



# Town of Ashland

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes

Zoom Video Conference

Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland Massachusetts 01721

February 18, 2021 – Approved at April 15, 2021 meeting

1 ***Call to Order***

2 Bill Savage, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. Bill Novakowski, member, Ujwala  
3 Pawnarkar, member and Cathy Rooney, member were present. Emma Snellings, Assistant Town  
4 Planner, recorded the meeting.

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6 **Discussion of possible changes to the Design Review Bylaw and Design Review Guidelines,**

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8 ***Parking Lot Guidelines***

9 Ms. Snellings shared that Frank Nakashian, Sustainability Coordinator, will be coming to the  
10 March 4 meeting to discuss sustainable parking lot infrastructure.

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12 ***Square Footage Trigger***

13 Mr. Savage stated that 5,000 square feet seemed to be a common number that other design  
14 review committees use. Ms. Snellings shared some photos of buildings that are 5,000 square feet.  
15 Ms. Pawnarkar added that a trigger for expansion should also be considered. Ms. Snellings stated  
16 that site plan review has an expansion trigger based on percent increase, and suggested that the  
17 site review trigger could be added as a design review trigger. A discussion of an expansion  
18 trigger and gross floor area followed.

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20 Ms. Rooney asked what parking requirements are based on, and a discussion of parking  
21 requirements followed. Ms. Rooney raised concerns about having too much parking. Ms.  
22 Snellings stated that some districts do have ways to lessen the parking requirements, and  
23 suggested that those incentives be discussed when the parking infrastructure is discussed. A  
24 discussion of what types of projects a square foot trigger would catch versus the existing triggers  
25 followed. Ms. Rooney expressed concern with projects that slip under the trigger requirements,  
26 and asked if it is possible to enforce site plan review after a project is completed. Ms. Snellings  
27 suggested looking to see if other towns have that aspect in their review bylaws.

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29 A discussion of small buildings that the Design Review would like to see followed. Ms.  
30 Pawnarkar stated that the Santander Bank is under 5,000 square feet. Mr. Savage asked about a  
31 small business in the Downtown District, which would trigger site plan review because of its  
32 location in the Downtown District. Ms. Rooney asked about the historic district, and Ms.  
33 Snellings stated that it is not a historic district in the zoning bylaw. Ms. Pawnarkar suggested  
34 reducing the expansion percentage. Ms. Snellings reviewed the triggers for site plan review, and  
35 discussed some examples of how a project with an expansion of under 10% might get to design  
36 review. Ms. Rooney asked how parking requirements are calculated for residential projects, and  
37 how big some of the recently approved apartments have been. A brief discussion of recently  
38 approved apartment sizes and parking requirements followed. Ms. Snellings stated that the  
39 parking trigger for site plan review will catch housing projects with more than three units.

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*Application Requirements*

Ms. Snellings presented the Design Review Guideline application requirements. Ms. Rooney suggested looking to Sturbridge's design guidelines for a preamble to set expectations, and using some of Sturbridge's application requirements, including rendering suggestions, because it will give a better sense of massing, scale and neighboring buildings. Ms. Rooney stated that one way to get a better sense of a proposed building is to have the developer stake out a building on site during the review process, and a discussion of site visits, and how the Committee might require site visits, followed. Ms. Rooney suggested that site visits be made a part of the bylaw. Ms. Snellings stated that a site visit requirement might be most appropriate in the procedure section of the bylaw. Ms. Savage suggested that the building heights be included on the plans. Mr. Savage suggested, and Ms. Rooney agreed, that an incomplete application package should not have a review started before the application is complete. Ms. Snellings will prepare draft application requirements that integrate Sturbridge requirements as well as the Design Review Guideline requirements.

*Downtown Facade*

Ms. Snellings shared that the Planning Board is going to go on a walking tour of downtown to visualize possible bylaw changes on February 24. Ms. Snellings will post an agenda for the walking tour in case a quorum of the Committee attends, and will distribute the draft changes to the Downtown bylaw that the Planning Board is considering.

**Discussion of upcoming concurrent meeting**

Ms. Snellings stated that the sign bylaw letter and the planting guideline additions to the Design Review Guidelines will be the focus of the concurrent meeting with the Planning Board. Ms. Rooney stated that she can take the lead on discussing the planting guidelines, and Mr. Savage stated that he can present the sign bylaw. Mr. Savage stated that he can provide an update on the bylaw amendments that the Committee is discussing.

**Review and Approval of Minutes**

Minutes were tabled until the next meeting.

**Staff Updates and Administrative Matters**

Ms. Snellings shared that part of the process for a proposed 40R district at 10-50 Main Street is that the project is reviewed by a Design Review Board. The Committee had questions about the Board and the process, and Mr. Savage and Ms. Rooney will be reaching out to Michael Herbert to get more information about the Board.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 PM.