



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Planning Board Meeting Minutes

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

September 14, 2023, at 7:15 PM

Approved October 26, 2023

1 Present: Tricia Kendall, Chair
2 Anna Tesmenitsky, Vice-Chair
3 Catherine Jurczyk, Clerk
4 Deepa Venkat, Member
5
6 Absent: Marcelo Arjona, Member
7
8 Others: Peter Matchak, Town Planner
9 Select Board Members
10

11 Call to Order

12 Ms. Kendall called the Planning Board meeting to order at 7:16 p.m. She mentioned that the session
13 was being recorded and broadcast and was a joint meeting with the Select Board. Rob Scherer called
14 the Select Board meeting to order.
15

16 Clerk's Report

17 Ms. Jurczyk reported that two emails were received since the last meeting that were responded to by
18 the Chair and the Town Planner.
19

20 Public Comment

21 Steve Morgan, 136 Concord St., commented on the Sustainability Committee's involvement in scenic
22 road management, and he felt that the Planning Board should take responsibility for scenic roads.
23

24 Mark Dassoni, 49 Hawthorne Rd., asked for more information regarding the 10-60 Main St.
25 withdrawn application. He also commented on the length of the board's discussions and asked if
26 they could be shortened.
27

28 Discussion: Joint Meeting with the Select Board

29
30 MBTA Communities Act

31 Mr. Matchak reviewed a PowerPoint presentation distributed to the board summarizing MBTA
32 zoning and what Ashland must do to comply. The zoning objective is to develop by-right housing
33 units to help address the state's housing shortfall crisis. Ashland is one of the 51 cities and towns
34 considered an MBTA station host community asked to zone a minimum of 50 acres within a half-mile
35 radius of the train station with a minimum of 15 units per acre and 15% of the housing stock. Also,
36 40% of the acreage of the total district must be not more than 0.5 miles from the commuter rail
37 station.

38
39 Mr. Matchak reviewed a map of the Ashland Downtown District and the zoning and overlay included
40 in that area. He pointed out that the multifamily development project within the half-mile radius
41 proposed and approved by the town has a 62-year-old age restriction. Still, its zoning does not have
42 an age restriction. Therefore, he would seek clarification from the state on how to consider that
43 land. Mr. Matchak said none of the town's zoning districts currently meet the MBTA zoning
44 regulations, and changes would be required to comply with MBTA zoning legislation.

45
46 As examples of density, Mr. Matchak listed several of the town's large multifamily developments,
47 including Cirrus Apartments, 501 Pond St., Village of the Americas, and 10-60 Main St. He explained
48 their density ranged from 7.2 to 29.4 units per acre.

49
50 Regarding Ashland's status based on its 2020 census, the town's MBTA zoning should accommodate
51 1,124 units or 15% of the housing stock, totaling 7,495. The board discussed potential options to
52 modify the town's zoning to comply while excluding the downtown area, whether the affordable
53 component can exceed 10%, and if the work to define the solution can be done in-house or if
54 technical assistance is required. They also pointed out non-compliance would result in ineligibility to
55 secure transportation-related state grants.

56
57 Targeting the Spring Town Meeting, convening a small working group with one Planning and Select
58 Board member to work with the Planning Office, and scheduling a joint meeting in November to
59 review the working group's draft scenarios was suggested.

60
61 Interim Zoning Related to Comprehensive Plan / Other Items of Select Board/Planning Board
62 Coordination

63 Topics for the boards to discuss and collaborate on included affordable housing, an inclusionary
64 zoning bylaw, 40B development vulnerability, and the sewer moratorium. A specific zoning item
65 involved a review of the zoning categories. The boards agreed to defer zoning items related to
66 economic development to the Comprehensive Plan effort.

67
68 **Associate Member Position: Joint Appointment with the Select Board**

69 Ms. Kendall explained that Kevin McClean vacated the Associate Board member position at the end
70 of June 2023, as he chose not to seek reappointment. Associate members should attend all meetings
71 on the second and fourth Thursday and will vote on Special Permit applications when a full member
72 is unable to do so. The members reviewed the applications received by August 31, 2023, and the
73 candidates chosen to interview were in attendance due to their relevant experience. The members
74 prepared three questions to ask each candidate.

75
76 Applicant Amanda Hayes introduced herself and said she and her family have lived in Ashland for
77 four years. Ms. Hayes said she is an immigration lawyer and community service is essential, as well
78 as learning about the residents' needs.

79
80 In response to the board's questions, she said that in her profession, she supports large business
81 clients, regularly deals with very complex regulations and problems, and is challenged to find
82 appropriate solutions. Regarding how she seeks consensus, she said she breaks down the issue and
83 finds a solution that works for all stakeholders. Ms. Hayes said that although she recognized how
84 vital engagement and spreading awareness through postings and public forums are to the Ashland
85 community, as a Planning Board member, she would either refrain from speaking as an individual or
86 make it very clear that she was speaking as a lay person to avoid the perception that she was
87 speaking on behalf of the board.

88
89 The members asked several other questions, to which Ms. Hayes responded, including that she
90 would consider running for election if a full seat on the board was available.

91
92 Applicant Stephen Morgan introduced himself and said he has lived in Ashland for nine years. He has
93 an engineering degree, has worked professionally on technical projects in construction, and currently
94 works for a leading Pharma company, running several projects simultaneously with financial
95 responsibility. Mr. Morgan said he also has experience owning commercial real estate.

96
97 In response to the board's questions, Mr. Morgan said his team-building and functional execution
98 skills would be an asset to the board. Regarding how he seeks consensus, Mr. Morgan mentioned a
99 sizeable complex project he managed and built consensus by taking the best ideas from the project,
100 putting them into an executable plan, and aligning them with goals the team could visualize. Mr.
101 Morgan said that when communicating with the public, he would facilitate communication back to
102 the board for discussion and referencing board documents to avoid speaking as an individual on
103 behalf of the board.

