

**Town of Carlisle Planning Board
MBTA Communities Subcommittee
Minutes of 10/29/24 10:00AM / Minutes Prepared by: Noelle Beland, Planning, Zoning & Land Use Assistant
Hybrid Meeting Format: Heald Room, 66 Westford Street, Carlisle MA & Zoom**

Voting Members Present:

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

Voting Members Absent:

- Helen Jackson Young, Conservation Commission

Non-Voting Members Present:

- Julie Mercier, Town Planner
- Noelle Beland, Planning, Zoning & Land Use Assistant

Other Attendees:

- Amelia Fournier, 475 East Street
- Cindy Craft, 75 Patch Meadow Lane
- Jin Xu, 165 Hutchins Road
- John Lavery, 395 School Street
- Katharine Boylan, 135 Kimball Road
- Margery Berube, 784 North Road
- Melissa Bilotta, 183 Hutchins Road
- Rachael & Calla Kaplan-Bie, 301 Hutchins Road

Vice Chair Reid called the meeting to order at 10:07 AM. She went over the agenda which included approving previous minutes, discussing the Board of Health meeting, and taking public comments.

Minutes

The Subcommittee reviewed the minutes of 10/8, 10/15, and 10/16, and made an amendment to the 10/15 minutes. Ms. Christodouloupoulos made a motion to approve the minutes of 10/8 and 10/16 and to approve the minutes of 10/15 as amended. Ms. Reid seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved by a 4-0-0 roll call vote.

Board of Health Meeting Update

Mr. Mariano noted that Ms. Mercier and Ms. Grady gave a presentation to the Board of Health at their meeting on October 23rd and commented that Ms. Grady explained the concept very well and the BOH members seemed to take it well. Ms. Grady noted that

members of the public who attended the meeting had questions about the water supply. She noted that many residents of the Tall Pines neighborhood were in attendance and expressed their concerns with groundwater to the BOH.

Mr. Mariano suggested the Subcommittee look at other neighborhoods that are not as restricted in terms of water supply. Ms. Mercier mentioned the 'Land Use Team' of staff is compiling a spreadsheet of septic and well information for the areas under consideration. She noted that some of the feedback received from residents of the Tall Pines neighborhood has been corroborated by information in the BOH files. Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked if zoning should be updated holistically to account for groundwater issues.

Ms. Grady noted consistent and strong feedback about the groundwater aspect of this rezoning. She has also heard concerns about subdivisions, neighborhoods, and property values. She suggested the Subcommittee look at other options, specifically areas along major roads oriented towards Town Center because they already have some density. She suggested finding 2-acre parcels along these roads. Ms. Reid noted that there are water problems in the Town Center. Ms. Christodoulopoulos expressed concern about adding traffic to the Town Center. Ms. Reid noted that most traffic comes from outside Town. Ms. Grady clarified that she would like to avoid narrow roads with limited capacity for traffic and suggested that the Subcommittee could craft a strategy that would be compatible with the concerns expressed.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos then suggested Brook Street be removed from consideration because added density will exacerbate emergency response times. Ms. Grady commented that the Town is unlikely to zone for more unit capacity than is required, and that it is unlikely the Town will have an answer from the State this year regarding the unit cap question. She suggested the Subcommittee focus on the River/Skelton area and Brook Street near Route 225.

Ms. Grady addressed the suggestion that the Subcommittee look at lower value properties by noting that many of those properties constitute the lower case "a" achievable affordable housing in Town. She added that these properties may be an opportunity for the Housing Trust and suggested shying away from using them as the only strategy. Ms. Christodoulopoulos commented that it is more environmentally friendly to carve up single-family homes and may be viable in the future as an attractive option. Ms. Grady opined that larger home carve-ups may not really be viable at this time.

Areas under Consideration

Ms. Christodoulopoulos said she plans to drive around to look at the areas more closely. Ms. Grady suggested she may want to wait until they adjust the areas first.

Ms. Grady recommended that the Subcommittee remove the Tall Pines neighborhood from consideration altogether due to water issues. All members agreed to this.

It was noted that residents of the Hanover/Johnson subdivision have concerns with property values, and that Patch Meadow has more extensive wetlands than shown on the DEP mapping. Ms. Mercier said she can ask the Conservation Administrator about recent wetland delineations in that area. Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked if they could add wetlands protection to the zoning, noting that she is a fan of redundancy. Ms. Mercier responded that she can ask Town Counsel about that but in her experience, zoning is supposed to stay in its own lane from a regulatory perspective.

Ms. Grady suggested removing or refining the East Riding/Brook Street area. Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked if developers would have to go through the State to add driveways or curb cuts to Route 225. Ms. Reid noted that it is a State numbered route, but not a State-owned road.

