



Town of Reading

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Community Planning and Development Commission

CPDC MINUTES

Meeting Dated: July 13, 2009

Location: Selectmen's Meeting Room, Town Hall

Time: 7:30 PM

Members Present: David Tuttle (DT), Chairman; Nicholas Safina (NS), Secretary; John Weston (JW), and Joseph Patterson (JP)

Members Absent: Clair Paradiso (CP)

Associate Members Present: George Katsoufis (GK)

Also Present:

Board of Selectmen: Ben Tafoya, Chairman; James Bonazoli, Vice Chairman; Secretary; Camille Anthony; Richard Schubert; Stephen Goldy.

Town Staff: Peter Hechenbleikner, Town Manager; Carol Kowalski (CK), Town Planner; Abigail McCabe (AM), Staff Planner; Michael Schloth, Recording Secretary.

Housing Partners, Inc.: Eleanor White; Charles Eisenberg.

Virginia Adams, 59 Azalea Circle
Lynn Arena, 26 Francis Drive
Barbara Argonish, 895 Main Street
Curtis Barnes, 11 Bancroft Avenue
Donnan Barnes, 11 Bancroft Avenue
Ralph & Adele Blunt, 22 Linden Street
Mark Boucher, 109 Washington Street
The Cooks, 94 Salem Street
Nancy Cullen, 58 Francis Drive
Peter Doucette, 108 Washington Street
Ed & Pat Driscoll, 105 Washington Street
Russ Graham, Economic Development
Committee, 68 Maple Ridge Road
Michael Harris, Office of Rep. Brad Jones
Kim Honetschlager, 51 Mill Street
Kim Hubbard, 43 Washington Street
Rob Hubbard, 43 Washington Street

Naomi Kaufman, 64 Woburn Street
Tom MacDonald, 25 Prescott Street
David McDonald, 11 Arlington Street
Joseph McDonald, 11 Arlington Street
David O'Sullivan, 18 Thorndike Street
Jim Queeny, 28 Mt. Vernon Street
Laurie Reilly, 109 Washington Street
Jack Russell, 91 Spruce Road
Peg Russell, 91 Spruce Road
Karen Sanborn, 54 Mt. Vernon Street
Rick Schaffer, 67 Woburn Street
Mary Sewall, 17 Highland Street
David Talbot, 75 Linden Street
Jeanne Thomases, 21 Arlington Street
Christopher Vaccaro, 57 Woburn Street
Ann Ward, 14 Bancroft Avenue

There being a quorum of the Board of Selectmen, Chairman Ben Tafoya called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

There being a quorum of the CPDC, Chairman Nick Safina called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

Public Comments

There were no comments from the public.

Public Hearing: Downtown Smart Growth (40R) Overlay District By-law

This was a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen because the Board of Selectmen must approve the submission of the Smart Growth (40R) application including the by-law language to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The DHCD accepts 40R applications at the end of each month only. The CPDC expects to submit the 40R application at the end of July 2009.

DT read the public notice.

The Town Manager provided a brief introduction and noted the proposed 40R by-law contains design guidelines which would give the Town more control over developers' projects than would be allowed under a 40B application.

CK made a brief presentation on the 40R bylaw and the district which included a summary of the reasons for and benefits of establishing the district. She noted the CPDC was still working on the Design Guidelines.

Selectman Schubert asked if there are agencies or procedures in place to provide financial oversight of projects coming in under the 40R. Ms. White, a consultant with Housing Partners, Inc., replied 40Rs fall strictly under zoning law not housing finance law but projects would most likely require housing subsidies from the DHCD in which case the DHCD would provide oversight.

Selectman Tafoya asked if densities lower than the proposed 20 units per acre had been considered. CK said the others had been discussed but the CPDC decided a lower density would not work for the downtown as it would not provide the vibrancy surveys had shown Reading residents were looking for in the downtown. Ms. White noted the by-law must allow 20 units per acre but a developer is not required to build to that density.

Selectman Schubert asked if there would be an issue with the fact the design guidelines were not yet completed. CK said the CPDC expected to have the draft guidelines reviewed and made final in time to be submitted to the DHCD along with the rest of the by-law by the July 31st deadline. She noted it is usually not a problem if the guidelines are submitted or if corrections to the guidelines are made shortly after the deadline.

Public Comments.

Although there was broad support for what was hoped to be achieved by the overlay district, there was also concern over its possible effects. Most comments fell into three not necessarily mutually exclusive categories:

1. Parking and traffic impacts.
2. Questions about the two proposed projects awaiting passage of the by-law: Oaktree Development's redevelopment of the Atlantic Supermarket; and the redevelopment of the M.F.Charles Building.
3. Concern the 40R would have a detrimental impact on the character of Reading (e.g. too tall buildings, too great a density, etc...). In particular, residents of the portion of the proposed district located west of the railroad tracks (roughly between Arlington and Fulton Streets) expressed concern over the 40R's impact on their neighborhood and questioned why their

neighborhood was being included in the district at all since, in their view, it is not an area typically associated with Reading's downtown.

Ms. Pat Driscoll and Mr. Jim Queeny each submitted statements to the Boards expressing opposition to all or parts of the by-law as being out of step with the character of the Town of Reading.