104
105 The members asked several other questions, to which Mr. Morgan responded, including that he
106 would consider running for election if a full seat on the board was available.

107
108 The members discussed the applicants' responses, experiences, and potential fit on the board.

109
110 Mr. Kinsman motioned to appoint Ms. Hayes as an associate member of the Planning Board for a
111 three-year term ending June 30, 2026. Venkat-aye, Jurczyk-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, and Kendall-aye,
112 with a vote of 4-0-0. Bennett-aye, Magnani-aye, Kinsman-aye, Greaves-aye, and Scherer-no, with a
113 vote of 4-1-0.

114
115 Ms. Greaves motioned to close the Select Board's joint meeting with the Planning Board. Ms.
116 Kinsman seconded with a vote of 5-0-0.

117
118 **Public Hearings**

119 **10-60 Main St – Site Plan and Special Permit – continued from May 11, 2023**

120 Mr. Matchak reported that the applicant’s attorney, Mr. Antonellis, filed a request on August 22,
121 2023, to withdraw the project without prejudice, mainly due to the applicant’s inability to identify
122 and secure a development partner.

123
124 The members expressed interest in exploring the lessons learned from this application, including
125 their ability to assess a project’s economic viability and the application fee cap on form-based code.
126

127 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to accept the withdrawal of the 10-60 Main St. Special Permit and Site
128 Plan Review application without prejudice. Ms. Jurczyk seconded. No discussion. Venkat-aye,
129 Jurczyk-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of 4-0-0.

130

131 **Report on Planning Topics:**

132 **Scenic Roads Outreach**

133 Mr. Matchak reported that he and Alvaro Esparza, the Assistant Town Planner, reviewed the scenic
134 road abutter list, added the condominium complexes, and will mail the prepared communication to
135 over 500 homes, including condo associations, on the list.

136

137 Mr. Morgan questioned why the Sustainability Committee is involved in developing Scenic Roads and
138 Tree Bylaws and felt they should consult the Planning Board on both topics. Ms. Tesmenitsky said
139 that the Committee attended a recent Planning Board meeting to discuss a proposed Tree Bylaw;
140 Scenic roads applications remain under the jurisdiction of the Planning Board (Editor’s note). Scenic
141 roads were not addressed. Regarding the sustainability concerns, Ms. Venkat added that tree
142 clearing and carbon dioxide ratio are essential components of the Net Zero goal.

143

144 **Economic Impact Tool**

145 No discussion.

146

147 **Parking Memo**

148 Mr. Matchak said Mr. Esparza is developing a comprehensive Parking Memo, including compact
149 parking space dimensions.

150

151 **Housing Moratorium**

152 No discussion.

153

154 **MBTA Communities: Sept 14, 2023, Upcoming Joint Meeting with Select Board**

155 No discussion.

156

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

158 **Comprehensive Plan**

159 Ms. Jurczyk reported that the first meeting with the consultant is September 21, 2023, and it would
160 be nice to have community participation.

161

162 **Design Review Committee (DRC)**

163 No discussion.

164

165 Sustainability Committee

166 Following the Planning Board's meeting with the Sustainability Committee, Mr. Matchak met with
167 the Sustainability Committee members and Margy Gassel to discuss the tree bylaw options, including
168 tree size and project the bylaw would pertain to. The Committee will attend an upcoming meeting to
169 discuss the topic further.

170

171 Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

172 Ms. Kendall reported that the CPC has assumed the task of reviewing specific properties, including
173 the Corner Spot and the Farmers Market, where money has been granted by the CPC Committee and
174 Town Meeting but no Conservation Restriction has been executed to date. These properties have
175 been purchased using open space and affordable housing fund and are being used for open/space
176 recreation purposes. Ms. Kendall, Mr. Matchak, and Lisa Mead, Town Counsel, met and will draft a
177 memo detailing information concerning the properties in question.

178

179 Other

180 None.

181

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

183

184 Planning Office Updates

185

186 Whitmore Estates Definitive Subdivision

187 Mr. Matchak noted that he is seeking more information about the pending litigation. He said Attn.
188 Mead was served, and the Planning Board, the Town, and he are named in the suit. The town's legal
189 team is handling the matter.

190

191 100-130 Chestnut Street (Village of Americas)

192 No discussion.

193

194 501 Pond Street

195 No discussion.

196

197 399 Union Street / Starbucks

198 No discussion.

199

200 12 Pond Street

201 No discussion.

202

203 Applications Received

204 An application was received for a new T-Mobile cellular tower at 400 Cedar St.

205

206 Next Meeting

207 The next meeting is scheduled for September 28, 2023.

208

209 Other

210 Ms. Kendall reported that she would begin submitting a Planning Board update to include in the
211 Town Manager's newsletter.

212

213 Minutes Review

214 Ms. Tesmenitsky motioned to accept the June 29, 2023, Planning Board minutes, as amended. Ms.
215 Kendall seconded the motion. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a
216 vote of 4-0-0.

217

218 Ms. Kendall motioned to accept the July 13, 2023, Planning Board minutes, as amended. Ms. Venkat
219 seconded the motion. Venkat-aye, Tesmenitsky-abstain, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of
220 3-0-1.

221

222 ***Adjournment***

223 Ms. Kendall motioned to adjourn the meeting at 10:28 p.m. Ms. Tesmenitsky seconded. Venkat-aye,
224 Tesmenitsky-aye, Jurczyk-aye, and Kendall-aye, with a vote of 4-0-0.

225