



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

Select Board Meeting Room / Zoom Conferencing
Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland, Massachusetts 01721

June 8, 2023, at 7:15 PM

Minutes Approved on August 10, 2023

1 Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair (joined after the call to order)
2 Anna Tesmenitsky, Vice-Chair
3 Catherine Jurczyk, Clerk
4 Marcelo Arjona, Member
5 Deepa Venkat, Member
6 Kevin McClean, Assoc. Member

7
8 Others: Peter Matchak, Town Planner
9

10 **Call to Order**

11 Anna Tesmenitsky called the meeting to order at 7:16 pm. She mentioned that the session was being
12 recorded and broadcast. Ms. Tesmenitsky reviewed the meeting agenda.
13

14 **Clerk's Report**

15 Catherine Jurczyk, the Planning Board Clerk, reported that the board had received one
16 correspondence since the last meeting and that she would provide the tally at the next meeting.
17

18 **Public Comment:**

19 Ms. Tesmenitsky explained that the board prefers project-specific public comments be made during
20 the scheduled public hearing. Therefore, this public comment period aims to hear general comments
21 that may not be related to a specific project.
22

23 Mark Dassoni, 49 Hawthorne Rd., commented that he was pleased the board added the citizen
24 participation agenda item.
25

26 Joan Gonfrades, Wenzell Rd., asked whether the board would list the town's scenic roads. Mr.
27 Matchak responded that the town had adopted the scenic road bylaw and would happily meet with
28 Ms. Gonfrades to review the list and the regulation.
29

30 **Public Hearings:**

31 **50 Megunko Rd. – Site Modification Plan**

32 Ms. Kendall reopened the public hearing. Mr. Matchak noted that the applicant, Mike McClements,
33 owner of Mike's Auto Body, Joyce Hastings from GLM Engineering, representing the applicant, and

34 Chris Kotsiopoulos, the property owner, were in attendance. He said the application team met with
35 the Design Review Committee (DRC) on Thursday, and their notes were distributed to the board. The
36 Conservation Commission (ConCom) Agent, Becca Solomon, reviewed the DRC notes and emailed her
37 comments to the board on June 8, 2023.

38
39 Ms. Hastings reviewed the Site Plan changes resulting from their meeting with the DRC, the DPW
40 Director, and the board's feedback. She said they removed the granite curbing, the sidewalk, and the
41 split rail fence at the front of the property. In exchange, two 6 to 7 ft. red oak street trees would be
42 planted on the property's edge, a landscape bed around the existing sign, and two flowering crab
43 trees in the back. Ms. Hastings said the two accessible parking spaces would be moved to the end of
44 the lot, and the paver parkway would be aligned with the strip in the middle.

45
46 The board reviewed the DRC's written response to ensure the applicant addressed their concerns.
47 The members noted that Ashland's bylaw does not specify consequences for increased impervious
48 surfaces and felt the board should review that related to the Comprehensive Plan and sustainability
49 issue at some point. Ms. Hastings confirmed that the front entrance and walkway would be
50 accessible. Ms. Kendall said Doug Scott, the Building Dept Director, must approve the signage. Ms.
51 Hastings confirmed that 70% of the planting would be native species.

52
53 Ms. Kendall opened the meeting for public comments.

54
55 Mark Dassoni complimented the board for sharing the results of their collaboration with other
56 boards and committees.

57
58 Ms. Jurczyk motioned to approve 50 Megunko Rd. Site Plan Modification, subject to the finalized
59 conditions. Mr. Arjona seconded. No discussion. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-
60 aye, and Kendall-aye.

61
62 **16 Union St. – Definitive Subdivision Plan**

63 Ms. Kendall noted that the applicant had requested a continuance to July 27, 2023.

64
65 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to continue the 16 Union St. Definitive Subdivision Plan hearing to June
66 29, 2023, and seek cooperation to move it to August 10, 2023. Ms. Jurczyk seconded. No discussion.
67 Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye.

68
69 **9-49 Homer Ave. – Site Plan and Special Permit**

70 Ms. Kendall noted that the applicant had requested a continuance to June 22, 2023.

71
72 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to continue the 9-49 Homer Ave Site Plan and Special Permit hearing to
73 June 29, 2023, given that the June 22nd meeting will be moved to June 29, 2023. Mr. Arjona
74 seconded. No discussion. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye.

75
76 **10-60 Main St. – Special Permit and Site Plan Review**

77 Ms. Kendall noted that the applicant had requested a continuance to August 10, 2023.

78

79 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to continue the 10-60 Main St. Special Permit and Site Plan Review
80 hearing to August 10, 2023, as requested. Ms. Venkat seconded. No discussion. Venkat-aye,
81 Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye.

82

83 **Planning Board Associate Position**

84 Ms. Kendall reported that the three-year associate position that Kevin McClean is filling expires at the
85 end of the month. Mr. McClean explained that he could not renew due to his busy work schedule.
86 Ms. Kendall said the board would post a notice to find a candidate with appropriate experience to
87 take on an active role with the board.

88

89 **MBTA Presentation from Planning Dept.**

90 Mr. Matchak provided an update on the MBTA Community as defined in the Mass General Law,
91 Chapter 161A, which he said is part of a more extensive economic development legislation. He
92 displayed a map that showed the 14 cities and towns in the inner core, or light rail/subway, that must
93 have zoning in place this year. Ashland is one of the 51 communities in the MBTA host service zone,
94 given that the town hosts the MBTA Commuter Rail Station on Pleasant St.

