

*Minutes approved by the Planning & Zoning Board on November 21, 2011 and posted with the Town Clerk on November 29, 2011.*



Town of Easton  
PLANNING & ZONING BOARD

Minutes  
October 24, 2011

The Easton Planning & Zoning Board held a business meeting on Monday, October 24, 2011 at Easton Town Hall, Board of Selectmen's Office, 136 Elm Street, North Easton, Massachusetts.

Present: Gregory Strange, Chair; Christine Santoro, Vice-Chair/Clerk; Peter Deschenes; Dan Smith; Wayne Benson, Jr.; John Varella, Alternate; Brad Washburn, Planning Director; and Historic Commission members: Timothy Hurley, John Ventresco, Paul Fitzpatrick, and Melanie Deware, Chair

Absent:

Greg Strange called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARING**

409/433 DEPOT ST "BEECH TREE ESTATES"

Definitive Subdivision / Open Space Residential Development (#10-24)

Applicant: Dino Susi; Attorney: Richard Staiti; Engineer: David Crispin, BSC Group

Applicant requested continuance of this hearing to November 21, 2011.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Release of Lot 8 – Summerfield Acres

Present: Attorney David Marsan

The Summerfield Acres subdivision was approved in the mid-1990's and divided into eight lots. Seven of the lots were buildable and one small lot was to be conveyed to the property owner at 56 Dean Street adjacent to and outside of the subdivision. The property owner recently discovered that the small lot was never conveyed. Christine Santoro motioned to approve the Form F as presented. John Varella seconded. Motion passes 6-0-0. Christine Santoro, Greg Strange, Wayne Benson, Jr., Peter Deschenes, Dan Smith, and John Varella signed the "Form F: Certificate of Performance (Covenant of Approval Release)" dated October 24, 2011. Mary Southworth notarized the Planning Board signatures.

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Subcommittee Update

The Subcommittee has attempted to meet but with scheduling conflicts has been unable to meet with a quorum. Chair Greg Strange recommended handling all discussions in regular Planning & Zoning Board meetings. Greg Strange will email board members an outline of the discussion items:

Six short term goals:

- Discussion of sign bylaw
- Address home business bylaw
- Site lighting
- Planned business development
- Review flexible developments
- Scenic roads bylaw

Longer term goals / bylaws:

- Look into new residential zones
- Look into new business zones
- Review Special Permit responsibilities w/Zoning Board of Appeals
- Rework the structure / presentation of entire Zoning bylaw

Master Plan discussion

Brad Washburn announced that Easton applied to the U.S. Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Sustainable Communities grant program for \$150K in funding to update the Town's Master Plan, but Easton did not receive the funding. This is a competitive grant (300 applied and 30 received funding). HUD has an annual grant cycle and Easton will plan to submit an application again next year. Brad Washburn recommends proceeding with work on updating the master plan by setting up a meeting to discuss scope, cost, and schedule process.

Unfinished Streets follow up

Randi Graham provided an update on unfinished streets. There are approximately 30 outstanding surety accounts for streets where construction was started but never completed. Brad Washburn, Pam Almeida, and Randi Graham are addressing the list starting with the oldest projects first. Streets are both private and public ways. Staff will contact developers to see if they intend to finish the streets, and if they don't then the board will need to look into taking the surety to cover the cost of having the streets completed. Stephanie Danielson will be updating the street inspection reports and road cost estimates to reflect current costs. Developers who intend to finish their roads will be invited to a Planning & Zoning Board meeting to provide an update. Staff will send board members a copy of the unfinished street list.

Meeting Minutes

Peter Deschenes motioned to approve the Planning & Zoning Board meeting minutes from October 3, 2011. Christine Santoro seconded. Motion passes 5-0-1. Wayne Benson abstains as he did not attend that meeting.

Capital Planning Committee

Wayne Benson motioned for Christine Santoro to continue to represent the Planning & Zoning Board at Capital Planning Committee meetings. Dan Smith seconded. Motion passes 6-0-0.

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Chair report

Chair Greg Strange discussed the benefits of interaction among the Town's boards, which included better planning and better design. Strange, Washburn, Harrington, and Deware recently met to discuss process. An initial meeting with the Town's Committees' Chairs will likely take place in early January 2012 to set up a structure for regular semi-annual meetings.

Christine Santoro inquired about the 2012 Planning & Zoning Board calendar. Randi Graham will follow-up with Jeremy Gillis who puts the calendar together for all board meetings.

Greg Strange called a meeting break at 6:50pm. Meeting resumed at 7:00pm.

**Joint Meeting with Historical Commission**

Melanie Deware called the Historical Commission meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Greg Strange introduced the Historical Commission to the Planning & Zoning Board members. The intent of the joint meeting is to discuss committee collaboration opportunities, the implementation of existing bylaws and potential bylaw revisions. Tonight Strange wishes to address three areas where orders of business overlap between the two boards: the Scenic Road Bylaw, the Sign Bylaw, and the Commercial Design Review Committee.

