

**Town of Carlisle Planning Board**

**MBTA Communities Subcommittee**

**Minutes of 11/12/24 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 Christodoulopoulos, 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

- Carren Panico, Carlisle Mosquito
- Margery & Ned Berube, 784 North Road
- Eric Balles, 105 Nowell Farme Road

Vice Chair Reid called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM. She went over the agenda which included approving previous minutes, discussing strategies, feedback, map refinement and taking public comments.

The Subcommittee members introduced themselves to new member, Justin Harrison.

Minutes

The Subcommittee reviewed and amended the minutes of 10/22. Ms. Christodoulopoulos made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. The motion was seconded by Ms. Reid and approved 5-0-0 by roll call vote.

Discussing Strategies, Feedback, & Map Refinement

Ms. Mercier went over a draft schedule for the Subcommittee and Planning Board if the goal is to bring zoning to Spring 2025 Town Meeting. She suggested the Subcommittee stick to the date of December 9<sup>th</sup> for submitting recommendations to the Planning Board. Ms. Christodoulopoulos opined that it feels like a tight deadline, and she is feeling rushed to hand this off to the Planning Board. She expressed concern that once it's handed to the Planning Board it becomes a concrete proposal. She said that December 9<sup>th</sup> feels too soon and asked if anyone else feels rushed. She mentioned the uncertainty around the ADU law and how it would relate to MBTA Communities. She asked if MBTA Communities would be like 40B. She commented that the Subcommittee has been so focused on compliance they are losing sense of the big picture. Mr. Harrison agreed with Ms. Christodoulopoulos, about feeling rushed.

Ms. Reid commented that the Subcommittee is planning ahead to be ready for Town Meeting, to comply with the December 2025 deadline for compliance. Ms. Grady suggested trying to get an answer from HLC as to whether ADUs can apply to more than just a single-family development.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos said the Subcommittee needs to step back and look at the big picture. Mr. Mariano noted that the Subcommittee has been dealing with this for a long time now and has already stepped back to consider the big picture twice. Chair Grady recapped some of the big picture questions and concerns that have been raised such as impacts to property values. She suggested getting feedback from an appraiser regarding impacts to home values in areas under consideration and adjacent areas.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked to understand the consequences in detail if Carlisle does not comply with the law. Ms. Mercier said she has been looking into it with the Town Administrator and Town Accountant and will prepare a poster using the best available information she can get. Ms. Grady noted that all these requests add up to a mountain of work for staff and suggested the Subcommittee assist with research, use their resources wisely, and give the Town Planner space to write the zoning.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos then asked what grant money is available. Ms. Mercier went through a list of potential grant funds that could be sought. Ms. Grady asked if any other type of research can be done as far as testing water. Mr. Mariano replied, saying the time frame is tough to understand this, and it would take a lot of effort. He said to start by looking at all the records for the areas under consideration as a top priority. Ms. Mercier noted that she has staff working to compile data from the Board of Health files.

Mr. Harrison said it is a big deal to change the zoning without knowing how it will affect groundwater. Ms. Grady explained that what the new zoning is proposing is no more bedrooms than what is allowed today – 8 bedrooms on 2 acres – but probably will result in an increase in the intensity of use and occupancy. Ms. Reid commented that it also might not because there is a large demand for options to downsize within the community.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked if the Subcommittee somehow determined that private wells cannot support the proposed zoning, would that be enough to say we tried and push the State off. Ms. Reid replied that it would not be and mentioned the possibility of bringing sewer into Town. Chair Grady noted that there are grant funds available (i.e. MassWorks) for utility extensions.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos then suggested the Subcommittee consider a zoning overlay on church properties, if allowed. She said it may alleviate other concerns of fairness of certain neighborhoods being targeted, the churches are near the Town Center, have good walkability and are relatively close to the wastewater treatment plant.

Ms. Reid reminded the Subcommittee that the excess capacity for the school's wastewater treatment plant is not available to be utilized. Mr. Mariano said it was designed to support the school, no more than that, and that the State requires the design to include reserve capacity. Ms. Mercier asked if when it comes time to update the system, could it be expanded. Mr. Mariano agreed that it could be an opportunity and said he believes the system needs to be updated soon.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos said each 2-acre parcel may not result in a huge impact, but if a series of 2-acre parcels get converted to multi-family, the impacts magnify. She added that concentrated development can sometimes have less environmental impact. Chair Grady noted that it also has less of a global impact.

Ms. Reid suggested they look at all the larger parcels just outside the Town Center. Ms. Grady commented that the St. Irenes property is 6.5 acres and might be an opportunity to zone for all 95 units in one place, which would have other impacts. Mr. Mariano objected to this idea. He noted that the Subcommittee was initially looking at soils and surficial geology, but now at the forefront of the analysis is the water supply. He opined that there is no telling whether the groundwater could sustain 95 units and the rest of the neighborhood. He stated that water availability limits the viability of large projects.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos commented that sensitive core habitat areas coincide with the areas the Subcommittee has been focusing on. She said that good soil conditions coincide with animal habitats.

