

PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

January 10, 2024

APPROVED: February 14, 2024

AGENDA: OLD BUSINESS:

- Review Steep Slopes and Ridgeline definitions.
- Identify and list hills with steep slopes around Bristol.
- Review the list of properties on Lake Street that are split zoned.

NEW BUSINESS:

- Discussion - Town Report, Master Plan and Agenda structure

ATTENDING: John Miller (Chair), David Shirley (Vice Chair), Elizabeth Seeler, Don Millbrand , Carroll Brown (Alternate Select Board Representative) and Steve Carten (Planning Board Alternate)

OTHER: **Staff:** Joanne Bailey (Land Use Manager), Donna Sullivan (Land Use Administrative Assistant) and Christina Goodwin (Town Administrator) **via Zoom**

Applicants, Professionals, and Public: none

With a quorum present, Chair Miller opened the meeting at 7 pm. He indicated that Alternate, Steve Carten was present but would not be seated as voting member due to a full quorum present.

OLD BUSINESS:

Steep Slopes and Ridgelines

There was discussion about visiting the hillsides with steep slopes and views to identify and determine those that hold significant views and other attributes to be protected. It was determined that this would require permission from landowners. Parameters and guidelines could be set up similar to Conservation Commission Site visits. Further research and considerations would be investigated for this.

Definitions of Ridgelines and Steep Slopes discussion included references to of Mr. Shirley's memo of June 14, 2023. Mr. Shirley stated that identification and mapping would be important and would help to guide the Board about the attributes present to define ridgelines and steep slopes. He indicated that it may not need to be definitions but instead noted and identified areas that inform the Town's protected areas and why. More discussion followed about zoning in these districts that would and would not allow certain development such as commercial or residential.

Chair Miller stated that he found that it all comes back to the vision and development of the Master Plan. He felt the mapping and other documentation would inform the townspeople and developers of the areas to be restricted and protected to preserve the important resources in Town while supporting growth and development that would be suitable for these areas.

Mr. Brown expressed concern about limiting landowners from building a residence. Discussion followed about driveway restrictions and current steep slopes/ridgeline restrictions in current zoning. Chair Miller stated that as stewards of the planning process, the Planning Board is reviewing existing zoning and Master Plan and looking forward to any issues for development that could be a concern or could be

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Steep Slopes and Ridgelines - continued

identified to address these in a proactive way rather than a reactive way. He indicated that the new Master Plan Land Use Chapter and adjustments to zoning would be the product of this review.

With work by Resilience Planning and Design still pending and more discussion needed, the Board tabled this for further discussion at future meetings.

Split Zoning Districts along Lake Street

The Board reviewed a list of properties along Lake Street that currently fall in split zoning districts which was prepared by the Land Use staff. There was discussion about the lots along North Main Street and Lake Street with emphasis on those lots that currently have mixed use. Mr. Milbrand expressed concern for the lots along North Main Street that are currently residential only and now could be commercial too.

Discussion followed about which zoning is more restrictive in the split zones and what that means for property owners in these areas. Mr. Shirley and Mr. Millbrand stated that along Lake Street it may be better to extend the commercial zoning to include the whole lot. More discussion followed about the grandfathered uses and the zoning impacts for future property owners.

Chair Miller asked if the maps could be adjusted based on the current use and he cautioned a need to be careful not to create islands. Mr. Milbrand stated that the intention of the zoning is not to just consider how a property is used presently but what the Town wants the district to be or represent in the future. He stated that the Commercial District along Lake Street is the intent. The zoning map was originally adjusted but went with 200-foot measurement for depth of the district which ended up causing the split zoning on lots that abut a residential district.

Following discussion, it was determined that the intent was important, and this should be a consideration for any changes in the mapping lines. Lots along Lake Street were reviewed and the consensus was that certain lots could be changed to Village Commercial only.

More discussion and concerns followed about what to do with lots that are to remain Village Residential or in split zones. With the concerns in mind, it was discussed that the new lines could be extended to all lots along Lake Street. Some of the concerns discussed involved possible lot line adjustments, new subdivisions, and other possible issues for future development along Lake Street.

Additional discussion followed about the lots along Lakes Street from Ballou Road to Keezer Road. Because some of the lots in the commercial zoning are residential along N. Main Street, there was discussion to adjust the lines so the residential areas would now be residential. More discussion about the original intent for the split zoning along this strip followed. A four-lot subdivision that falls in the commercial zoning with the back lots having residential use on North Main Street was discussed specifically with a consensus to adjust zoning by lot lines.

