

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 8, 2006

A regular meeting of the Lexington Planning Board held in Cary Hall Auditorium, 1605 Massachusetts Avenue, was called to order at 7:30 p.m. by Chairman Manz with members Galaitsis, Harden, Hornig, Canale and planning staff McCall-Taylor and Schilt present.

***** TRAFFIC MITIGATION *****

Public Meeting on the Marrett-Spring-Bridge Intersection: There were approximately 40 people in the audience. Ms. McCall-Taylor welcomed them and thanked them for coming to the meeting. She explained that this meeting was a continuation of last year's work that identified issues at the Marrett Road/Spring and Bridge Streets intersection (MSB), and explored concepts for acceptable solutions related to enhancing public safety and reducing congestion during peak travel hours. The purpose of tonight's meeting was to narrow the options and arrive at a preferred alternative that could be used in working with MassHighway to improve the intersection. She turned the meeting over to Ms. Anne McKinnon and Mr. Thomas Stokes, consultants from Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates.

Ms. McKinnon gave a more in depth summary of the work leading up to tonight's meeting. Mr. Stokes presented the data gathered in the fall. Traffic counts showed the traffic volumes at the approaches were predictable and consistent. The average daily trips were over 13,000; Saturday experienced a lower peak during mid-day. There was a very significant peak on Spring Street in both the morning and afternoon. He compared the current counts with ones done in 1974, 1987 and 2002.

Possible Improvements: Mr. Stokes said that there were certain improvements common to all the proposals. These would be installation of sidewalks, crosswalks and a pedestrian signal on Marrett Road, and relocation of the MBTA bus stop and the hydrant on Marrett. The possible improvements to be presented this evening are traffic signals, a roundabout, and geometric improvements.

Traffic signals - The presence of a traffic signal at MSB would ease the delay slightly. The effect would depend on the timing, but it would probably take from Marrett and reduce delays on Spring, balancing out the delays at the intersection. The signals themselves could be on a pole or suspended over the road. They need to be within twenty degrees of the main line of vision so a pole mount could work at this location. The signals could be set to operate during off-peak times based on detectors in the road. There could be a pedestrian signal by the reservoir and the Bridge School.

Roundabout - A roundabout is not the same as a rotary; it is designed to reduce speeds. The construction of a roundabout would require the taking of land in front of the historic Bridge House. Having the cross traffic from Marrett turning left onto Spring doesn't work well with a roundabout and may cause more backups. The advantage to the roundabout is that all traffic is slowed down and coming from one direction.

Geometric improvements - The roadway would be striped to have a 3-foot bike lane and an 11-foot travel way. There would be stop signs and a left turn lane from Marrett onto Spring with new pavement markings. This could make the left turn from Spring more difficult as through traffic would not be held up by queuing. Curb lines at the intersection of Spring and Bridge Streets would be extended, in effect narrowing Marrett Road at this location, allowing safer pedestrian crossing and helping to channel traffic. A further consideration would be restricting turns onto Spring, making Bridget Street right turn only.

Costs of improvements - No formal estimates have been made, but geometric improvements would be the cheapest, perhaps around \$300,000; the roundabout would be about the same but with the addition of the cost of the land takings; signalization would be about a half a million dollars but might be eligible for federal funding.

There were questions from the audience about how work at this intersection might affect, or be affected by, other intersections, and did the MSB intersection need to be coordinated with Trapelo Road and other signals. Mr. Stokes said that if the intersection is over a half mile away it is assumed to have no effect. It was also pointed out that this is an alternate route when there is a back up on Route 128. Shade and Grassland streets were reported as being cut-throughs for traffic. There seemed to be support for making the area safer for pedestrians, including sidewalks and a pedestrian signal. This would be in keeping with the newly instituted Safe Routes to School program. There appeared to be little support for the roundabout, particularly as it would involve land takings. In addition it was felt it would not be friendly to bicycle traffic. Some speculated that if the improvements worked, it would be short-lived as more traffic would be attracted as delays decreased, and soon it would be as bad as it had been.

