

Town of Sharon Planning Board

Minutes 2/29/24

Joint Meeting with the Select Board

These minutes are from the Select Board 2/29/24 Meeting

Meeting held via ZOOM

Planning Board Members

Shannon McLaughlin, Chair absent	Pasqualino Pannone
Xander Shapiro, Vice Chair	Peter O’Cain, Town Engineer
Rob Maidman, Secretary	Sonal Pai
David Blaszkowsky	

The meeting of the Sharon Select Board was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Kiana Pierre-Louis remotely via Zoom. Select Board members Emily Smith-Lee and Hanna Switekowski were in attendance as was Town Administrator, Frederic Turkington. The meeting commenced with recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment

Ms. Pierre-Louis welcomed the members of the Planning Board and Finance Committee and invited them to call their meetings to order. All three Chairs have agreed that it is appropriate to hold a public comment period and yielded the floor to any member of the public in attendance. It was requested that comments be limited to two minutes. Judy Crosby encouraged members of the three Boards to help clarify this zoning article to Sharon residents, including the risk of potentially losing more than \$12 million dollars in funding from Chapter 70, etc. if not approved at Annual Town Meeting. Richard Kramer offered his opinion that it is inappropriate to limit public comment.

Collaboration between Boards

The Select Board and Planning Board discussed ways in which they could increase collaboration and communication with respect to development projects such as liaison representation and circulating relevant agendas. The Finance Committee members noted their ongoing efforts to improve communication with the School Committee and other Town Boards.

Master plan implementation

The Planning Board advised that the Master Plan is a living document which should be reviewed every five years to ensure changes in trends and technology are adequately codified. This is meant as a guide and, as the Towns needs are fluid, this should be an evolving method of mapping the community’s priorities and goals.

Updates on MBTA Zoning by-law

The state passed a law in 2020 stating that MBTA communities have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted. Planning Board members discussed that updates to the MBTA zoning district for Sharon has been worked on for many months, and they are now in the stage where education is being done to residents to give a fuller understanding of the potential impacts to the Town. Planning Board recently held an open meeting and two additional informational meetings are scheduled for Tuesday and Thursday. This has been a controversial topic, and thorough debates are taking place. Public input is crucial. Sonal Pai, Planning / Engineering Specialist, gave a presentation on the draft zoning changes needed to comply with this new law, including showing various maps indicating the different areas of the potential zoning around the Sharon MBTA station, Business District A, Subdistrict D, etc. This district is not currently feasible for construction based on the types of land in the area and adjoining properties. Finance Committee members discussed the importance of the financial impact this could have on the Town if this article is voted down and funding is cut, and that this should be outlined clearly in the warrant article writeup. These boards agree they want to be following the Governor's MBTA zoning requirement but understand that residents will have questions. Each lot built would need to meet septic area requirements, etc. The purpose of Sharon Select Board Meeting Minutes of February 29, 2024 Page 2 of 2 the law is to have more housing within a short distance of the MBTA station – however, building new lots is not necessarily feasible currently. Finance Committee members encourage Boards to be prepared to answer in-depth questions at the public hearing on March 21, as was done at the water treatment facility meeting. When writing up the warrant article, the need for compliance should be clearly stated as should the financial implications of the Town's failure to comply.

Proposed changes to Business District A

There are proposed amendments to Post Office Square (Business District A). Currently there is conflicting language, and the upper limit for square footage development should be expanded from 5,000 for development. The new language will also state that the Planning Board will be given sole authority for site planning and permitting, as having both the Planning Board and Zoning Board involvement is too time consuming. Multifamily and commercial zoning will be added to the tables. Finance Committee members encouraged the Planning Board to include the Historical Commission because they have two lots within District A.

Adjourn MOTION: To adjourn the meeting at 7:43 pm. (Smith-Lee – Switekowski) Switekowski: AYE
Smith-Lee: AYE Pierre-Louis: AYE 3-0 PASSES