



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting (Virtual Zoom Meeting) Meeting Minutes

February 13, 2025 at 7:15 PM

Approved by the Planning Board on: February 27, 2025

1 Members Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair
2 Anna Tesmenitsky, Vice-Chair (Remote)
3 Catherine Jurczyk, Clerk
4 Deepa Venkat, Member
5 Amanda Hayes, Associate Member
6

7 Also present: Peter Matchak, Town Planner
8 Alvaro Esparza, Assistant Town Planner
9 Becca Solomon, Conservation Agent
10

11 Call Meeting to Order

12 Chair Tricia Kendall, called the meeting to order at 7:18 PM and announced that the meeting was being
13 broadcast and recorded live by WACA-TV.
14

15 Clerk's Report

16 Ms. Jurczyk reported receiving three correspondences to the Planning Board since the last meeting;
17 two have been responded to by the Town Planner, and the third she will respond to as a general
18 response as Clerk.
19

20 Public Comment:

21 Connie Mannell, resident, stated she is a 47-year resident and has raised her family here and enjoys
22 the small-town feel and open spaces. Ms. Mannell stated she understands the need for affordable
23 housing but expressed concern with the proposed developments in Town, and worries how they will
24 affect the Town. The Town has worked hard to beautify the Downtown and believes this complex
25 would be intrusive and unfitting to the character of the Town.
26

27 Ms. Kendall thanked Ms. Mannell for her comments, and all public comments the Board has received.
28 Ms. Kendall stated that Ms. Mannell's concerns are shared with Members of the Board. Ms. Kendall
29 discussed the Board's limited control over 40B, and stated that the MBTA working group tried to make
30 the MBTA Zoning affect Ashland as little as possible. Mr. Matchak explained that Chapter 40B is a State
31 mandate which requires that all communities have 10% of their housing stock considered affordable.
32 MBTA Zoning Law requires that Massachusetts towns must zone land (minimum of 50 acres) for
33 housing on land that is in close proximity to train stations; communities who are not compliant can
34 lose certain grant funding. Mr. Matchak explained, in regards to the 40B process, Towns do not have

35 jurisdiction regarding the size of the buildings that are put on the sites, it disregards a community's
36 bylaws. We are currently in that process with the Applicant, through the Zoning Board of Appeals.

37
38 Carolyn Bell, resident, inquired as to whether a 40B development could be many stories tall, Mr.
39 Matchak stated that under 40B an Applicant can apply for a waiver from multiple town bylaws; they
40 do their best to negotiate with the Developer.

41
42 Mark Dassoni, resident, discussed the MBTA Zoning and discussed attending the ZBA meeting on
43 Tuesday.

44
45 Joan Gonfrade, resident, thanked the Planning Board for their letter to MassHousing which was
46 included in the Planning Board's comments to the ZBA regarding 10-60 Main Street, she was glad to
47 see they incorporated the historical issues in there.

48
49 Ashland Historical Commission presentation and discussion.
50 Jim Neilsen, Chair of the Ashland Historical Commission shared a PPT presentation with the Board; the
51 presentation was an update for their proposed plan to create a Historic Zoning District in the
52 Downtown area; he noted they have made quite a bit of progress.

53
54 Mr. Neilsen discussed why it is important to create a Historic District, and shared a map of the proposed
55 District which he explained must be contiguous. It includes Stones Public House, the former Fire
56 Station, the Federated Church, the Wiggins Block, and the Ashland Post Office.

57
58 They will need a 2/3 approval at Town Meeting, a District Commission will be created if the vote passes.

59
60 Mr. Neilsen reviewed some of the advantages of having a Local Historic District, including preserving
61 historical and architecturally significant buildings, protecting the character of the Downtown, and
62 increasing property values. It is cheaper and more efficient to reuse old buildings than it is to build
63 from scratch and gives the Town more local control. The Historic District creates a community-based
64 review process that protects historically significant buildings from demolition and inappropriate
65 alterations to retain the character of Downtown Ashland.

66
67 Mr. Neilsen explained that this will not be a bylaw, but rather a set of guidelines which would give
68 developers an idea of what the commission is looking for. He stated it has been vetted by the State.

69
70 Board Members agreed to take additional time to look at this in more detail, to see an updated map,
71 and revisit the exclusions. The Board agreed to have Mr. Neilsen come back to the Board's first meeting
72 in March at which time the Board will vote on whether the Board is in support.

73
74 Discussion of update to Floodplain Overlay District (Section 8.1 of Ashland Zoning Bylaws)
75 Mr. Matchak noted that from time-to-time floodplain maps are updated; Mr. Matchak explained that
76 Ashland is located within two watersheds, Concord and Charles River. Over the past year FEMA and
77 the State DCR (Department of Conservation and Recreation) have been updating the Charles River
78 Watershed; we are being asked to update our bylaw and update two of the tiles. Mr. Matchak has

79 been working on this with Mr. Esparza and Becca Solomon, Conservation Agent, who was attendance
80 at the meeting remotely. Mr. Matchak shared the tiles on the screen, one from 2014 and one from
81 2023; Ms. Solomon detailed the changes which included eliminating the 500-year floodplain from the
82 Warren Woods area. Mr. Matchak shared on the screen the draft bylaw which was created based on
83 a sample from the State; the edits were color coded for clarity; he explained that the bylaw hasn't been
84 updated in ten years and there are many updates the State is asking us to include. It was recommended
85 that they build in exemptions to not require a Special Permit within the MBTA Overlay District's
86 boundary. Ms. Solomon explained that some exemptions are not exempt from the Wetlands
87 Protection Act and will still need to be reviewed by the Conservation Commission. The bylaw is to give
88 Planning Boards jurisdiction as well.

