



## Affordable Housing Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: June 14, 2022

Time: 7:00 pm

Location: Remote

**Attendees:** Chairperson, Brian Keating; Clerk, Lora Woodward; Members: Renee D'Argento, John Ladik, Tereze Stokes

**Guests:** Jennifer Gingras, Pepperell Town Planner

- **Call to Order**  
7:07pm by Chair, Brian Keating
  
- **Acceptance of Minutes of any previous meetings**
  - Brian Keating makes motion to accept the meeting minutes of 5/17/2022; John Ladik seconded. Vote was 4-0; Motion passes unanimously. Tereze arrived at the meeting after the vote.
  
- **Continued Discussion of Smart Growth Overlay District (Ch. 40R) Analysis (Chris Hayes)**
  - Jenny showed a PowerPoint presentation about Smart Growth (40R) and Mixed Use Overlay District (MUOD)
    - i. She shared that the Town of Pepperell (TOP) worked with Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) to do a Local Rapid Recovery Plan in 2021. A top goal that came out of the process was reinvestment and mixed-use development in Railroad Square. Traditional New England aesthetics are wanted in the commercial area with a walkabout center.
    - ii. Pepperell has 130 units in its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) compared to the 10% goal of 434 units. Adopting a 40R can help with reasons for denying a 40B application.
    - iii. 40R districts proposed: Leighton/Lowell Street, 4 Railroad Street, Paper Mill, Fitzgerald Center, Senior Center, Police Station, Pepperell Mall, Hotel Place, Grocery Store Mall.
    - iv. With the bylaws, Jenny said that they are trying to get ahead of developments with design standards that the developer is to follow. The town has no control in a 40B.
    - v. MUOD includes two areas: commercial area (CV) and village around commercial center (CN)

- vi. 40R gives the town money for building affordable housing
- vii. The PowerPoint slides compared the MUOD and 40R processes
- viii. The slides showed examples of both processes in other towns and in Pepperell
- ix. Current table of zoning uses is the basis of zoning for MUOD
- x. Some of the 40R properties are outside the proposed MUOD districts
- John says that it seems to him that 40R and MUOD are distinct, and it's odd they are being presented in competition
  - i. Jenny shared that by having the districts overlap, it gives the developer options for developing; by putting mixed use design standards in the 40R, it incentivizes the developer to choose 40R so the town benefits
  - ii. Jenny's personal view as a planner is to combine the two bylaws; or add MUOD requirements to the base code standards for TOP's commercial zoning district
- The committee discussed who affordable housing is being developed for – middle income market.
- Renee asked what it would take for us to get to safe harbor status. In Housing Production Plan (HPP) .5% percent in 1 year or 1% in two years.
  - i. Brian shared that 60 units in any one year would get us safe harbor.
- Jenny said that the slide show is available for review on the Planning Department website page under MUOD working group.
  - i. Jenny suggested that the Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) get familiar with this information so that we can advocate for it leading up to the fall town meeting
  - ii. To be discussed again with the Planning Board (PB) on June 21. There will be a formal hearing on July 18<sup>th</sup> on the 40R.
  - iii. Lora summarized her understanding of where we are in the process and what the AHC is being asked to do prior to the Planning Board meeting
  - iv. Jenny stated that this needs to be a consensual agreement between the PB and AHC
  - v. Jenny asked the AHC to find recommendations from other towns that we like that distinguish 40R and MUOD because the town has a limited amount of time with its consultants
  - vi. Jenny asked that the AHC to keep meeting on this discussion point and make a recommendation. The PB wants comments prior to their meeting; suggest questions or pros/cons from AHC standpoint.
- Brian's asked: what is the benefit of having a MUOD rather than focusing on 40R? Why create a separate overlapping district with MUOD?
  - i. Jenny shared that base zoning is the bottom layer of what is required by zoning, uses that are and aren't allowed. When you have an overlay district, then the developer has the option to choose between base zoning or the overlay district.
  - ii. Jenny said that we could change the base zoning to include the form-based code, so it matches what we came up with for the MUOD.
  - iii. Mixed use is currently not allowed in Pepperell, except in a limited amount in the commercial district.
- Lora asked what is the process for changing the base zoning to include the MUOD guidelines?

- Lora shared that she is comfortable with the amount of work from the town staff, consultants, and public have put into the on-going process to learn about MUOD so that whatever comes out of the PB meeting will be in the town's best interest.
  - Renee said that she is not comfortable with the MUOD yet; she feels the process has been rushed and that the town should be overhauling its zoning
  - Tereze feels that the process hasn't been rushed at all; we just need to be careful in how we present it to the town; and we need to be good advocates of it when we present it to town; we've been in this position before with CPA, conservation trust, and it's a matter of preparation and coming up with a plan; we've covered it over and over; agree with doing a mix of the MUOD and 40R; we need to get going with affordable housing
  - Renee said that we can put out our own RFPs
  - Brian said that we can't require; we can only ask; no one is building it voluntarily
  - Renee said that Paula Terrazzi is concerned; Jenny said that she's involved in the process as is all of the town staff and the different town committees. We're trying to create standards that consider environmental impacts.
  - John says that it is going to be a ton of work to educate the town
  - Tereze says it is our job to get the word out
  - Jenny said that she's going to be out there getting the word out once she knows which way the PB wants to go.
  - PB is meeting on Tuesday at 7pm; send Jenny an email with any questions you want the PB to consider; she encourages the AHC members to attend to advocate for affordable housing
  - Lora is comfortable with the 40R moving forward and using the MUOD design standards.
  - Renee would like more clarification on what conservation and environmental guidelines will be put in place.
  - Brian summarized that we are in favor of where this is going.
  - Jenny recommended reviewing the guidelines that are in the MUOD working group; comments are still open.
  - Get comments in ahead of the PB meeting
  - Brian to speak during the PB meeting on behalf of AHC.
- **RFQ for Inclusionary Zoning consultant services**
    - Jenny to pull language from last meeting minutes from 5/17
  - **MHP Consultant for Affordable Housing Activity**
    - Andrew sent a message about hiring a consultant on technical assistance for senior center parcel.
    - Lora asked that Brian forward emails sent to him from town staff or other committee chairs to the rest of the committee members in the future.
  - **New Business**
    - None
  - **Next Meeting**  
Set for Tuesday, July 19, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.
  - **Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn made by Lora Woodward; Seconded by Tereze Stokes.  
Voted 5-0; Motion passes unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 9:25 pm.