed ordinance rather than STRUCTURE.

Further discussion regarding the identification of buildings subject to the Demolition Delay Ordinance. The ordinance is not in Zoning but is a General Ordinance Chapter 87. The language of the ordinance was reviewed and discussed by members.

Members then reviewed the Master Plan recommendation regarding notification to the Historic Commission of buildings 50 years old or older that are cited under Chapter 83 security and maintenance of abandoned and/or dilapidated buildings. This typically doesn't come through the Planning Board but from the Building Commissioner to the Historic Commission when there is a request to modify an historic building. There is a review process by the Commission to determine the significance of the building and the impact of any modification to it. Chairperson Cooke outlined processes regarding neglect and vandalism to buildings and the involvement of the Historic Commission with the Building Commissioner.

Members took up discussion regarding the Master Plan recommendation to amend ordinances that define historic buildings by changing the age from 100 years to the national standard of 50 years and extend the delay period from 6 to 9 months. Chairperson Cooke provide background information on how demolition delay was introduced to Town Meeting in 1999, the discussion, amendments and resulting ordinance that exists today. Members engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the consequences to the Town, a property owner and/or developer regarding changing the threshold for review and increasing the delay period. Possibilities discussed were to establish a specific year for a threshold (e.g. buildings constructed prior to 1950), using the national standard of buildings 50 years or older, creating a standard using a 75 year threshold and simply not amending the ordinance at all. Chairperson Cooke explained the Historic Commission authority to designate other parcels as significant even if they don't meet an age threshold. The criteria could be based on the significance of architecture, ownership or other historic event that took place in the building (e.g. a president lived there at some point). The Planning Board was advised about the existence of the inventory of historic buildings in Randolph completed about 10 years ago by a Preservation Planner contracted by the Historic Commission. There is a written inventory but also, there is an overlay on the Town's GIS provided by Mass Historic Commission that indicates all relevant properties.

There was consent that a 50 year threshold isn't the right age but there was not a consensus about what threshold is more applicable. The Historic Commission indicated that they'd like to have additional conversation before making a recommendation.

Member Monteiro asked if designating a building as historic affected a property owner's tax rate. Chairperson Cooke provided background on impact on property value but indicates that tax rates are made by the Board of Assessors.

Members engaged in additional discussion regarding changing the delay period, currently 6 months, to 9 months and whether it has a negative effect on development. Chairperson Cooke outlined the Historic Commission's approach to working with owners/developers as early on in the process as possible and their history of reviews and decisions over the past few years.

There was discussion about the inclusion of historic resources on the Town's GIS which has been partly completed by Mass Historic Commission. Additional items could be added when the Town hires a GIS Coordinator.

The Master Plan also references using historic properties for economic redevelopment and encouraging the use of historic rehabilitation tax credits and the circuit rider program. This doesn't seem to impact the Planning Board so not taken up for review.

There was discussion about the presence of the Historic Commission and related information on the Town's website. The Planner indicates that the Town's website is being updated this summer and that she would gladly assist the Commission in updating their page.

Member Taveira inquired if there were any other topics, not on the Master Plan, that the Historic Commission thinks should be included? Things such as wayside markers, monuments, etc. A brief discussion ensued and concluded that these efforts may be worthwhile and taken up by the Historic Commission, Planning Board or other committee but cannot be made a part of the Master Plan itself.

Historic Commission and Planning Board members thanked each other for the joint meeting and Historic Commission members adjourned.

F. New Business

G. Staff Report

Letters were sent out to subdividers requesting updates on all projects.

Reached out to Mexicali Grill and the property owner about the requirement to repaint ALL of the areas previously painted blue.

The preliminary subdivision on Canton Street provided some revised plans and I provided them to Fire for review in advance of the next meeting before the Board.

The project at 647 North Main Street is working on the revisions as requested by the Board.

Devine/Lyons School project may come before the Board sometime in the summer regarding the Dow Street layout and whether the school project team wishes to abandon it or complete it for the project. There are property owners with rights in the way since it was laid out and recorded; it can not simply be abandoned by a vote of the Planning Board without consent of those with rights in the way.

The FY23 budget was recently approved and included a salary line item for a new position of GIS coordinator. That person would have the knowledge and skills to manage the online maps and alleviate Planning of the responsibility.

H. Board Comments

I. Adjournment

Notification of Upcoming Meeting Dates

Adjourned at 7:43pm