

**Town of Carlisle Planning Board
MBTA Communities Subcommittee
Minutes of 4/16/24 2:00PM / Minutes Prepared by: Julie Mercier, Town Planner
Hybrid Meeting Format: Heald Room, 66 Westford Street, Carlisle MA & Zoom**

Voting Members Present:

- Kate Reid, Select Board
- Adelaide Grady, Planning Board
- Christina Christodoulopoulos, Environmental Sustainability Committee
- Tony Mariano, Board of Health
- Christine Johnson-Battista, Affordable Housing Trust

Non-Voting Members Present:

- Julie Mercier, Town Planner
- Linda Fantasia, Health Agent

Other Attendees:

Fritz Reichenbach
Greg Petersen
Heidi _____

Ms. Mercier called the meeting to order at 2:03 PM.

The first order of business was Subcommittee Organization. Ms. Grady volunteered to Chair the Subcommittee. Ms. Reid nominated her. Ms. Christodoulopoulos seconded. Ms. Reid volunteered to be Vice Chair and to help with minutes if needed. Ms. Grady nominated her. Ms. Christodoulopoulos seconded.

Both nominees were approved by roll call vote:

Reid – aye
Grady – aye
Mariano – aye
Christodoulopoulos – aye
Johnson-Battista - aye

Ms. Mercier updated everyone on Carlisle’s current status re: the MBTA Communities legislation and guidelines. She screen-shared a slide from a prior presentation.

Mr. Mariano asked about the Subcommittee’s purpose and goals. Ms. Mercier screen-shared and talked through the Subcommittee charge, and the Planning Board’s approved MBTA Communities outreach plan. Chair Grady commented that the Subcommittee should work through the details and bring recommendations on a few different options back to the Planning Board.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos noted that she feels the tone has shifted from simply satisfying state requirements to implementing housing production. Mr. Mariano commented that in some ways they are one and the same because the State does not want them to create something that isn't achievable. He and Chair Grady explained that other than creating the zoning, the Town has no active role in developing anything. Ms. Mercier added that most of the sites under consideration are private, and so the Town would have little involvement in or control over any pre-development work that might occur as a result of the zoning.

Ms. Mercier walked through the site selection process she used to generate some potential opportunity areas. Chair Grady asked whether wetlands buffers were considered and noted that the Notice of Intent process in a sense precludes the 'as-of-right' nature of the zoning requirement. Ms. Mercier noted that the initial site selection analysis just screened out parcels that are more than 50% wet pursuant to the DEP wetlands layer. She offered to redo the analysis based on the Wetlands Protection Act 100-foot buffer zone. Ms. Christodoulopoulos commented that a local wetlands buffer might be considered in the future, as one outcome of the ongoing 'Climate Resilient Carlisle' MVP project.

The Subcommittee then talked about tying into existing infrastructure capacity in Town (i.e., Carlisle Public Schools WWTP), and in nearby towns. Chair Grady pondered how the latter might be accomplished and noted that it would likely take a private developer to pursue it and would need outside funding sources (i.e., MassWorks) to make a housing pro forma feasible. Ms. Reid mentioned a recent example where one house near the Billerica line gained approval to tie into Billerica sewer.

Ms. Mercier screen-shared a map of potential Opportunity Areas. Chair Grady noted that one cluster of sites – in the East Street and Bedford Street neighborhood – is constrained by the narrow and treacherous nature of the streets in the area. She commented that while the area may have good soils and surficial conditions, a proposal for new zoning in that area might make sense from a pragmatic standpoint but would require a really good case to the neighbors/neighborhood.

Mr. Mariano noted that the analysis is very preliminary at this point, and there is a lot to consider – traffic patterns, accessibility, etc. – and that the Subcommittee has a journey ahead of them.

Ms. Reid noted some large sites that should probably be removed from the analysis.

Ms. Fantasia commented that the East Street/Bedford Street neighborhood is where all the water in town flows – and opined that wetlands would probably be a big concern. Ms. Mercier noted that the DEP wetlands GIS layer is not based on local wetlands delineations and the wetlands may be more extensive than shown on the map. Chair Grady mentioned that her own neighborhood is much wetter than the DEP wetlands layer indicates.

Chair Grady suggested grouping the neighborhoods into different categories based on strengths (i.e., physical and political) and opportunities (i.e., likelihood of success). For example, some areas have good road access and are relatively proximate to transit; other areas have good soils, etc.

Ms. Fantasia pointed out that good soils should not be the end-all-be-all of this analysis because there are ways to engineer an site appropriate septic design in less-than-ideal soils.

Chair Grady asked for clarification from Mr. Mariano and Ms. Fantasia regarding parameters for how large a traditional septic can be. Ms. Fantasia explained that 2,000-10,000 gpd is a locally-permitted large system; >10,000 gpd requires groundwater discharge permit (WWTP) and a leach field. Ms. Fantasia gave some local examples: Woodward Village is designed for 9,000 gpd for 18 units; Garrison Place is designed for 5,820 gpd for 16 age-restricted 2BR units. Mr. Mariano noted that Benfield was over-designed for 3,900 gpd, for 26 2BR units, which is partly why it fails.

Mr. Mariano commented that water availability is just as important as septic capacity. He pondered whether and how we might use some of the grant funds to test for well fields.

Ms. Christodouloupoulos reiterated prior comments she's made about looking at areas that are already developed, because that will result in less new land disturbance.

Ms. Mercier summarized the feedback, noting that she could do the analysis again with the following things in mind: existing development, wetlands buffers/riverfront area, soils of any type, existing or nearby wastewater infrastructure. The Subcommittee agreed.

Chair Grady asked a technical question about strict compliance with State requirements – whether the land area for septic components and a leach field would be carved out of the land area used to calculate minimum gross density and units/acre, as water supply protection areas are. She asked how the minimum density could be achieved in a town like Carlisle, where septic and well are necessary. Ms. Mercier commented that it seems odd to carve out one but not the other, and that it seems logical that infrastructure needed to make a development feasible should be included in the land area. She offered to try and get an answer to this question.

Mr. Mariano asked if we should get in touch with other communities to see whether they are forming coalitions to petition the State. Ms. Mercier offered to look into this via her connections with the technical assistance cohorts.

Ms. Mercier asked about the next meeting date, and a potential Forum date. She noted that the Forum could be at an upcoming Planning Board meeting – either May 9th or June 10th.

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Chair Grady said she would like the Subcommittee to formulate a clear strategy for the Forum – noting that approach is important. She suggested starting with an outline of the reasons for compliance, conceptualizing what it might look/feel like in Carlisle, and discussing goals. She asked for a discussion of the Forum to be added to the next agenda.

Chair Grady made a motion that the Subcommittee is not prepared to have a Forum on May 9th. Ms. Reid seconded. The Subcommittee agreed by roll call vote:

Reid – aye
Grady – aye
Mariano – aye
Christodoulopoulos – aye
Johnson-Battista – aye

Ms. Mercier asked for public comment. There was none.

Ms. Reid made a motion that the next Subcommittee meeting will be on Tuesday, April 30th at 2:00 PM. Mr. Mariano seconded. The Subcommittee agreed by roll call vote:

Reid – aye
Grady – aye
Mariano – aye
Christodoulopoulos – aye
Johnson-Battista – aye

The meeting adjourned at 3:24 PM.

These Minutes were approved on 4/30/24.

Materials Reviewed at the Meeting:

- Agenda for 4/16/24
- Outreach Plan and MBTA Communities Presentation linked here:
<https://www.carlislema.gov/1195/MBTA-Communities>
- Site Selection Process
- Context Maps