



TOWN OF EASTON
Planning & Zoning Board
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MAC

Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, January 18, 2011

Present: Christine Santoro, Chair; Gregory Strange; Peter Deschenes; Dan Smith; Wayne Benson, Jr.; Brad Washburn, Planning Director; Stephanie Danielson, Land Use Agent

Absent: Walter Johnson, Clerk

Christine Santoro called the Subcommittee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. (Peter Deschenes joined the meeting at 7:12pm.)

ZONING BYLAW DISCUSSION

Building Height in a Residential Zone

Tonight's Subcommittee meeting will address building height and scale in Easton's residential neighborhoods. The Rt. 138 commercial center overlay will be addressed at a later date. Small homes are being torn down and replaced with bigger and taller houses, some of which are out-of-scale with their neighborhood. The current bylaw addressing building height in Easton is based on average roof height and allows new houses to be built closer to the road because of the existing rules addressing setbacks. Westwood, Canton, and Sharon have begun to implement dynamic zoning where the size of the house is limited by proximity to property lines. The subcommittee discussed various residential areas in Easton and associated lot sizes for residential zoning. The current bylaw states one residential zoning height and setback, which does not make sense given the diversity of Easton's neighborhoods in terms of architecture, age of homes, scale, and lot size. Under the existing Bylaw, builders are able to raise the grade of a lot and then build the house to the maximum height which can put the roofline out-of-scale with the rest of the neighborhood. All agreed that maximum roof height should be measured from pre-existing grade. One suggestion was to agree on a primary roof height and then give credits toward increasing that height based on greater setbacks. Gregory Strange shared zoning bylaws from Westwood, Mansfield, and Canton. Discussion ensued around implementation of an amended bylaw and what currently works and does not work. It was suggested to create different residential zones in Easton. A site walk was proposed to see diverse scenarios. The committee scheduled a site walk for Saturday, January 29, 2011 at 10am.

Accessory Dwelling Units

Many applications for conversion of a one-family dwelling to a two-family dwelling have come before the Planning & Zoning Board in the form of Requests for Comment from the Zoning Board of Appeals because this use is not permitted in the residential district. The Planning & Zoning board would like to address this type of dwelling in its Bylaws. Applicants are seeking to modify their home with an addition for in-laws quarters. A proposed zoning bylaw

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amendment addressing Accessory Dwelling Units was planned to go before the last Town Meeting but it was denied by the Planning & Zoning Board because it would have applied to any home in Easton. It was agreed to allow accessory dwelling units through Special Permit or deed restriction. The Subcommittee reviewed similar bylaws in Westwood, Mansfield and Canton which include restrictions such as home must be single-family residence, owner occupied, size restrictions on the addition, and requirements that resident of ADU must be a family member. It was suggested to preface the bylaw with an introductory paragraph stating intent for in-law / family member occupant.

Planning Director Brad Washburn will draft language for the aforementioned proposed Zoning Bylaw amendments. The next Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for January 31, 2011 after the regularly scheduled Planning & Zoning Board meeting. The Subcommittee will address commercial signage in Easton. Stephanie Danielson suggested soliciting input from the Historical Commission. It was suggested to have local business owners represented. Brad Washburn will see if the consultant working on the Rt. 138 commercial center can join the meeting to discuss signage.

Gregory Strange motioned to adjourn the Subcommittee meeting at 8:45pm. Peter Deschenes seconded. Motion passes 4-0-0.

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