The Board agreed to more fully discuss these issues after the work for Town Meeting was done and a written report was received from Howard/Stein-Hudson.

***** PLANNING BOARD ORGANIZATION, SCHEDULE *****

The members agreed to meet on Friday, March 10 at 3:00 p.m. in the Planning Office to discuss the inclusionary housing article.

***** MINUTES *****

Review of Minutes: The Board reviewed and corrected the minutes for the meeting of January 4, 2006. On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to approve the minutes as amended.

***** ARTICLES FOR 2006 TOWN MEETING *****

Inclusionary Housing: The Board discussed two issues, whether or not the affordable units in smaller developments should be allowed to have only one or two bedrooms, and, if so, what should the inclusionary credit be for such units. All agreed that the major concern is still the complexity of the bylaw. Mr. Hornig felt this could be addressed by restructuring the bylaw and said that he would attempt to do so.

***** ADMINISTRATION OF LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS *****

40 Middleby Road Preliminary Cluster Subdivision, Public Information Meeting: Present for the development team were John Farrington, attorney; Gary Larson and Linda Bruno, landscape architects, Larson and Associates; and Jane and Fred Davis, owners. Two neighborhood residents, who had been informally notified of the agenda item by postcard, were in attendance.

Mr. Farrington said that the plan before the Board was a preliminary subdivision. There had been a sketch plan in May of 2003 and again in October 2005 for a reduced frontage subdivision. The Board had recommended refilling as cluster, which gives more flexibility in site design.

The proposal is for a two-lot cluster subdivision with three dwelling units. One of the proposed dwelling units is a new single-family house, and the other two units are comprised of an existing 3-bedroom single-family house with an attached 2-bedroom accessory apartment. Both of the proposed new lots meet the minimum lot size of 15,500 square feet in the RS District. A separate area of common open space is proposed, consisting of approximately 12,920 square feet of space along the northern section of the property. The common open space will retain many of the existing trees on the site. Access for both lots is to be provided via a shared 12-foot wide driveway with a 2-foot gravel shoulder on either side, for a total width of 16-feet.

Mr. Larson said there was a piped intermittent stream across the street. Although no test pits had been done at this time, with the Charlton soil present on the site he would expect no drainage issues. The cluster plan shows some changes from the reduced frontage plan. The catch basin is no longer shown in the easement. A new stone retaining wall will be built approximately 4 feet in from the property line and 2 or 2 ½ feet tall.

Most of the questions raised by the Planning Board dealt with the scale and massing of the proposed new house, impacts to the adjacent town-owned land and bike path, the proposed retaining wall to be constructed within an existing sewer easement, the design of the driveway, and the potential for limited access to the new house if the Town is working on the sewer line in the easement.

It was felt that more information was needed about the proposed stormwater drainage system, including a more detailed analysis from soil test pits on the site, stormwater runoff calculations for the 100-year storm, and the location and design details of the proposed drywells on the individual lots. The Conservation Commission will need to verify the wetland delineation on the adjacent town-owned property prior to submission of a definitive plan.

The Planning Board had concerns about the size and scale of the proposed new house in terms of its relationship to the existing house, as well as views from the adjacent town-owned land and bikeway. Members felt a definitive plan submission should include elevations of the proposed house in relation to that of the existing house at 40 Middleby Road and that a sketch of the view of the proposed house from the bikeway would be helpful.

The Planning Board was supportive of the proposal to retain the existing smaller home and the accessory apartment as a means to provide a wider range of housing opportunities in town. They asked the applicant to consider a deed restriction to ensure that the accessory apartment remains as a rental unit in perpetuity. It was noted that should this plan be approved at the definitive stage, any change to the size of the accessory apartment, or its incorporation into the existing home to form a larger single-family structure, would require an amendment to the special permit.

The questions and comments from the audience were related mostly to concerns about impacts to the adjacent wetland resources and the size and scale of the proposed new house.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to approve the preliminary cluster subdivision with conditions, and to authorize the applicant to proceed with a definitive submission.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:50 p.m.

Anthony G. Galaitsis, Clerk