

**Town of Carlisle Planning Board
MBTA Communities Subcommittee**

Minutes of 11/14/24 2:00 PM / 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
- Justin Harrison, Carlisle resident

Voting Members Absent

- Helen Jackson Young, Conservation Commission

Non-Voting Members Present:

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

Members of The Public

- Amelia Fournier, 475 East Street
- Margery Berube, 784 North Road
- Valerie Thaddeus, 779 North Road

Chair Grady called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM. She went over the agenda which included taking public comments, discussing strategies and preparing for the upcoming Open House.

While waiting for Mr. Mariano to arrive, Chair Grady entertained some feedback from a resident.

Valerie Thaddeus, 779 North Road, complimented Ms. Mercier on her zoning expertise. She commented that it is a bad idea to do nothing, and good that Ms. Mercier submitted the initial paperwork to the State. She reminded the Subcommittee that the Guidelines have changed multiple times and suggested that they may change again to accommodate Carlisle. She noted that the ADU law and MBTA Communities law are not that far apart. She provided a letter expressing her concerns to the Subcommittee members.

Chair Grady commented that the current Guidelines do account for Carlisle from a private septic and well standpoint. She noted that the low-density multi-family conservation cluster strategy is only slightly more housing units per 2 acres than what will be allowed under the ADU law.

Discussing Strategies

Chair Grady suggested the Subcommittee take a step back and start where they ended at the last meeting. She noted their focus today is preparation for the next Open House, refining their language, and articulating their ideas better. This is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach.

Chair Grady suggested that she and Ms. Mercier prepare talking points for the Open House. She reiterated the role of the Subcommittee is to make recommendations for zoning for the strategy that is most likely to pass Town Meeting to the Planning Board. She said that if it fails it will be because people would rather say no to the mandate.

Mr. Harrison commented that the two things are different and asked if the Subcommittee is trying to create something that will pass or explore what’s best for the Town. Ms. Christodoulopoulos commented that this is a mandate, the Subcommittee’s language has evolved, and their charge is to figure out what works best for Carlisle. Chair Grady noted that there are a variety of feasible ways to comply, but the ultimate determination of feasibility is up to the Town Meeting vote.

Ms. Reid commented that there is a poster that includes the language in the Subcommittee charge, and that it says, “make a good faith effort.”

Mr. Harrison asked what the goal is. Chair Grady responded that they are trying to find a compliant strategy. Ms. Christodoulopoulos noted that their effort ties into the Master Plan and Housing Plan, and that other Master Plan recommendations are being brought into the conversation. Mr. Mariano, Ms. Johnson-Battista, and Ms. Reid all agreed. Chair Grady commented that the Subcommittee and Planning Board need to stay on track with the 3-4 units on 2-acres strategy unless and until Town Meeting says otherwise.

Mr. Mariano opined that if the Subcommittee is giving multiple strategies to the Planning Board, they need to finalize the first strategy and then move on to another idea.

Ms. Mercier asked the Subcommittee how many strategies they want to present to the Planning Board. Chair Grady opined that at this point there is not time to present more than 1 option. Mr. Mariano commented that the Subcommittee has not seriously looked into any other options because they quickly came to the conclusion that no other options met the goals. He said it’s time to get this done and move forward.

Chair Grady offered that the Subcommittee present other options that were considered and investigate them further if the Planning Board wants.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked if the conservation cluster subdivision is a second option or if it is tied into the 3-4 units on 2-acres strategy. Ms. Grady expressed that in her opinion the conservation cluster is an extension of the strategy. Ms. Mercier clarified that it would be part of the same zoning bylaw, as a way to address parcels larger than 2 acres.

Chair Grady made a motion to have Ms. Mercier write zoning language for the low-density (3-4 units on 2-acres) multi-family conservation cluster strategy. The motion was seconded by Ms. Johnson-Battista and approved 6-0-0 by roll call vote.

Open House Preparation

Ms. Mercier showed her updates to the posters for the Open House, and explained that most of her modifications clarify jargon, fix grammar and punctuation, make font sizes larger, etc., and were suggested by resident Mary Zoll. Ms. Christodoulopoulos suggested keeping language consistent on the posters to avoid confusion. Subcommittee members provided feedback on the posters and suggested a few be printed as handouts.

