

Town of Carlisle Planning Board
MBTA Communities Subcommittee
Minutes of 6/11/24 1:00PM / Minutes Prepared by: Julie Mercier, Town Planner
Hybrid Meeting Format: Heald Room, 66 Westford Street, Carlisle MA & Zoom

Voting Members Present (all in-person, none on zoom):

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

Voting Members Absent:

- Helen Jackson Young, Conservation Commission

Non-Voting Members Present:

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

Other Attendees:

None

Chair Grady called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

Minutes of 6/4/24

The Subcommittee reviewed the minutes. Ms. Reid made a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Christodoulopoulos seconded. The minutes were approved 4-0-1 (Mariano abstained).

Ms. Reid noted the situation in Billerica, and emphasized the importance of bringing all boards, committees, etc. along with the process.

Chair Grady used the white board in the room to demonstrate the strategy based on the land area difference between a survey acre (43,560 SF) and a Title 5 acre (40,000 SF). She showed how it would work on a 1-acre lot, and then how it would work on a 3-acre lot. Various Subcommittee members asked for clarification on the math, the excluded land, and the MBTA Communities Guidelines.

Mr. Mariano asked if this strategy is a way around doing what the State wants. Chair Grady commented that it is a technical, correct, and viable strategy for doing exactly what the State wants.

Mr. Mariano mentioned that even if it appears to work in terms of Title 5 nitrogen loading, there are other considerations such as perc rates, soils, wetlands, ledge, etc. Chair Grady described that in West Newbury they did testing to identify sites with proper leaching to accommodate density. She noted that you can't really know what can be achieved on a

site until you start to study it, but that the State doesn't require this level of feasibility analysis to support the zoning.

Ms. Christodouloupoulos commented that her understanding is that subdivisions avoid the need for public water systems, and asked whether it might be possible to cluster the conservation areas between subdivided properties. Chair Grady drew some diagrams on the white board. Ms. Mercier agreed to try to craft language that could achieve that aim.

Mr. Mariano asked whether the zoning can include specific parameters. Chair Grady and Ms. Mercier replied affirmatively and gave an overview of how the zoning could work.

Ms. Johnson-Battista noted the prior conversation about the need for 16 3-acre areas to meet the 95-unit capacity requirement. Ms. Reid suggested finding a 50-acre area. Ms. Mercier noted that 50 acres would not be enough given that all wetland areas, CRs, and protected lands would be excluded from the calculation. She suggested finding a bigger area, or even considering allowing the MF Conservation Cluster anywhere in the Residence B District (with a 3-acre site requirement), just like the current Conservation Clusters are (with a 10-acre site requirement). She explained that then the Town wouldn't be deciding what land is best, but developers would have to try and figure it out, and that it would result in incremental change over time and could be capped at 95 units.

Ms. Christodouloupoulos and Mr. Mariano expressed concern that allowing it anywhere in Residence B would never get through Town Meeting. They believe that people want to know specific sites.

The Subcommittee then talked about the benefits of public water systems. Ms. Fantasia noted that capping the # of people who live in a development (to avoid triggering the need for a public water system) will be highly scrutinized by the Board of Health. Mr. Mariano noted that there are many reasons why public water supply wells are beneficial – namely the testing and monitoring required offer a high level of protection to drinking water.

Ms. Reid suggested running calculations to see what size site would work from a density perspective, if there were a public water supply well. Chair Grady noted that the underlying land would no longer be excluded, but that the radius around a public water supply well would be. She estimated this radius area would be about 3 acres that could be excluded and did some quick back of the napkin math. Ms. Mercier noted that a developer may want to maximize the site by also putting in a wastewater treatment plant. Ms. Fantasia suggested limiting septic to systems under 10,000 gpd. Ms. Mercier noted that the land under the septic system would not be excluded from the gross density calculation.

Chair Grady ran through a few mathematical scenarios based on the above but none of them worked to achieve the minimum density of 15 units/acre specified in the MBTA Communities legislation. The members ruled out this middle-ground strategy as an option.

The discussion then pivoted to larger developments on the edges of Town that could tie into infrastructure in neighboring towns. It was generally agreed that the scale and design of the Benfield project is an example of the type of larger project that would be desired.

Ms. Johnson-Battista noted that Chelmsford and Billerica have municipal infrastructure close to their boundaries with Carlisle. The Patch Meadow and Estey Road neighborhoods were discussed as potential locations for an MBTA Communities compliant zoning district. Chair Grady noted that the issue with picking areas like that would be abutters would likely come out in force against it. Ms. Reid expressed personal distaste for putting large ugly buildings on the edges of Town. The Subcommittee talked about aesthetics and including design parameters in the bylaw.

Mr. Mariano summarized the Subcommittee’s charge is to develop ideas to bring to the Planning Board that meet the MBTA Communities requirements and that are likely to pass Town Meeting. He asked if developers would challenge certain aspects of the bylaw. Chair Grady commented that it’s unlikely a developer would challenge a bylaw that has been approved by the Attorney General’s Office. Ms. Mercier said that it is more typical for a developer to go through the Site Plan Review process and then challenge a condition of the Site Plan Approval – for instance, if they felt a condition imposed by the Planning Board would unreasonably regulate their project or render their project uneconomic or infeasible for some other reason.

The Subcommittee reviewed the draft survey and discussed including different visuals. They agreed the next steps are to put out the survey, use feedback from the survey to develop concepts based on the viable options discussed, and then conduct a series of listening sessions and community meetings in the fall.

Ms. Mercier noted that there was no one present from the public.

Ms. Reid made a motion that the next Subcommittee meeting will be on Tuesday, June 25th at 1:00 PM. Ms. Christodouloupoulos seconded. The Subcommittee agreed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:21 PM.

These Minutes were approved on 6/25/24.

Materials Reviewed at the Meeting:

- Agenda for 6/11/24
- Draft Survey