

Town Council Planning Subcommittee Meeting
Library Conference Room
Wednesday, March 21, 2018
9am

Present:

Chairman Donald Anderson, Town Council
Michael Kane, Town Council
Thomas O'Connor, Town Council
Ralph Page
Marilyn Richards

Also Present:

Denise Menard, Town Manager
Larry Smith, Interim Town Planner
Attorney Jane Mantolesky
John Taikina, Developer
Joseph Connelly, Property Owner

Subcommittee Chairman Anderson opened the meeting of the Town Council Planning Matters Subcommittee at 9:00am.

Ms. Richards moved to approve the minutes of 3/2/18. Mr. Page seconded. **The motion to approve the minutes of 3/2/18 passed unanimously (5-0).**

Approval of the 3/7/18 minutes was tabled to the next meeting, pending revisions.

Chairman Anderson asked the petitioner if financing will still be able to be worked out if Special Permit format passes. Mr. Taikina responded that it would.

Ms. Richards asked for clarification from Mr. Taikina that he had previously asked for the proposed Mixed Use Development to remain Industrial Garden Park zone if this goes to Mixed Use under Special Permit with a Mixed Use Development allowed by right under Special Permit in the Industrial Garden Park. Mr. Taikina confirmed that that was precisely what he was saying. Ms. Richards then went on the record stating that it's a deal breaker if any 40 acre parcel could then propose a mixed use development within the Industrial Garden Park, as a Mixed Use would now be listed in the Table of Uses as an allowed use. Mr. Taikina asked to stop discussing this development as if it is all over Town. Chairman Anderson explained that they have to think in reference to the entire Town, because otherwise it would be considered spot zoning. Chairman Anderson stated that the Town is trying to do everything right the first time, and he doesn't want approval of a high density zone to be open to misinterpretation by a court of law. If the Town is to allow a mixed use zoning district, it shouldn't be as a line item, it should be as a by-law. There was discussion as to who wrote the original proposed by-law, and it was concluded that it was the former Town Planner. Ms. Richards stated that the perception is that

this is a good project, but it's the by-law that the Sub-Committee needs to be working on. She stated that she is having trouble envisioning this density in East Longmeadow. Chairman Anderson stated that the core concern is, whether or not this is good for the town. From a Planning perspective, this is technically sound. There is no indication of whether or not this is actually good planning for the Town and its Master Plan. Mr. O'Connor stated that the Planning Board is on record saying that this is not their proposed by-law, it is the developer's. The Planning Board has not actually given any opinion. Ms. Menard said that she discussed this with Planning Board Chairman George Kingston and this by-law would have to be rejected in order to go back before the Planning Board. Ms. Menard pointed out that the former Planner was ill during conceptualization of this proposal.

Chairman Anderson recalled that the Sub-Committee seemed clear on parking, special permit and acreage recommendations and said it would be prudent to get the new Director of Planning involved for the next meeting. There was discussion of whether or not it would make sense for the petitioner to withdraw and begin the process over again, with the new Director of Planning in place to see the process through from beginning to end. Mr. Taikina said that they will wait until the next meeting before withdrawing, if that's the case. Chairman Anderson said he would like some assurance from the Planning Board that this is good planning and consistent with the Town's master plan. He said the new Director of Planning will be key to this process, moving forward.

Mr. Kane asked the petitioners if they had any plans for progressive steps during the interim. Mr. Taikina stated they will plow snow and cut grass, so the buildings will sit there. Ms Richards stated that she was concerned whether or not the scope of this proposal is too broad for what East Longmeadow is willing to accept. You can drive around and see the aesthetic value of what is a good fit for the town, and how zoning has protected that. Mr. O'Connor said he had talked to several hundred people, and if this went to town meeting, it would fail as presented, unless modified. This has never existed before. Creating a mixed use district environment is change, and so is creating a new by-law. Ms. Richards clarified that it's the density of the project that is concerning to her. She said that high-end housing is not what the town needs, but rather more affordable housing. Mr. Taikina stated that they asked for a number the former Director of Planning was comfortable with, then the Planning Board cut that number by 20% that's how they arrived at the current proposal. There was discussion about how to avoid damaging the positive relationship the developer and Town have worked to cultivate. Ms. Mantolesky pointed out that the agreement could include a stipulation for a restrictive covenant which would control any increases to allowed density. She cited the Town of Hopkinton's by-law, as an example. Ms. Richards asked if the developer would accept a by-law that had a mix of affordable housing and concierge living, but the question was not answered concisely.

The next meeting was scheduled for April 24th at 9am in the Library Conference Room.

Mr. Page moved to close the meeting at 10:18am, Mr. O'Connor seconded. **The motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:18am passed unanimously (5-0).**

Respectfully submitted,

Tracy Berns
Planning Administrative Assistant