Public Comments

Melissa Bilotta of 183 Hutchins Road asked the committee to reconsider Fiske and Curve Street. She expressed her concerns that increasing the density and traffic in that area could be unsafe for pedestrians. She explained that the area is popular among bikers and has narrow streets. Ms. Bilotta also thanked the Subcommittee for taking on such a challenging and difficult task.

Katharine Boylan of 135 Kimball Road thanked the Subcommittee and commented that she does not envy their position between a rock and hard place in terms of the State mandate. She opined that in an ideal world there would be more homes near transit. She asked if the results of the questions asked at the Open House were going to be published. Ms. Grady responded by noting the results are not conclusive and not meant to be published – they were meant to get a sense of how people were feeling about the mandate and the strategy. Ms. Grady commented that another electronic survey will be conducted.

Ms. Boylan asked about the excess capacity of the septic system belonging to the Carlisle Public School. Ms. Grady explained that the septic system was designed appropriately to have reserve capacity, but that reserve capacity cannot be used for anything else, or the system will be out of compliance for the School. Ms. Boylan suggested the Subcommittee use a rubric for decision-making. Ms. Grady responded that there is a set of criteria for parcel consideration and neighborhood consideration, and that it will be made more prominent as the discussion continues.

Rachel Kaplan-Bie of 301 Hutchins Road thanked the Subcommittee for listening to the concerns of the public and focusing on data to make decisions.

Ms. Bilotta asked if there has been communication among other adjacent small towns about why communities like Carlisle are included in the MBTA Communities Act. She suggested that there may be strength in numbers. Ms. Grady explained that Carlisle is in proximity to MBTA services and that is why we qualify for zoning for a 5% increase in housing units. Mr. Mariano noted that this is a housing initiative not a commuting or transit

initiative. He questioned whether the MBTA can even handle the existing volume of users. Ms. Grady commented that there are all sorts of ways to get to transit if you want to.

Magery Berube of 784 North Road commented that she would like to write a letter with her concerns.

Cindy Craft of 75 Patch Meadow Lane asked if based on a prior discussion of advanced septic systems and nitrogen pre-treatment, is it possible to rely on the Board of Health's 4 bedrooms/acre regulation. Ms. Grady replied that the goal is to create zoning that aligns with the Board of Health Regulations, noting that there is little opportunity for more bedrooms than what is allowed on a property with a private septic and well. She suggested that the zoning can also limit the overall size of the housing units.

Amelia Fournier of 475 East Street asked if the Subcommittee has considered zoning over existing multi-family structures like Benfield. Ms. Grady says they have not really considered this an option because they do not think the State would approve it, especially on parcels with developments that are permanently affordable. She noted that on the flip-side, if the Town zones for it there, it could happen there.

Ms. Fournier then asked if they considered the current strategy over the existing multi-family developments. Ms. Grady replied that it would result in reduced density on these parcels. Ms. Fournier opined that she would like the density to be spread out and asked about Rocky Point. Ms. Grady said their sense is that the State will not accept rezoning of areas that were recently developed. She noted that the recently approved Master Plan and Housing Production Plan include goals for the Town to zone for additional housing options, and the Subcommittee is focused on genuine strategies.

Ms. Fournier also asked if there was something that could be put in the zoning language to require that existing structures be maintained. She noted the mixed-use provisions in the guidelines as an opportunity. Ms. Mercier offered to investigate her questions.

Ms. Christodouloupoulos noted that the maps show many more parcels than are needed, and that the Subcommittee hasn't set a max number of units allowed per lot. The Subcommittee then agreed on a minimum of 3 units per 2-acre lot in keeping with the definition of multi-family, and a maximum of 4 units per 2-acre lot.

Mr. Mariano said that he has heard from a lot of people who oppose the mandate and he suggested the Subcommittee outline the funding/budgetary ramifications of non-compliance. Ms. Mercier commented that she has started working on it.

Ms. Grady suggested having an alternate strategy to give to the Planning Board that would accommodate all units in one place. This could be the fallback plan in case the Town does not like the low-density strategy. Ms. Mercier suggested the Subcommittee may want to explore a zoning overlay over private institutions such as churches.

Ms. Christodouloupoulos added that the Subcommittee should think about how a 2-acre cluster subdivision would really work. Ms. Mercier said she will ask Bohler Engineering to put some concepts together.

Next Steps

The Subcommittee set their next meetings for Tuesday, November 12th at 2:00 PM and Thursday, November 14th at 2:00 PM.

These Minutes were approved on 11/21/24

Materials Reviewed at the Meeting:

- Agenda for 10/29/24
- Minutes of 10/8/24, 10/15/24, & 10/16/24
- GIS maps