Chair Miller asked Ms. Bailey what the process would be to make changes to the maps and zoning districts. It was discussed that the zoning amendment process of proposals, hearings and voting would apply. Ms. Goodwin stated that the current property owners would need to be notified as well.

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Split Zoning Districts along Lake Street - continued

Chair Miller asked the Board if they wished to take a field trip to view all these lots. Ms. Bailey suggested use of Google Earth to view these lots. It was suggested that this be done in sections. The consensus of the Board was that it made sense to look at adjusting the lines for commercial use and residential use by considering the intent of zoning. Chair Miller spoke about the lot 101 subdivision being his main concern considering the current use of the four subdivision lots. Mr. Milbrand said the road frontage is a factor as well with the lots on North Main Street in this area being residential.

To move forward with review and proposals for the split zones, Chair Miller suggested looking at the existing commercial properties to possibly adjust the zoning based on lot lines and for those that also have road frontage in residential areas the Board could look closely for the road frontage, the residential use, neighboring uses, and any potential for commercial use to consider changes. There was discussion about some of the lots having other considerations such as steep slopes.

A site visit schedule was discussed and the need for posting of these as meetings with minutes to be provided if a quorum is present. The first visit to Lake Street Split Zoned properties would be Wednesday, January 31, 2024, at 10 am. Intended viewing will be lots from Ballou Road along Lake Street, Keezer Road, and North Main Street. The office will post this agenda and notify property owners. Members will meet at Village Pizza. Chair Miller, Mr. Shirley, and Mr. Carten stated they will be present. Mr. Sanschagrín will be notified.

NEW BUSINESS:

Town Report

The draft Planning Board Town Report was reviewed.

Discussion followed about the importance of Planning and the Master Plan process and communicating this to the Townspeople and taxpayers. Chair Miller stated that this was an opportunity to report activities of the Board for the year and to communicate to the Town the importance of what the Planning Board does to address and balance growth and resource protection for Bristol. Specific activities of the Board with Land Use permits and zoning updates were reported.

There was additional discussion of 2023 activities and responsibilities, workforce issues, housing development, job retention/creation and other issues that could be part of future activities and development of the Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan. Chair Miller added that including the Master Planning information offered opportunity for all taxpayers to take part or have a voice in Town Planning activities, not just residents.

Following discussions, Mr. Brown offered an edit to include the word “the” in the second sentence in the second paragraph to complete the sentence, “Please come to the public hearing when it is announced to hear more about the Land Use Chapter.”

The report will be submitted for the Town Report as amended.

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Agenda Updates

A draft Agenda for the Planning Board was reviewed with Chair Miller proposing new categories which better suited the activities of the Board. He indicated he would like to move from the Old Business and New Business format to a new format that would include three sections: Cases, Planning and Operational.

It was noted that this would require a change to the Planning Board Bylaws. After discussion of the categories and activities, the Board opted to amend the Bylaws at the next meeting and incorporate this change to the agenda moving forward.

MINUTES:

The minutes of December 13, 2023, were reviewed. Mr. Milbrand motioned to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Shirley seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0.

COMMUNICATIONS:

Ms. Sullivan shared a survey received for the Littlefield property on High Street. This was an FYI for the Board and the Land Use Office. This survey will be filed with the property file.

REPORTS:

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION (HDC) – No report

CIP COMMITTEE – No Report

CONSERVATION COMMISSION – No Report

LAND USE – Ms. Sullivan updated the Board about the Flood Plain Mapping updates. The Select Board has completed its acceptance of this information. Ms. Goodwin stated that this is the only updating the Select Board is authorized to do for Zoning Maps and these updates will be posted when all approved zoning updates are posted after voting at the Town Meeting.

SELECT BOARD - Mr. Brown reported that a date was set for the All-Committees Meeting. Ms. Goodwin added that there was a concern for full committee representation for the original January 11th date, so the meeting was moved to January 25th at 6 pm.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS: None

STAFF COMMENTS: None

NEXT MEETING: January 24, 2024

ADJOURNMENT: With no other business before the Board, Ms. Seeler motioned to adjourn. Mr. Milbrand seconded. The motion carried 5-0-0. The meeting adjourned at 8:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Cote
Land Use Associate