Mr. Dave McDonald, Ms. Lynn Arena, Ms. Kim Hubbard, Ms. Jeanne Thomases, and others commented on the adverse effect the district would have on the neighborhood west of the railroad tracks.

Ms. Naomi Kaufman cautioned against voting on the by-law without reviewing the design guidelines in detail. Mr. Schaffer also requested more information on the design guidelines.

Concern was expressed over the impact of more school children. The Town Manager said the expectation is the type of residential units proposed would probably not attract many families with children but noted the state's 40S program is meant to specifically mitigate through cash offsets any adverse effects a 40R would have on a participating town's services.

Mr. Talbot asked why the town should be against providing units for families with children. The Town Manager replied that was not the case: developers could use the district to create rentals or condominiums for families but the expectation is most units would be purchased by first-time buyers or empty-nesters.

Mr. Talbot asked how often the state has gone after towns that have refused to allow the construction of a 40B. Both Boards and the consultants answered as one: always.

Mr. Talbot asked why a traffic study for this 40R was not required when one was required for the recent proposed redevelopment of the Addison-Wesley site which includes a 40R district. CK said the Addison-Wesley project triggered a MEPA (environmental impact) study but she did not expect the downtown 40R itself to trigger a similar requirement. She agreed a traffic study for individual developments within the district – for example the proposed Oaktree (Atlantic Supermarket) or Mawn (M.F. Charles Bldg.) projects -- may be warranted.

Mr. Schaffer noted the parking exemption for businesses within 300 ft of a municipal lot is still in place and expressed concern it could lead to much worse parking problems in the downtown if a large business was to establish itself in the proposed district. Almost all properties within the district could take advantage of the exemption.

Mr. Russell Graham, member of the Economic Development Committee, expressed support for the 40R district. He noted the advantage of establishing a 40R rather than waiting for a 40B is that the town has a greater say in what can be built within a 40R district.

Mr. Christopher Vaccaro expressed concern over the possible shadow impact on abutting residential neighborhoods of buildings built to take advantage of the design guideline's height and setback allowances. The CPDC noted buildings could be built just as tall and with no rear setback under current zoning, and the design guidelines would improve this situation by requiring buildings built in the 40R district be set back at least 15 feet from the rear boundary.

Mr. Cook asked how the M.F.Charles building could be redeveloped if it is on the historical register. CK explained historical properties could be rehabilitated i.e. redevelop the interior only while keeping the building's envelope and important historical features unchanged. Its height would not change. The Town Manager noted that the redevelopment plans for the building call for the demolition of a portion of the parking-lot side of the adjacent one-story buildings to provide additional parking spaces.

For the Board of Selectmen, Selectman Bonazoli moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded and carried: 5:0:0.

For the CPDC, DT moved to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded and carried: 4:0:0.

The public hearing was closed.

The consensus of the Board of Selectmen was they had no issues with language of the by-law but thought it best to remove from the district that portion to the west of the railroad tracks.

Selectman Anthony moved the Board of Selectmen approve the submission of the Downtown Smart Growth 40R application as amended by redrawing the district's boundary to be coterminous with the Business-B zoning district's boundary along Lincoln Street.

The motion was seconded and carried: 5:0:0.

Selectmen Bonazoli moved the Board of Selectmen adjourn. The motion was seconded and carried; 5:0:0. The Board of Selectmen adjourned at 10: 55PM.

After the Board of Selectmen and most of the public left, the CPDC continued its agenda.

Smart Growth (40R) Overlay District: Design Guidelines Work Session

The Board learned the Floor Area Ratio of Oaktree's proposed redevelopment of the Atlantic Supermarket site would be greater than the design guideline's maximum of 2.0. After discussion with the consultants of Housing Partners, Inc, the Board determined the proposed Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R) of 2.0 to be too low to attract desired developments and suggested increasing the guideline's F.A.R to 3.4.

DT moved the Board meet July 20, 2009 (next Monday) to continue the Design Guidelines Work Session. JP seconded. The motion was carried 4:0:0.

CK said she would investigate if Oaktree's project could meet a F.A.R of 3.4 and report her findings to the Board at the 7/20/2009 meeting.

Other Business

Bond Reduction Request: Benjamin Lane

JW moved the Board follow the recommendation of the Engineering Department and release \$59,500.00 of the Benjamin Lane bond leaving a bond amount of \$5,500.00.

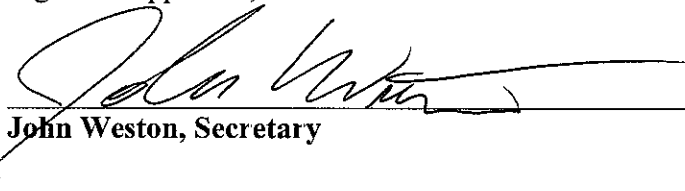
DT seconded. The motion was carried 4:0:0.

JW moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and carried 4:0:0.

The meeting adjourned at 11:20 PM.

These minutes were prepared by Michael Schloth and submitted to the CPDC on July 27, 2009; these minutes were approved as presented by the CPDC on July 27, 2009.

Signed as approved,



Handwritten signature of John Weston in cursive script, written over a horizontal line.

John Weston, Secretary

7/28/09
Date