

**Rowley Planning Board
Minutes - January 30, 2019 Meeting
Informational Meeting**

Members Present

Chris Thornton (Chairman), David Jaquith (Vice Chairman), John Urbanczewski (Member), Troy Spaulding (Member), Mark Savory (Member), Kevin Daley (Associate Member), Larry Graham (Consulting Engineer) and Kirk Baker (Town Planner) were present. The meeting location is in the Rowley Library meeting room located at 141 Main Street.

Thornton called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. and announces that tonight's meeting is an informational meeting for the public to ask questions of the Planning Board and to express concerns pertaining to upcoming zoning amendment hearings.

1st Item of discussion:

Newburyport Turnpike (Route 1) - Transfer specific properties as listed in notice located along from the Outlying District (OD) to the Business/Light Industry District (BLI):

Thornton went over the location of the prospective zoning change from Outlying (OD) zoning district to Business Light Industry (BLI) and the intended economic impact, as well as how it might impact the owners of those properties in proximity to proposed redistricted area. He notes that it would open up that portion of Route 1, a major traffic artery through to certain commercial uses that would benefit the Town. He notes that the Outlying District primarily allows for residential development, but also notes there are a number of existing businesses which are grandfathered and non-conforming, which would be made conforming this proposed zoning change.

Multiple comments were received from audience residents. Karen Herrick, representing the Fox Meadows Homeowners' Association gave an overview of their concerns primarily focusing on traffic and road safety for the intersection of Route 1/Wethersfield Street. She further notes that homeowners are adamant that the preferred zoning would be that which serves to retain the character of the town and the value of the homes and the properties. A letter was submitted to Board from an individual resident at Fox Meadows.

Brent Baeslack, the Town's Conservation Agent spoke up pertaining to the existence of wetlands in the areas covered by the proposed rezoning. He asked if the town is requesting change due to the fact that developers have expressed interest in them. Thornton notes there is not any specific interest in any of the properties, rather, at this point in time, the Board had identified these properties as having enormous commercial potential compared to other locations in Town and that the rezoning would lay the groundwork for future developers to realize this commercial potential. The Board notes that the Town just recently allowed for marijuana cultivation solely in the BLI district.

Jenna Haag, a Rowley Resident spoke up regarding the zoning boundary and asked what specific uses are allowed in the BLI district. She also asked about the approval processes for the permitted use and what guarantees the Board would ensure the aesthetic integrity of that part of the Route 1 corridor. Baker summarized the elements of the proposed bylaw noting that new developments in the BLI would require special permit approval during which time the Planning Board can impose conditions intended to enhance the aesthetic quality of developments along Route 1. Joan Peterson spoke up that it was a positive that the Planning Board would have the input to shape the development of Route using the Special Permit process. Thornton reminded everyone of the fact that the State is always involved in the project that happen along Route 1 also. David Field of Cross Street asked how the town came about the selection of parcels, to which Jaquith replied that the Zoning Review Committee looked into it and decided that these parcels along Route 1 had the most commercial potential without unnecessarily compromising the character and charm of the remainder of the Town which otherwise is zoned Outlying District. He noted that Rowley does not have a split tax rate.

Baker talked about the four other parcels to be included in the rezoning request which are located south of Wethersfield Street, and abut Business Park where the Ipswich Bay Glass facility is located.

Zoning Bylaw Amendment and for Zoning District Map Amendment – area along western extent of Haverhill Street near the I-95 exchange as being a new Retail Village Overlay District (RVOD)

Thornton introduced the proposed zoning amendment and noted that there are limitations on number of residential units that could be located on the subject area due to the fact that there is no town sewer. Baker explained RVOD criteria for the extension of the business overlay area. Special features would include a small scale retail mall that would involve special architectural requirements, signage, parking in the rear, and additional items as required by a special permit review, such as materials used. Residents commented and questioned design features and the timeliness of the change. Baker notes that one of the parcels included at the request of the property, that wasn't initially included, is the property where Chrislar Farm is located.

Thornton noted that public safety concerns will be discussed when particular projects come up and, at that time Police and Fire departments weigh in on the merits of specific proposals. Residents stated they would welcome residential and the Board will make this recommendation. Another abutter spoke about the nearby off-ramp for the I-95 from which traffic merges onto Route 133. The Board points out that a traffic study would be required for any proposal. The Board notes that under the current zoning, drive-throughs are not allowed, except for drive-through pharmacies. The Board members didn't think this was the time to deal with restaurant drive-throughs, which is a very hot topic. Baker notes the businesses in the proposed area are zoned BLI except for Chrislar Farm which is zoned Outlying District (OD). One attendee suggests that if the project could include room for a residential component, perhaps on the second floor then there would be more incentive for a developer to take on such a project.

Zoning Bylaw Amendment for new Rowley Station Transit Oriented Development Overlay District (RSTOD) bylaw, and to amend Zoning District Map of Rowley to create a new RSTOD over an area of approximately 19.43 acres incorporating 395, 393, and 397 Main Street and) Railroad Avenue

Baker notes that the property is being rezoned based on a proposal by the property owner of Didax requested the change noting they have outgrown their current location and have offered to donate the Didax building to the town if they were allowed to develop the abutting undeveloped parcel which abuts the MBTA station, possibly as a compact residential, pedestrian-oriented community. Baker explained the concept in zoning which is called a Transit Oriented Design (TOD) type development which in the recent years has become the current trend urban development. The Board feels this would be a great opportunity for the town. There is no requirement for affordable or moderate income development. Didax could be used for municipal offices. Currently the annex is now too small. The town could use the annex whole first floor for the Council on Aging, as is already handicapped accessible. Didax would offer good storage, bays, a good building, and the town would get it housing mix, trails, and parking in rear to make it aesthetically pleasing. Estimating 45 units max depending on septic, based on the formula to determine this. Residents hoping to keep historic Rowley look while also creating a cutting edge type of production as well. A resident thanked the Board for the format tonight.

The Board reminded residents that this topic is on the Selectman agenda for February 13.

Jaquith made a motion to adjourn, Savory seconded. All voted in favor. Meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.