



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes

Zoom Video Conference

Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland Massachusetts 01721

April 15, 2021 – Approved at May 5, 2021 meeting

1 ***Call to Order***

2 Bill Savage, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. Bill Novakowski, member and Ujwala
3 Pawnarkar, member were present. Cathy Rooney, member, joined at 7:45PM. Emma Snellings,
4 Assistant Town Planner, recorded the meeting.

5

6 **Discussion of parking lot best practices with Frank Nakashian, Sustainability Coordinator**

7 Frank Nakashian, Sustainability Coordinator, presented a memo based on the discussion from the
8 previous meeting about parking lot approaches that could be included in the Design Guidelines.
9 Kevin Mullins, Sustainability Committee, shared that the Sustainability Committee is also
10 interested in the sustainability impacts of parking lots.

11

12 The first memo item was natural drainage and green infrastructure. Mr. Nakashian explained that
13 one suggestion is to add definitions about green infrastructure, and some of those definitions
14 might already exist in the guidelines or bylaws. Mr. Novakowski asked what percentage of green
15 space might be reasonable for a large parking lot, and Mr. Nakashian stated that more research
16 would be needed to set a minimum threshold. Mr. Novakowski asked about the space needed to
17 plant a tree, and Mr. Nakashian stated that those requirements may be in the planting guidelines.
18 Ms. Snellings added that the recommended street trees list could be used for parking lot
19 recommendations, and that a developer will be responsible for integrating the recommendations
20 from the guidelines. Ms. Snellings stated that there are not many areas in town that allow for less
21 parking than is generally required in the bylaw. Ms. Pawnarkar noted that some green
22 infrastructure such as permeable pavement could be incentivized under the storm water bylaw.
23 Ms. Snellings stated that making changes to the Design Review Guidelines happens through a
24 Planning Board vote, while changing Zoning Bylaws, such as the parking bylaw, requires a 2/3
25 vote at Town Meeting. Mr. Nakashian noted that some of the green infrastructure could be
26 encouraged through the storm water bylaw.

27

28 The second memo item was smart growth and community character. Mr. Nakashian explained
29 that this concept encourages walkability and bike friendliness, and tries to reduce underused
30 parking lots. The third memo item concerned clean energy. Mr. Nakashian explained that clean
31 energy and parking lots can be integrated through electric vehicle charging stations and solar
32 canopies, and that these recommendations could help Ashland achieve its goal of net zero carbon
33 emissions. Mr. Nakashian noted that a recent study found that 42% of emissions are from
34 residential cars, so encouraging electric vehicles could result in significant changes, and that
35 encouraging developers to install the infrastructure for charging stations, even if the stations are
36 not installed, could increase access in the future. Mr. Nakashian noted that the focus should be
37 on areas where people park for multiple hours, not quick trips. Mr. Nakashian suggested that
38 encouraging solar canopies, and possibly requiring solar assessments on new projects, could be
39 ways to make parking lots more sustainable.

40
41 The Committee briefly discussed which items they would like to include in the guidelines. Ms.
42 Snellings suggested discussing adding the solar assessment to the site plan review requirements
43 with the Planning Board. A discussion followed about appropriate locations for electric vehicle
44 charging stations, and Chuck Lidz stated that employees at stores could take advantage of the
45 stations. Ms. Rooney stated that electric vehicle owners will find the stations wherever they are.
46

47 Ms. Rooney added that Framingham may have been recently working on a sustainable parking
48 bylaw through their Conservation Commission. A brief discussion of when the Planning Board
49 sees parking lot plans, and how that could influence sustainable parking lot bylaw enforcement
50 followed. Mr. Lidz suggested having a working committee to draft a sustainable parking bylaw,
51 with members from the Sustainability Committee and Design Review Committee. Ms. Rooney
52 asked if bylaw changes can be phased in to negate grandfathering, and Ms. Snellings stated that
53 she will look into whether that is possible. The Design Review Committee agreed that they
54 would like to consider draft changes to the Guidelines that integrates the sustainability
55 approaches discussed in the memo. Ms. Snellings stated that she will ask the Planning Board if
56 they are interested in participating in the proposed working group.
57

58 **Discussion of possible changes to the Design Review Bylaw and Design Review Guidelines,**
59 **including recommended planting list and Design Review triggers**

60 Ms. Snelling shared that the Town Planner, Peter Matchak, suggested that the proposed bylaw
61 amendments go to the November Town Meeting, so a concurrent meeting will be set up with the
62 Planning Board for July, after the next Town Meeting, to discuss the amendments.
63

64 **Review and Approval of Minutes**

65 The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes as amended from February 18, 2021 with a
66 vote of 4-0-0.

67 The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes as amended from March 4, 2021 with a vote
68 of 4-0-0.

69 The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes as amended from March 18, 2021 with a
70 vote of 4-0-0.
71

72 **Staff Updates and Administrative Matters**

73 Ms. Rooney asked about discussing site visits at the next concurrent Planning Board meeting.

74 Ms. Snellings stated that she will check with Mr. Matchak about a date for a concurrent meeting.
75

76 The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 PM.