95

96 Mr. Matchak explained Chapter 40A, Section 3a, which requires an MBTA community to have a by-
97 right zoning ordinance or a bylaw that provides at least one district of reasonable size for multifamily
98 housing. Or a minimum unit count of 22 units per 50-acre area within one-half mile of an MBTA
99 station. Mr. Matchak said the minimum density is 15 units per acre, but this interpretation would
100 need to be confirmed. He reviewed the town's zoning map and explained how the town could
101 change the zoning in several areas, including the RTD District, to allow for various levels of density.
102 He also cited the density of several developments; Cirrus Apartments is 14 units per acre, 501 Pond
103 St. is 29 units per acre, and the last phase of the Village of the Americas is 28 units per acre. The
104 overall density per acre lowers the density to 17 units per acre.

105

106 Mr. Matchak said there is more to learn about the process; however, state funding may be available
107 to provide technical assistance to complete the effort.

108

109 **Update on Housing Moratorium**

110 Mr. Matchak reported that on May 30, 2023, the Attorney General rejected the town's building
111 moratorium. However, the Select Board has 60 days to file an appeal.

112

113 The members cited language in the Attorney General's decision that suggested the town take a more
114 aggressive stance concerning zoning to address the reason for needing a moratorium. However,
115 some felt that tackling zoning changes without understanding zoning requirements relative to the
116 comprehensive plan results may be unwise. Others felt that delaying zoning changes for two years
117 could exacerbate the initial need for a moratorium, and zoning changes to address density could be
118 explored congruently with the comprehensive plan development.

119

120 **Request Continuance Protocol**

121 Ms. Tesmenitsky explained her concern regarding when the board granted a continuance, the need
122 to ensure all members would be present on the new date to avoid disqualifying a voting member.
123 The members agreed to consider members planned absences.

124

125 **Discussion of Summer Schedule**

126 Due to scheduled travel, Ms. Tesmenitsky reported that she would miss the June 22, 2023, and July
127 13, 2023, meetings. The members agreed to move the June 22nd meeting to June 29, 2023, and
128 readvertise the Homer Ave hearing. They also moved the 16 Union St. hearing to August 10, 2023.
129 Mr. Matchak said that he would confirm the extensions with the applicants.

130

131 **Report on Planning Topics:**

132 **Scenic Roads Outreach**

133 Mr. Matchak reported that Alvaro Esparza, the Assistant Town Planner, drafted a memo and a
134 postcard mailer outlining the town's scenic road management procedures. The Planning Dept is
135 working with the Dept. of Public Works and the GIS Dept to determine the number of scenic road
136 abutters who should receive the mailer. Mr. Matchak read a list of Ashland's scenic roads. The
137 members asked that the memo, which they proposed to be publicized in the Town Manager's
138 newsletter and on the town's website, include the scenic road list.

139

140 Ms. Tesmenitsky asked the members to review the correspondence and provide their feedback. She
141 recommended that the board adopt this update as an annual process to build knowledge and help
142 educate the public about scenic roads.

143

144 **Parking Memo**

145 No discussion.

146

147 **Economic Impact Tool**

148 Mr. Matchak reported that after contacting several towns in the area, he learned that Ashland is one
149 of the few towns with an Economic Development Tool. He contacted Framingham State University's
150 Economic Research Center and scheduled a Zoom meeting with the Program Director on June 22,
151 2023, to discuss the possibility of partnering with the university to develop the tool.

152

153 Ms. Jurczyk asked that the tool incorporate infrastructure components.

154

155 **Reports from Board Members and Town Planner:**

156 **Comprehensive Plan**

157 No discussion.

158

159 **Design Review Committee (DRC)**

160 No discussion.

161

162 **Sustainability Committee**

163 No discussion.

164

165 Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

166 Ms. Kendall reported that the CPC met this week and tentatively voted on funding for the dog park.

167

168 Other

169 A picture of TJ's Restaurant's outdoor patio, provided by Ms. Kendall, was viewed due to its
170 attractive, eye-catching design that the board helped to formulate. The members were pleased with
171 the overall result.

172

173 **Administrative Matters: future meetings, public hearings**

174 Future Joint Meeting with Historical Commission: TBA

175 No discussion.

176

177 Future Retreat Date

178 No discussion.

179

180 Applications Received

181 No discussion.

182

183 Next Meeting

184 The next meeting is scheduled for June 29, 2023.

185

186 Minutes Review

187 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to accept March 23, 2023, Planning Board minutes, as drafted. Ms.
188 Jurczyk seconded the motion; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-
189 aye, with a vote of 5-0-0.

190

191 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to accept April 13, 2023, Planning Board minutes, as amended. Mr.

192 Arjona seconded the motion; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-
193 aye, with a vote of 5-0-0.

194

195 Ms. Jurczyk motioned to accept July 6, 2022, Planning Board Retreat and Joint DRC meeting minutes,
196 as drafted. Ms. Tesmenitsky seconded the motion; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye,
197 Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of 5-0-0.

198

199 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to accept September 14, 2023, Planning Board and Select Board Joint
200 Meeting minutes, as drafted. Mr. Arjona seconded the motion; Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye,
201 Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of 5-0-0.

202

203 ***Adjournment***

204 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:00 pm. Mr. Arjona seconded the motion;
205 Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Arjona-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of 5-0-0.

206