Scenic Road Regulations

The Scenic Road Regulations (see Planning & Zoning document "Administrative Rules & Regulations" Section 8) protect trees and stone walls along roads designated as "scenic." A Scenic Road may be recommended by the Planning and Zoning Board, the Historic Commission, or the Conservation Commission. Currently there are no roads in Easton with this designation. The wording of the regulation states that a Scenic Road Layout plan must be "prepared by a registered engineer or land surveyor," which can be an expensive process particularly if designating a significantly long stretch of road. It was discussed whether Town employees and/or volunteers could collect initial data for a Scenic Road Layout Plan, and then have the data reviewed by an engineer. Ms. Deware noted that the Scenic Road Bylaw is the only way to protect the Town's stone walls. Deware suggested starting with the designated historic districts (i.e. Jenny Lind Street, Highland to Bay Road, Elm Street) and using the information gathered in the Historic Surveys. She also mentioned potential funding from matching Planning grants through the Massachusetts Historic Commission. Wayne Benson suggested proposing portions of streets that would be considered significant. Ventresco suggested seeing if fencing design could be regulated in designated Scenic Road areas. It was suggested to contact Taunton for data on Bay Road and the Town of Sharon to see how they designated their Scenic Roads (i.e. did they use a certified plot plan and how did they identify criteria for selection). Brad Washburn and Tim Harrigan will contact the Planner for the Town of Sharon and report back to both committees. It was asked if the board could amend the bylaw to allow the Planning Board to have a say in certification. Brad Washburn will research whether other towns with designated Scenic Roads have all used certified plans. The Planning & Zoning Board and the Historical Commission, will each draft a list of potential streets and roadways and then compare their lists. Enforcement is addressed in Section 8.7 of the regulation. It was agreed that there should be an educational component, that landowners should receive notification letters regarding significant trees or stonewalls on their property prior to designation.

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Sign Bylaw

Prior to May 2011 Town Meeting there was a ban on internally illuminated signs. The current bylaw states signs must be externally illuminated and internally illuminated signs can be allowed at the discretion of the Planning & Zoning Board. Greg Strange recommends drafting a bylaw needs that is sensitive to pre-existing internally illuminated signs that can be replaced and established plazas where most businesses have internally illuminated signs and the restriction would negatively affect new businesses and the uniformity of the lighting of the plaza (i.e. Hannaford's Plaza and Roche Brothers). It was suggested to designate certain areas in Easton to have the exclusion on internally illuminated signs and grandfather other areas to allow for it. Ms. Deware suggested basing the allowance on the size of the property (i.e. large shopping plazas). The group discussed creating a Sign Committee versus having a Sign Handbook in lieu of (or with) a committee. Planning & Zoning Board will include Historical Commission in review of applications for internally illuminated signs.

Commercial Design Review Committee

Greg Strange suggested establishing a Commercial Design Review Committee to start business owners thinking about architecture with the construction of new buildings in order to address planning and the Town's history. Wayne Benson added that discussing architecture and having a review committee can only improve construction projects and does not necessarily have to increase project cost. Strange noted that the Town of Sharon amended their bylaws on sign design and building façade in anticipation of the mixed use development in Sharon next to I-95. Strange asserted that a Commercial Design Review Committee would benefit both the Town and the businesses and adds to property values and the value of the Town.

**CONTINUED AMENDED SITE PLAN REVIEW**

104 MAIN STREET, File #08-27

Present: Douglas Cardinale, Applicant / Owner

Mr. Cardinale explained that in his previously submitted plan the architect had made an error in drawing the handicap accessible ramp. Mr. Cardinale described the ramp and the revised plan he submitted to the Planning Department office last week. He also brought a sample brick which he had shown to the Historical Commission. Planning Director Brad Washburn noted that the Planning & Zoning Board cannot sign the architectural plan that Mr. Cardinale submitted, as it does not show all the details required for modified Site Plan approval. The Planning & Zoning Board can approve the plan in concept but Mr. Cardinale still needs to submit a formal Site Plan with the required information for approval and signature by the Planning & Zoning Board. The Historical Commission would like to see a plan showing the ramp with relation to the street. Mr. Cardinale confirmed that he needs a sign permit to post a sign in front of his building. The Historic Commission is working with the Historical Society to put plaques on buildings of historical significance. Mr. Cardinale stated he will submit a formal site plan to Brad Washburn by the end of the week.

**ADJOURN**

Wayne Benson motioned to adjourn at 8:40pm. Christine Santoro seconded. Motion passes 6-0-0.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted by Randi L. Graham, Recording Secretary.