89
90 Mr. Matchak explained that when the State comes up with updates to the Concord River, there will be
91 more changes to the Floodplain in Ashland. Updating the bylaw now will hopefully make the update
92 to Concord River easier. The State wants to see towns updated on the Charles River Watershed by July
93 8th.

94
95 Board Members discussed the Floodplain Overlay Zoning as it relates to MBTA Zoning and 40B; because
96 of the importance of the Floodplain Zoning to preserve natural resources, there will be a backup of
97 oversight from the Conservation aspect. Currently, MBTA Zoning falls into a gray area which will need
98 to be reconciled.

99
100 Discussion of Accessory Dwelling Units
101 Section 8 of Chapter 150 of the Acts of 2024 allows Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), (<900 SF) to be
102 built by-right in single-family zoning districts.

103 The Board discussed how to modify the bylaw for ADUs to be in line with the new State regulations
104 allowing them by-right in single family home districts. Mr. Matchak shared a draft bylaw with the Board
105 which included, and to which the Board had agreed:

- 106 • To only allow one protected ADU per lot.
- 107 • No parking space shall be required at the parcel if the land is within 0.5 mile of public
108 transportation (Mr. Matchak shared a plan depicting the bus stop locations in Ashland. Board
109 Members discussed whether not being walkable to the bus stops creates another set of
110 challenges.)
- 111 • No short-term rentals will be allowed at this time.
- 112 • ADUs should conform to existing setbacks.
- 113 • The appointing authority will be the Building Commissioner.
- 114 • ADUs shall have separate meter for water and sewer (Mr. Matchak will clarify with DPW).

115 Mr. Matchak discussed his hesitancy in creating design guidelines on ADUs, since there are no design
116 guidelines for single-family homes. We can do the best we can to convey that it should be reflective of
117 a housing unit and should be connected to the principle structure. Whether detached or connected, it
118 still needs to meeting Building and Fire Codes, Energy Codes, and Health Codes, and have a foundation.

119
120
121

122 Discussion of Planning Board Open Seat

123 Mr. Matchak stated we have received one Talent Bank Form for the open seat from Amanda Hayes;
124 Mr. Matchak has drafted an agenda for next Wednesday night at 7:45 PM for the Board to attend the
125 Select Board meeting to review the Talent Bank Form(s) and appoint a candidate; the Board Members
126 discussed their availability; a quorum of the Board (at least three Members) will be able to attend.
127

128 Discussion/Review of Retreat Items:

129 a) Site Plan Review Timeline

130 Mr. Matchak noted this would require a simple change to the Site Plan Bylaw which
131 requires that you have to open the public hearing in 30 days, however, if it's through
132 the MGL/Special Permit process, you have 65 days to open the public hearing.

133 b) Changes to Projects after Planning Board Site Plan Approval

134 Ms. Jurczyk explained that they have received comments that projects do not always
135 look like what was approved; she noted things do change, but it needs to be
136 communicated to the public and recorded. There should be a modification form for the
137 applicant to notify the Board of the changes.; the Board agreed that the Town Planner
138 and Planning Board will review to decide whether the changes are de minimis. Changes
139 can happen during the construction process, or when the final designs are submitted to
140 the Building Commissioner. The Asher project was brought up as an example. The Board
141 agreed they will need to define the changes in some form and changes will need to be
142 quantitative. The Board will continue this discussion and how this process will be
143 documented.
144

145 Reports from Board Members and Town Planner

- 146 a. Comprehensive Plan
- 147 b. Design Review Committee
- 148 c. Sustainability Committee
- 149 d. CPC
- 150 e. Metro West Regional Collaborative

151

152 Reports on Planning Topics

- 153 a. Scenic Roads
- 154 b. Economic Impact Tool
- 155 c. Parking Memo

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157 Administrative Matters

- 158 a. Planning Office Updates – Ongoing Projects
- 159 b. New Projects:
 - 160 i. Mr. Matchak reported receiving a new application for 20 Ponderosa Road;
161 Verizon Wireless Equipment Upgrade. Public Hearing Feb 27, 2025.
162 He also received an application for 240-260 Pleasant Street, they are two vacant
163 lots owned by Connect Church; they are looking to build a soccer field, a parking
164 lot and a playground. This will be on the Planning Board's first meeting in March.
 - 165 ii. Eversource Scenic Road Maintenance, Howe Street. Public Hearing TBA

- 166 c. Upcoming Meetings
167 • Next Meetings: Feb 27th, 2025; March 13th, 2025
168 d. Minutes Review: Jan 23, 2025
169 **Motion:** Ms. Jurczyk motioned to approve the January 23rd Planning Board meeting
170 minutes as amended; the motion was seconded by Ms. Tesmenitsky.
171 **Vote:** 4-0-0. Motion approved by rollcall vote (Jurczyk-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-
172 aye, Kendall-aye).

173 Adjournment

174 **Motion:** Ms. Kendall motioned to adjourn at 10:15 PM; Ms. Jurczyk seconded the motion.

175 **Vote:** 5-0-0. Motion approved by rollcall vote (Jurczyk-aye, Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Hayes-aye,
176 Kendall-aye).

177

178 Documents Reviewed during the 2/13/2025 Meeting

- 179 • Historical Commission's Proposed Historic District PPT Presentation
180 • 2014 and 2023 Floodplain Maps/Tiles, Floodplain Overlay District Draft Bylaw
181 • Accessory Dwelling Units, Draft Bylaw
182 • Draft Meeting Minutes, January 23, 2025
183