

Hamilton Planning Board
Meeting Minutes
January 3, 2023
Memorial Room, Town Hall
577 Bay Rd., Hamilton, MA

Members Present: Marnie Crouch, Chair, Jonathan Poore, Bill Wheaton, Emil Dahlquist, Beth Herr, Rick Mitchell, Richard Boroff, Pat Norton

On video: Mr. Ken Barnes
Present: Patrick Reffett

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Reference Materials:

1. Review and Discussion of Potential Amendments to Chapter XXIX, Stormwater Management Town Bylaw

The chair called this discussion out of order to report that Board members, including the chair, met with Alex Weisheit of KP Law, to discuss the Board's concerns about the inadequacies of the Town's Bylaw as well as potential concomitant changes to the regulations if changes are made to the town by law. Mr. Weisheit indicated he has not completed his analysis of what changes might be necessary. He will present to the Board on February 7th and recommend to us some amendments that he thinks will address the concerns that the Board has raised.

2. Discussion of Town Pursuit of Strategic Plan for Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary.

Report from Board member/liaison to Working Group. Given the topography, the current uses, and building types on the seminary property, David Gamble and Barry Abramson divided the property into three sections. Consensus among the working group is that the area now identified as the upper section lends itself more to commercial development. The middle section has potential for new development. The lower section already has residential buildings so these could be converted into market rate or market rate with some affordable component. The working group discussed, with John Witten, using the commercial overlay from Willow Street as a template. David Gamble and Barry Abramson will present at the Board's next meeting on the 17th and will come with a much more refined map with more detail and clarity in terms of potential uses. They will also discuss Development Agreements and present a much clearer description of an overlay district, dividing it by zone and then within those zones what would be relevant in terms of a By Right Use, a Site Plan Use, and a Special Permit Use.

Presentation of Goals, Objectives and Principles. Board member stressed that the presentation was informational only and reflects Board discussions and input from abutters and consultants. The presentation begins the process of developing community goals and principles which are critical for decision making. Design principles were discussed in terms of what is valued on the

site, what needs to be preserved and protected, what might be modified or changed for a different purpose, what might be restricted, and what added features might need to be considered. Slide presentation included topographical and other maps of the property. Embedded in the discussion was the purpose of the site, potential uses, functionality, and performance. Presentation also offered regulatory plans from other states and municipalities as samples for the work of the Planning Board in considering the Overlay District Bylaw. The Board heard from Mr. Barnes who thanked Board members for their hard work and involvement and noted the tremendous esprit de corps between the seminary and the town. He stated that the desire is to find a win-win solution that maximizes the value of the property while respecting the interests of the town and the abutters. Mr. Barnes stated that the timeline is tight but achievable.

The Board agreed that prior to their next meeting, Board members will note what they value in this site, identifying areas at the perimeter of the property as well as within the property boundaries to be protected such as the historic landscape, historic buildings, and mature trees. Also to be considered are the environmental and aesthetic components of the site as this relates to walkability and public access.

A motion was made to continue Board review and discussion of Bylaw provisions with respect to Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary to January 10th at 6:00 PM. Motion was approved unanimously. Robin Stein will attend this meeting.

3. Board business

Minutes. The chair stated she had prepared minutes for April 5th, April 21st, and May 3rd. Minutes do need to be prepared and should be prioritized for the May 17th and the June 12th meetings. The board has minutes for the meetings on February 15th, June 7th, June 28th, and August 16th. The chair asked for volunteers to review these minutes along with the video records of the meetings to ensure accuracy. Board members volunteered and the chair requested that these be reviewed for approval at the February 7th meeting.

MBTA Communities. The state has approved our interim action plan for MBTA's community zoning and we would need to have zoning in place by the end of 2024. Next step is to develop a proposal for the Planning Board and the Town to evaluate, then it moves on to public hearings and then a Town Meeting for approval. Mr. Reffett stated that he intends to pursue a grant to hire a consultant to work with the Town to advance future steps of the planning phase.

Motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved unanimously. Meeting was adjourned at 10:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted as approved at the 07-25-2023 meeting.

Marnie Crouch