

**Planning Board  
Minutes of Meeting  
July 23, 2009**

**\*\*\* Approved August 6, 2009**

**Members Present:** Mark Montanari, Chairman; Janet LaVigne, Vice Chairman; Richard Crowley, Clerk; and, Steve Wheaton and Gregg Champney, Members

**Also Present:** Selectmen and Members of Littleton MBTA Advisory Committee

The meeting was called to order at 7 p.m.

**Informal Discussion – Moore Lane** – Rus Wilson and Kurt Dutcher were present for this discussion. Mr. Wilson stated that since the last time Mr. Dutcher spoke with the Planning Board, he looked at bringing the water line down from the subdivision further up and it is cost prohibitive. He stated that they talked to the Fire Department and they suggested a fire cistern; a 20,000 gallon cistern is proposed; they felt that would be acceptable and they would need the turnaround to be wider. Mr. Wilson stated that they could widen the turnaround. Mr. Montanari stated that the roadway would have to be widened. Mr. Champney asked what the neighbors said about widening the roadway. Mr. Dutcher stated that they were not proposing to widen the roadway; the neighbors did not want it. Mrs. LaVigne stated that Moore Lane is not a public way. Mr. Montanari stated that there is no evidence from the Town Clerk that it was ever accepted at Town Meeting. The discussion regarding the status and the safety of Moore Lane continued for some time. Mrs. LaVigne stated that it should be brought up to subdivision standards. Mr. Montanari stated that it should be widened with turnouts. In response to a question about a well to fill the fire cistern, Mr. Wilson stated that no well was proposed; the Fire Department would keep it filled. Mrs. LaVigne asked how many houses are served by this road; she stated that the board asked for adequate fire safety for the whole road, including access. Mr. Dutcher stated that the road has been this way for many years. Mr. Champney stated that does not mean that the Town will agree to make it worse. Mr. Dutcher stated that the Board had endorsed several ANR plans. Mr. Montanari stated that was a mistake. Mrs. LaVigne stated that drainage would have to be installed as well. Mr. Montanari stated that we need to see a better alternative with a real turnaround, not on property owned by others, and a wider roadway. Mr. Wilson asked if they were to make the turnaround a subdivision, could that be approved. Mrs. LaVigne stated that would not get her vote without drainage. Mr. Champney stated that he was concerned with doing it right this time. Mr. Montanari expressed concern with the notation “Public Way” on the plans, noting that it was not a public way. Mr. Wheaton stated that they need to work with the neighbors.

**Informal discussion – Littleton MBTA Advisory Committee** – Mr. Montanari welcomed members of the committee, stating that the Town is interested in the best solutions for the site. Town Administrator Keith Bergman introduced members of the Littleton MBTA Advisory Committee: Bill Cole, Dave Derrig; Don Maclver, Steve Sussman, and Ruth Liebowitz. He stated that the Board of Selectmen has tasked the Committee with looking at issues to maximize local and regional benefits while minimizing adverse impacts on the town, and addresses also economic impact, access, and parking issues, and report back to the Board of Selectmen. He stated that they looked at the history on the committee, with previous

committee looking at the alternative of relocating to the depot, and the 1995 version perambulating the entire length of the railway, looking for a site and identifying a number of potential locations. He stated that the committee is trying to understand the decision making that went into the station site; what the parameters were, and to look at the current station. He stated that Federal Stimulus funds requiring a State match are forthcoming to reconstruct the Littleton Station as part of the Fitchburg line upgrade project. He stated this is the opportunity for Littleton to identify things that could help the neighborhood. He stated that the committee also has questions about the existing parking and the local regulatory process; there is a need for daily parking; a shuttle to link the station to the common; IBM has expressed interest in a range of issues.

Mr. MacIver stated that he is looking for a formalized process on the citing decision; it has huge land use impacts; the urgency is with the double-tracking and handicap platforms. He sees this as both a threat and opportunity.

Ruth Liebowitz stated that handicap access is an issue; the new station needs to be accessible and the parking needs to be accessible. She stated that putting in the improvements will remove 25 of the 60 to 70 public spaces; daily riders are being cut out. She stated that the station can be a great resource. She asked about approvals for the site and if provisions can be made for daily parking.

Mr. MacIver stated this begs another issue; there is urgency; this is a large issue with impacts to land use; the Master Plan and Open Space plan are important. He stated that discussions are going on now between Nordblom and the tree farm.

Mr. Champney asked about the double tracking. Mr. Bergman stated that the entire length of track in Littleton would be double-tracked. Mr. Champney asked about any alternative sites. Mr. Bergman stated that the last study only looked at the depot, and that site doesn't work; all that's left is sites along 110/2A, a state road; the State salt shed or triumph leasing, or McNiff sites. Mr. MacIver stated that needs to be looked at objectively with risks and mitigation; that should be done quickly.

Mr. Montanari stated that Roger Nordblom came to us to propose a parking garage; he build the first 100 spaces with no daily parking, it is not manned. He stated that there is another 100 spaces approved; he is the only person that stepped forward and tried to do something about the parking; this is the best we can hope for this time.

Don MacIver stated that this is near the largest open space in town; it is the opposite of smart growth, with the threat of unconstrained development; other communities see a threat there. He stated that this is a risk, a land use concern; there is no obligation to build something for a developer. He stated that this really has to be decided based on what the true needs are for Littleton; other communities have a very public process. He stated that Acton got several million dollars from the big dig and is building two parking garages; why aren't we proactive. He stated that the urgency ramps this up; is this really where we want it; what are the risks, what is the alternative; what about threats and opportunities.

Mr. Montanari stated that another way to look at it is we had a bad situation; parking was helter-skelter; the first parking lot has served us well; there is another 100 spaces approved.