Chair Grady responded that the intent of the zoning could be to limit the size of structures to no greater than what is there, or a variance will be required. Ms. Christodoulopoulos opined that variances are granted easily. Chair Grady said in her experience variances are granted more easily for single-family homes than for larger developments. Mr. Mariano noted that the Board of Health is not allowing waivers if new developments cannot be built within their requirements. Ms. Grady commented that the zoning can be tightly written and noted it may be worth having a poster to say what the limits would be. Mr. Harrison asked if the Subcommittee has a handle on the zoning.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos asked if once the parcels are selected, zoning could be written per parcel to accommodate different needs. Ms. Mercier noted that the Subcommittee keeps referring to all the things zoning could or should do, but that she hasn't had the time to write the zoning to reflect their ideas. She asked the Subcommittee to decide on which strategy or strategies to pursue and get to a point where the zoning can be written.

Ms. Grady showed an AxisGIS map she created with some refined areas and some new areas for the Subcommittee to consider. She noted that she focused on areas with good road access and/or near the edges of Town. She commented that the Reichenbach property on West Street is close to Westford, the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, has access to Route 27, and could potentially gain access to Westford's water supply. Ms. Reid mentioned that Westford's Town Manager expressed interest in expanding the Westford water supply.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos said that we are in the middle of a drought and need to consider areas that are sensitive to species' habitat. She asked the Subcommittee to reconsider the Nowell Farm area, commenting that it is a massive wildlife area, proximate to the river and Estabrook Woods, and that BioMap shows layer upon layer of rare species habitat. Ms. Christodoulopoulos suggested that Nowell farm should not be included.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos went on to suggest the Subcommittee consider preservation of agricultural land. She said this idea coincides with the Master Plan recommendation of

preserving the natural history of Carlisle. Ms. Christodoulopoulos commented that another critical area is the Westford/West area. Chair Grady asked if they should add more parcels to other areas. Ms. Christodoulopoulos suggested the Concord Street area may make sense. Mr. Mariano asked where she is getting the information about wildlife. Ms. Christodoulopoulos explained that the BioMap information comes from state level information including aerial maps and use of drones.

Mr. Mariano asked Chair Grady if the new areas she was showing were a subset of the areas that were already chosen. Chair Grady explained there were some new parcels as well as previously chosen ones. Ms. Christodoulopoulos suggested looking at churches, but not FRS due to lack of acreage. She asked if it is possible to do a zoning overlay on State land. Ms. Mercier replied in the negative.

Ms. Christodoulopoulos suggested looking at areas on the edges of Town such as Treble Cove Road, which is already a dense area, and Estey Road. She opined that development on the edges of Town won't disturb the character of Carlisle as much. Mr. Mariano said he lives over by Treble Cove Road, and it seems like a major wildlife corridor to him. Ms. Reid mentioned the Queensland Subdivision, saying one lot is already tied into Billerica's sewer system.

Ms. Mercier asked what strategies and areas the Subcommittee wants to recommend to the Planning Board. Ms. Reid suggested giving at least three recommendations. Mr. Mariano agreed, saying they'll have a primary suggestion and two others that have caveats for further investigation. Ms. Battista agreed. No vote was taken.

Chair Grady suggested it might be worthwhile to explore a 20-acre parcel off Log Hill. It is currently land-locked, but access could be gained via Acton. Ms. Christodoulopoulos suggested an area near East Street and Maple Street, which would have access in Carlisle and not need to rely on another Town.

#### Open House

Ms. Mercier asked the Subcommittee for guidance on materials to show at the Open House. The Subcommittee agreed to stick with what they had at the last Open House, with small changes to the posters, and removal of the Tall Pines area. After the Open House they will confer about whether there are specific changes they should make to the areas, or if parcel selection should be part of the public process with the Planning Board.

#### Public Comment

Margery Berube of 784 North Road said she was pleased to hear Ms. Christodoulopoulos' points about biological impacts. She said she is confounded about the idea of multiple buildings on two acres that have the same footprint as a single-family home. Chair Grady responded that the intention of the Subcommittee could be to limit the size of structures. Either one building with three units, or two with two units on one parcel, but still having the same impacts of a single-family development. Ms. Berube noted that some existing homes have a small footprint, and redevelopment would require more space. She expressed concerns with the environmental impact of teardowns. Chair Grady noted that teardowns of smaller homes also limit the supply of 'affordable' housing in Town.

Ms. Berube noted that a big portion of the Affordable housing in Town is age-restricted, and asked what restrictions would apply to these developments. Ms. Grady explained that 'by right' doesn't mean no restrictions, it just means you can develop what is allowed in the zoning language. A site plan review is required, and we can restrict things like requiring a wildlife buffer area, drainage, etc. Mr. Harrison commented that people do not understand anything about zoning and that more education is needed. Ms. Berube also stated that the criteria for parcel elimination aren't clear to the public.

Ms. Reid explained that the Tall Pines neighborhood has been the only neighborhood that was eliminated, and it is because they do not have enough water supply.

Next meeting was set for 11/14/24 at 2:00 PM.

Meeting adjourned at 3:28.

Materials Reviewed at the Meeting:

- Agenda for 11/12/24
- Minutes of 10/22/24
- Draft Schedule for Subcommittee & Planning Board
- AxisGIS map prepared by Chair Grady

These minutes were approved 12/4/24