

TOWN OF WENHAM

Planning Board Meeting of January 14, 2021

Wenham Town Hall, 138 Main Street

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Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. Chapter 30 A, §§18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk delivered to all Board members, a meeting of the Planning Board was held on Thursday January 14, 2021 at 7:30 pm. *Due to the COVID19 Virus pandemic & restrictions concerning in-person gatherings ordered by the Governor, this meeting took place virtually on Zoom. The chair identified the meeting was being recorded and those present.*

The Planning Board oversees the Rules & Regulations governing the subdivision of land, site plan review, and special permits according to the Wenham Zoning By-Law and Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, §81. The Board consists of five elected members, with one member to be elected each year at the Annual Town Meeting: A. Weeks (2021); V. Rogers (2022);

D. Pasquarello (2023); P. Clay (2024); D. Anderson (2025)

Mr. Clay is the Planning Board representative to the Community Preservation Committee.

Call to order - *With a quorum present, Ms. Weeks called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.*

Board members present: Ann Weeks, Chair; Virginia Rogers, Vice Chair; David Anderson; Peter Clay; Dan Pasquarello

Also present: Margaret Hoffman, Planning Coordinator; Catherine Tinsley, Recording Secretary

- Discuss Master Plan project and schedule public information session. Update on recent budget hearing.

Ms. Hoffman reported that the Master Plan was discussed at the Finance Committee/Board of Selectmen budget meeting Saturday January 9 and received positive feedback. Ms. Weeks stressed the importance for Wenham to have a Master Plan and observed that community outreach was an important part of the process going forward. Ms. Weeks spoke on the Master Plan process as an interactive one, engaging the community. The initial presentation on the Master Plan will cover such topics as the reason for a Master Plan, what is involved, what a Master Plan addresses, and highlights of the 1960 Master Plan so residents are informed when it is presented at Town Meeting for funding. Informational sessions will be planned prior to the May 1 Town Meeting to keep residents updated and allow for input.

If the funding is approved, a subcommittee would be selected to begin the process of hiring a consultant.

A general discussion followed regarding the different aspects of a Master Plan, how they may pertain to Wenham, and the potential impact. It was noted that studies in specific areas i.e. Boulder Lane, already exist and some boards and committees have recently updated action plans.

A public forum was scheduled for February 25. The Board will review the PowerPoint presentation for the forum at their February 11 meeting.

- Update on Planning Grant and next steps for Regulation Update project. Determine possible liaison for project.

The Rules & Regulation need to be updated and addressed immediately. Ms. Hoffman applied for, and received, a \$6,000 grant for this project. Included in the update will be best practices, proactive climate resiliency, and that regulations are cohesive. The Rules & Regulations will be reviewed again during the development of a Master Plan.

To avoid confusion about the Master Plan and Rules & Regulation project, both will be introduced collectively and explained how they work in partnership.

Ms. Hoffman will work with the Finance Director to get the Request for Proposal ready for next week. It is hoped to have a consultant in place by April.

Ms. Weeks and Mr. Clay volunteered to be the lead on the regulations update with Ms. Hoffman. This includes the Subdivision Rules Regulations, last updated in 1984, which will be clarified to avoid confusion and revised to give guidance to permitting boards and easily understood by the public.

- Update on Town Hall closing to public except by appointment.

Ms. Hoffman reported that the town hall is closed to the public except by appointment which can be accessed through a portal on the town's web site.

- Discuss current Legislation H5250

Bill H5250 is on the Governor's desk. If the Governor signs H5250, there are two parts of the bill that may impact Wenham directly. This is a bill to increase economic development and housing in Massachusetts.

The bill will allow town meeting to pass zoning amendments and certain housing provisions by majority vote rather than the current two-third vote.

With a train station on the town line of Hamilton & Wenham, the towns are both considered “MBTA” communities. If the bill is passed, all MBTA communities would be required to adopt a zoning district permitting multi-family housing “by right” within a half mile of the train station. Ms. Hoffman referenced the town map to show the scope of this half mile area. A general discussion followed.

- Meeting Minutes – December 10, 2020

*Vote: The Board members voted unanimously by roll call to accept the minutes of December 10, 2020 as edited.*

- Other matters, as may not have been reasonably anticipated by the Chair (Discussion Only)
- Calendar: Planning Board meeting - February 11, 2021  
Planning Board public forum - February 25, 2021
- Adjournment – *The Board members voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn at 8:50pm.*

*Respectfully Submitted By  
Catherine Tinsley  
1.14.2021*