Ms. Liebowitz stated that the committee would like to meet with the contractor who is designing the site; with Nordblom, and MBTA. Mr. MacIver stated that we owe it to the Town to go through an objective, formalized process; more of the Town needs to be involved. He continued to express his opinion on the process that should be conducted.

Mr. Cole stated that he came to this meeting to find out if the Planning Board was going to use whatever leverage it could to help mitigate the situation so it is more acceptable to our community, to the Town as a whole. He feels this spot is ideal for the station; Nordblom is providing a service; to continue to stifle growth in that area is not good for the Town.

Mr. Wheaton stated that the initial Nordblom parking lot was the first discussion the Board had; we are still waiting for design plans for the station and for additional parking. It was noted that the MBTA had no obligation to provide parking for an upgraded station. Mrs. LaVigne stated that Nordblom is willing to work with the Town; we are at a disadvantage, we don't have any funds; he has the land. She stated that it could be a simple station, or it could be more, with some kind of commercial aspect, coffee shop, newspaper shop that would require a rezoning or an overlay and in that process we could work with them.

Mr. MacIver stated that Ayer had a different approach; it isn't just a matter of waiting for someone to file something. Mrs. LaVigne stated that is why we have Mr. Bergman, to identify sources of funding available. Mr. Bergman stated that the Town has a unique opportunity to take advantage of; shuttles are in discussion; the station will be upgraded. Mr. Bergman stated that the majority of neighbors are on the committee. Mrs. Toohill suggested a list of mitigation desired by the Town. Mr. Bergman stated that Representatives Eldrige and Arciero have volunteered to be involved with the project; the 1995 and 2005 studies are linked on our web site; further outreach is needed.

Mr. Liebowitz stated that Police Chief Kelly did a traffic study of Foster Street; it turns out that peak traffic doesn't correlate with the train station, suggesting that train ridership constitutes ten percent of traffic on the lower part of the street down to Taylor Street; it is more general traffic.

The Planning Board thanked the committee members for the information.

**DLTA – Littleton Common Overlay District – Mark Racicot/MAPC** – Mark Racicot provided copies of handouts for those present. Mr. Bergman stated that all the information was posted on the web site. Mr. Racicot reviewed the handouts, noting that the results of the land use tally for the three sub-areas from the June 17 meeting, updated through July 19 were presented. He stated that uses that scored the highest are mostly allowed now; there is an interest in Town to have some additional mix of uses in downtown; this would be an infrastructure issue. He stated that for comparison, 1,000 square feet of retail space needs about 50 gallons per day wastewater treatment, while a 2-bedroom condo of 1,000 square feet would need about 220 gallons per day wastewater treatment. He stated that this would have to be addressed.

Mr. Racicot stated that for the land area east of the common, farmland protection, indoor and outdoor recreation, and historic preservation were the only land uses that had over 50 votes, with some interest in cluster residential and some interest in restaurants. He stated that he got the impression that people want to preserve this area as the eastern gateway to the community and maintain farmland along that corridor. Mr. Racicot stated that design guideline responses support historic New England style, not large scale, more house and barn scale with gabled rather than flat roofs, 2.5 to 3 stories max; pedestrian amenities; green-scape; parking hidden and used to serve a number of structures.

The discussion turned to which districts to start with for further work, with input from Planning Board members, Selectmen, and residents. Following a lengthy discussion, the board agreed to move forward on all three areas for now, noting that it would take time to do a good job of any zoning proposals, with input from more residents needed. Mr. Racicot stated that some of the areas might require a simple zoning change; he agreed it would be tough to do all three for the Fall Town Meeting. It was suggested to aggressively contact owners in the areas; Mr. Montanari noted that all owners and businesses had been notified.

Mr. Racicot stated that for area B from downtown to Beaver Brook, many of the uses that are desired are currently allowed; a hotel is allowed by Special Permit; a restaurant is allowed by Special Permit; things that cannot be included under the existing zoning are a theater, no residential, and retail is limited to 10 percent of the gross floor area of the project being built. The change for that area might be a zoning change that could enable a special permit from the Planning Board to increase the percentage of floor area that could be occupied by retail, not a very difficult zoning change. Mr. Montanari stated that he wants to work first on area B because we have a dialog with Cisco; they came to the June meeting and expressed an interest in working with the Town on this. Mr. Racicot referenced districts in Bedford, Stoughton, and Millis that could be used; he envisioned a Special Permit process where the Planning Board can use design guideline elements; small package treatment plants have been used in other towns.

Mr. Racicot stated that in area C, east of the common, Littleton does have an existing cluster ordinance that would allow for clustering of residential, but the issue is if that meets the goals adequately for farmland protection. There could be a series of ANR lots and later development in the back parcels; he would like to see incentive for the landowners to steer them away from the frontage development, possibly allow additional uses as long as the farmland is protected. He referenced Amherst's Farmland Protection bylaw, and the Great Estates bylaw in Ipswich; he will bring examples and talk about possibilities.

Mr. Racicot stated that 80 people was a good turnout, although not a scientific sample. The discussion turned to how to proceed and what approach to take. Mr. Champney stated that we have an opportunity to plan for preservation. It was noted that adding architectural elements to the common, area A, would help. A comment was made to not rush to over commercialization; zoning should be protective. Amenities the Townspeople would like to see include restaurants. Traffic impact concerns were raised as well as commercialization and environmental effects.

Following a discussion about scheduling, the Planning Board announced another meeting on August 20 to continue the work on the Littleton Common Overlay Distracts.

**Board Business** – Bills and Payroll were signed and approved for payment.

The meeting adjourned.

Signed,

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Richard Crowley, Clerk