

Hamilton Planning Board

2015 Annual Report

Members of the Hamilton Planning Board in 2015 included Jeffrey Melick, Chairman; Robert McKean, Clerk (prior to April elections); Peter Clark; Edwin Howard; Rick Mitchell; Brian Stein, Clerk (after April elections); Claudia Woods; and Matthew Tobyne, Associate Member (prior to April elections who became a full member afterward); Christopher LaPointe, Associate Member (who resigned in May); Richard Boroff, Associate Member; and Bill Olson, Associate Member.

The mission of the Hamilton Planning Board is to engage in land use management and planning on behalf of the Town. This includes administering portions of the Zoning By-Laws and Subdivision Control Laws. The Board is responsible for updating the Town Master Plan and for reviewing proposed Zoning By-Laws intended to meet the demands of the Town and its growth patterns.

Throughout 2015 Planning & Inspections Director, Patrick Reffett assisted the Planning Board. He started employment with the Town in the newly created position early in November, 2014.

During 2015 the Hamilton Planning Board held twenty-four (24) regular meetings, one (1) executive session and one (1) site visit (Canter Brook) during the calendar year.

Regulatory Actions by the Hamilton Planning Board in 2015

Regulatory applications and reviews include Site Plan Review for advisory opinions, Approval Not Required (ANR) applications, Subdivisions and Special Permits.

Site Plan Reviews - The Planning Board provided input to the Zoning Board of Appeals relative to five (5) Site Plan Reviews and provided official Planning Board recommendations relative to each application. Projects included:

1. 17 Bay Road – T&M Landscaping;
2. 545 Bay Road – Institution for Savings Bank;
3. 16 Bay Road - Black Cow Restaurant;
4. Patton Park – Pool Project;
5. 587 Bay Road - Allsopp Mixed Use Project.

Subdivision Review – A Definitive Subdivision Plan Application was received and considered by the Planning Board for 540-568 Bay Road. After much refinement and numerous appearances before the Board and abutters, the project was withdrawn.

Form A - Approval Not Required (ANR) Reviews – The Planning Board provided five (5) Form A – ANR Reviews during 2015. Properties included:

1. 136 Gardner St;
2. 568 Bay Road;
3. 136 Gardner (again);
4. 650 Asbury Street;
5. 650 Asbury Street (again).

Pre-Application Conferences – The Planning Board conducted two such conferences during 2015 including:

1. 354 Highland Street (Canter Brook);
2. 434 Asbury Street (Possible Cell Tower).

Special Permit Applications – Two projects pursued Special Permit Applications with the Planning Board during 2015. Both projects had associated Stormwater Management Special Permit applications.

These include:

1. Patton Homestead (650 Asbury Road);
2. Canter Brook (354 Highland Street).

Planning Board Legislative Actions

The Planning Board undertook numerous legislative efforts during the calendar year including numerous articles which were presented at the 2015 Annual Town Meeting. Work on ATM articles began in the late fall of 2014. Articles sponsored by the Planning Board included clarification as to the types of units that can be built in senior housing projects including single, double, triple, four unit and multi-family residential structures. The amendment passed at ATM. The Board sponsored a Town Bylaw to limit Planning Board member terms to three (3) years rather than five to allow for greater transparency and responsiveness to the voters. The article passed.

The Planning Board supported/sponsored a modification to the Zoning Bylaw proposing a shift of responsibility for Site Plan Review (SPR) from the Zoning Board of Appeals to the Planning Board pursuant to the recommendation of the Town Master Plan. The proposed change was originally initiated by a Citizens Petition filed with the Town Clerk and signed by 130 town residents. Afterward the proposal was refined as an article sponsored by the Planning Board. The proposed article did not pass, quite possibly due to the authorization of the Article concerning the revision of the Bylaws mentioned below..

Additionally the Planning Board requested that Town Meeting authorize the provision of \$50,000 to be used to revise the Hamilton Zoning Bylaw. The funding request passed and a Steering Committee was formed in the summer of 2015 by the Town Manager. A consultant was hired and much work has taken place recommending revisions to the Hamilton Zoning Bylaw. The Steering Committee is composed of the Planning Board Chairman, ZBA Chairman, Hamilton Development Corporation Chairman, a member of the Conservation Commission, the Town Manager and the Director of Planning & Inspections. The Committee seeks to have a revised zoning bylaw before Town Meeting in the spring of 2016. Public hearings before the Planning Board will be required on any zoning changes.

Recognizing that cell phone service in Hamilton is quite limited, the Planning & Inspections Director prepared recommended changes to the Zoning Bylaw and presented them to the Planning Board which strongly supported the changes and fully recognized the need for expanded service. Afterward Town Meeting endorsed the requested changes.

Another 2015 ATM article sponsored by the Planning Board was to change the GPOD Zoning District map to be consistent with Zone II changes which had been made the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. The map change passed.

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a member of the Conservation Commission, the Town Manager and the Director of Planning & Inspections. The Committee seeks to have a revised zoning bylaw before Town Meeting in the spring of 2016. Public hearings will be required on any zoning changes.

Planning Initiatives and Discussions

Several items arose during 2015 that necessitated Planning Boards involvement including input in Town policy, support for open space acquisition and board business. The Board considered a demolition delay bylaw and potentially restructuring the accessory apartment by law. The Board also discussed possible development implications with representatives of a large land owner regarding development of the subject property. The Board provided comment upon a Land Acquisition Policy which was generated by the Selectmen. The Planning Board was active in supporting acquisition of the Sagamore Hill property for town open space.

The Board worked on a Code of Conduct and arrived at the final version in late 2015.