Ms. Mercier showed the Subcommittee the new posters she made based on their prior recommendations – which are intended to help clarify the concept and provide additional education to people on zoning and the Subcommittee’s intentions. Ms. Mercier shared a poster she made detailing the funding Carlisle has received from the State that may be at risk based on a comment made by the Governor. Ms. Beland suggested having this poster as a handout as well.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked for a map showing State wetlands and endangered species data. Mr. Mariano asked if they could add an explanation as to why land in Carlisle is nitrogen sensitive under Title 5. He explained that flow calculations and local regulations are stricter than Title 5.

Ms. Grady suggested the final parcel selection should be by the Planning Board. Mr. Mariano agreed with that idea, saying the Subcommittee has provided their expertise on the matter.

Mr. Harrison opined that this zoning feels like a significant change to Carlisle and expressed concerns with high occupancy in the new multi-family housing affecting the groundwater conditions for existing single-family homes. Chair Grady noted that it is a 5% increase in housing capacity; she noted that the data for multi-family housing doesn’t bear out a concentration of occupancy because typically smaller sized families occupy multi-family units. The subcommittee acknowledged they do not have information on the impact of new developments on water availability.

Mr. Harrison asked if the Board of Health has regulations in place to prevent issues. Mr. Mariano mentioned that the Board of Health is working on updating their private well regulations and emphasized that there is no definitive test to determine the extent of the impact and that it's impossible to predict the effects of drilling a well on water availability. He suggested that the Town could require a higher recharge rate and a simultaneous recharge test for new wells, but only if homeowners give permission for the test.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos mentioned the need for resiliency in the face of climate change and suggested limiting irrigation use and implementing low-flow fixtures in new buildings. She asked how the Subcommittee should respond to concerns about water availability.

Ms. Mercier asked Mr. Mariano if the Board of Health can deny a permit if an owner or applicant can’t prove the required well recharge rate. Mr. Mariano responded in the affirmative. He suggested the Board of Health requires a higher recharge rate and a pump test. Mr. Harrison suggested that any changes to the Board of Health well regulations should be done in tandem with this effort.

Chair Grady inquired whether there is any history of neighbors telling the Board of Health that their well runs dry after a well was dug next door to them. Mr. Mariano responded that to his knowledge there really hasn't been, and though he has not done research into the matter he believes the Board of Health is or will be looking into it. The Subcommittee acknowledged that they do not have this information.

Public Comment

Amelia Fournier of 475 East Street asked if existing multi-family units can be counted towards MBTA zoning. Ms. Mercier responded that she looked into it and spoke with other planners about it. The State views the land as if it's vacant and does not net out existing units. So, for example, the Town could zone for 50 units on a parcel that currently has 25 units, and the Town would get credit for all 50 units. Chair Grady responded that while it may be a possible approach, it feels disingenuous, and the Subcommittee has been focusing on a strategy that is aligned with Master Plan and Housing Plan goals.

Ms. Fournier asked the Subcommittee not to dismiss the idea, opining that existing progress towards housing matters and she believes most of the Town would agree with her. She asked about zoning over Benfield Farms. The Subcommittee explained that the units at Benfield Farms may not be able to be counted because they are age-restricted, and the parcel may have a deed restriction on it. Ms. Mercier offered to investigate it further. Ms. Grady noted that the Housing Production Plan, as well as the Master Plan, both call for increasing housing options.

Margery Berube of 784 North Road exclaimed she was pleased to hear talk of limitations on irrigation and asked if they could be applied Town-wide. Mr. Mariano said this practice can already be put in place during drought conditions as an emergency measure. Ms. Christodouloupoulos mentioned that limitations in irrigation is being discussed as part of the 'Climate Resilient Carlisle' MVP project. Ms. Berube asked if parcel selection will be done by the Select Board. Chair Grady responded that it will be done by the Planning Board.

The next meeting is the Open House on 11/16/24.

The next meeting after the Open House was set for Thursday 11/21/24 at 12:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.

These Minutes were approved on 12/4/24.

Materials Reviewed at the Meeting:

- Agenda for 11/14/24
- Posters for Open House