

# **Town of Princeton, MA Planning Board**

## **Meeting Minutes October 5, 2022**

### **Town Hall Annex and GoToMeeting**

*Board Members present in-person:* Ian Catlow, Rud Mason, John Mirick, Ann Neuburg, Tom Sullivan and Alternates Corey Burnham-Howard and Lisa Drexhage

*Public Participation, in person and remote, as noted*

**Call to order:** 7:30 PM

#### **ANR Plan Reviews**

The Board informally discussed with Larry Greene a possible backlot development on Brooks Station Road under Section XV of the Zoning By-Laws. There appears to be sufficient acreage a conventional ANR subdivision of the parcel, but not enough frontage for two building lots. Section XV provides for dimensional discretion. The existing house is not visible from Brooks Station Road, but is less than 300 feet back from Brooks Station Road. The proposed new house would be at least 300 feet back. There would be a single driveway. The concept is to meet the purposes of Backlot Development with a Conservation Restriction on the front portions of both lots if the Planning Board exercised its discretion on dimensions (road frontage and distance back from road).

The Board has not previously had an application under Section XV. After extended discussion, it was the consensus of the Board that the concept presented was consistent with the purposes of Section XV. Larry Greene will have further discussions with the property owner and decide whether to proceed with an application for a special permit. The Board noted that the application needed to include a surveyed plan showing proposed lot lines and locations of buildings.

#### **Solar Energy Generation Systems**

The Board reviewed a revised draft of a possible by-law prepared by the Chair following the discussion of issues at the September 21 meeting. There was concern over possible size of large scale systems, and clear-cutting of woodlands to create a site for a large scale system. Tom Sullivan pointed out that the entire Town is a watershed for surrounding municipal water systems, and that forests perform a vital function in watershed protection and clean water. The Board considered the possibility of requiring a special permit for a large scale system to provide site-specific protection of watersheds.

There was discussion about limiting the number of sites, the total area of sites, or the total generating capacity in Town. The concern is that such limitations might be challenged as unreasonable restrictions, prohibited by Ch. 40A sec. 3.

The Chair reported on information received from the Fire Department about safety and firefighting concerns. It was the sense of the Board that the concerns of the Fire Department were beyond the scope of zoning by-laws dealing with land use regulations, and could be

addressed by the generic requirement that all solar generation systems had to comply with all applicable town, state, and federal laws, codes, and regulations.

The draft needs to be revised to make it clear that “solar energy generation system” includes all accessory structures and battery storage as well as solar panels.

The Chair will prepare a new draft responding to the discussion.

### **High Density Zoning as MBTA Community**

The Board reviewed a rough draft of a possible by-law prepared by the Chair following the discussion of issues at the September 21 meeting. Larry DeBlois participated remotely and had questions about the statute and regulations that prompted the development of the draft by-law. There was consensus that, if the Town was required to provide an area for high density residential development, the southerly side of Route 140 (Redemption Rock Trail) between Hobbs Road and Mirick Road was probably the best location: on a major artery, closest to an MBTA commuter rail station, and with sufficient depth to be screened from Route 140. Tom Sullivan suggested that the district start 1,500 feet west of Hobbs Road, and end 1,000 feet east of Mirick Road.

It would be useful to have more specific information on the benefit to the Town from grants, and the infrastructure costs to the Town if the site is developed. There is certain to be a demand for that information if a zoning by-law for high density zoning is presented at Town Meeting.

The Board discussed the possibility of inserting a requirement for 10% Affordable Units in any development. The Town presently is well under the State goal for Affordable Units. There was consensus to include such a requirement.

The Chair will prepare a new draft responding to the discussion.

### **Housing Production Plan Committee**

In her role as a member of HPPC, Ann Neuburg reported that the HPPC now expects to have a proposal ready for consideration next month. The Board discussed the challenge of drafting design standards for new two or three unit dwellings to have the appearance of single family residences, such as number of entrances, number of driveways, exterior staircases, and garage doors facing the street. It was suggested that perhaps the approach could be deeper setbacks, and vegetative screening from the street. Ann will ask CMRPC for suggestions, and for possible examples.

### **Master Plan**

In her role on the Master Plan Committee, Ann Neuburg asked if the Board had any zoning issues for the Master Plan Committee to consider in addition to Solar Power Generation, the MBTA Community High Density Zoning, and the possible expansion of two and three unit dwellings under consideration by the HPPC. The Chair mentioned that in 2021, at the suggestion of the Select Board, the Planning Board briefly discussed the possibility of a recreational overlay district along Mountain Road to encourage businesses such as the Mountainside Cafe catering to the increased traffic to Mount Wachusett, but that possibility was never explored.

**Review and Approve Meeting Minutes of September 21, 2022**

**MOTION** to approve minutes

Motion: Tom Sullivan; second Ann Neuburg

Vote: unanimous

**Next Meeting October 19, 2022**

The next meeting will be October 19, 2022, in the Town Hall Annex at 7:30.

**Meeting adjourned** at 9:25 pm p.m.

**MOTION** to adjourn passed unanimously

Respectfully submitted,

John Mirick