



ACTON PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of Meeting  
January 13, 2004  
Acton Memorial Library

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E. Bower  
TOWN CLERK, ACTON

Planning Board members Ms. Lauren Rosenzweig (Chairman), Mr. Ed Pearson (Vice Chair), Mr. Greg Niemyski, Mr. Christopher Schaffner, Mr. Patrick Halm, Ms. Mobina Mohsin and Associate Member Ms. Stacy Rogers were in attendance. Town Planner, Mr. Roland Bartl and Planning Board Secretary, Ms. Karen Switzer-Neff were also in attendance. Absent was Mr. Hart Millett.

Ms. Rosenzweig called the meeting to order at 7:30 PM.

I. Citizen Concerns

No citizen concerns were presented.

II. Consent Agenda

The minutes of December 16, 2003 were approved unanimously.

III. East Acton Village Planning Committee

East Acton Village Planning Committee (EAVPC) members present: Ms. Micki Williams, Ms. Carol Holley, Ms. Stacey Durkin, Ms. Betsy Comstock, and Mr. Tom McLaughlin. Also present was Ms. Kristin Alexander, Assistant Planner.

Ms. Williams gave a presentation on the following proposed Town Meeting articles that are associated with the draft East Acton Village Plan:

EAV A – Prohibition of Motorized Craft on Ice House Pond

EAV B – Village Green Rezoning

- Change the Town-owned parcel at 108 Great Rd. from LB to ARC.

EAV C – 8 Wetherbee Street Rezoning

- Change from SM to EAV.

EAV D – EAV Use Regulations

- Allow greater variety of businesses; disallow uses less appropriate for village settings; and permit additional housing types.

EAV E – EAV Dimensional Regulations

- Allow buildings 10 feet from the right-of way and 5 feet from non-residential side lot lines.
- No minimum requirement for lot size, frontage and width.
- 25% minimum open space requirement.

EAV F – Create EAV-II District

- Will concentrate development in EAV
- Helps to protect Nashoba Brook
- 35% minimum opens space requirement
- 0.2 FAR requirement

EAV G – Special Provisions for EAV District

- Includes business sizes, limits and design standards for buildings requiring a site plan special permit.

EAV H – Options for Density Increases

- Maximum 0.5 FAR with use of TDRs, historical preservation, affordable housing, or base LEED certification.

- Property is limited to maximum 0.2 FAR for 25 years if an historical structure is demolished.
- A 25% increase in square footage will be provided to the receiving property in EAV on the east side of Great Rd. if TDRs are purchased from streamside properties in EAV and EAV-II.

#### EAV I – EAV Parking Requirements

- Connections between adjacent parking lots.
- Reduction in minimum spaces required.
- Further reduction in minimum parking spaces if shared parking.
- No above-ground structured parking.
- Encourage placement of retention areas in large, consolidated landscaped areas in parking lots.

#### EAV J – Modified Sign Regulations for EAV

- Allow signs made of “wood-appearance” materials.
- Allow gooseneck lamps to illuminate exterior signs.
- Maximum of 3 signs per business.
- Allow internally lit awning signs.

#### EAV K – Site Plan Review Threshold in EAV

- Development and building expansions greater than 500 square feet require a site plan special permit and triggers the Special Design Provisions

#### Additional Recommendations for EAV

- Sidewalks & crosswalks
- Traffic light
- Village gateways
- EAV Green & Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
- Shared wastewater treatment
- Update stormwater management regulations
- Encourage open space and protection of Nashoba Brook and Ice House Pond
- Public awareness
- Formation of an East Acton Village Organization

#### Planning Board questions/comments

- Members of the Board commended the EAVPC on the presentation. Members of the EAVPC acknowledged Ms. Alexander’s hard work and long hours associated with the Committee.
- It was suggested that future presentations start with a locus map prior to focusing on the subject area to better orient the audience.
- Demonstration of the FARs should include the size of the parcel used.
- A glossary of abbreviations should be provided.
- It was recommended that a group be delegated to keep track of what properties have land available for TDRs such as the EDIC.
- When asked about the effect on existing properties, it was confirmed that existing properties are grandfathered.
- It was suggested that information be available on other village centers, such as Concord Center.
- There was concern that small manufacturing is not going to be an allowed use in EAV-II. It was suggested that small manufacturing uses be allowed, but be controlled by limiting square footage.

Mr. Bartl had the following concerns:

- The 25% open space requirement may promote sprawl by creating useless pockets of open space. He suggested that landscaping requirements be used rather than imposing strict minimums.

- Mr. Bartl suggested that the Committee consider design criteria for parking garages instead of prohibiting them. He reported that businesses' own parking requirements tend to be an impediment for denser village developments. Ms. Rosenzweig offered to gather examples of parking garages for the Committee.

Members of the Board will provide comments on the Draft East Acton Village Plan directly to the Committee.

IV. Mr. Kevin Sweeney re: Colonial Acres IV House Designs

Mr. Kevin Sweeney of Sweeney & Sons, Inc., Mr. Jeff Ruda and Mr. Landers Symes of Symes Associates, Inc. were present to discuss changing the originally approved set of house designs for the Colonial Acres IV subdivision to a new set of house designs. Mr. Sweeney reported that he intends to convey the house lots to Symes Associates, Inc. who would like to use their own set of house designs. Mr. Sweeney will continue to be the site contractor and will bond and complete the road. It was noted that the new house designs are not substantially different from the original house designs.

Planning Board comments

- The new house designs are less ostentatious than the original designs.
- When asked about constructing Energy Star rated homes, Mr. Symes responded that the past three projects were Energy Star rated; however, it depends on the inspection schedule for obtaining the rating.
- It was noted that there were no representatives from the neighborhood present. Mr. Bartl reported that a few abutters had come into the Planning Department to review the proposed new house designs and did not have any objections.
- In response to a question by Mr. Ruda regarding like kind architecture, members of the Board responded that it would be acceptable to modify the styles as long as they are generally consistent with the presented plans.

Mr. Niemyski moved that the Planning Board vote to amend the decision for the Colonial Acres IV PCRC Special Permit by deleting the house style designations from all plan sheets and replacing them with the house plans, or similar, proposed by Symes Associates. The decision was further amended to waive the style designations on sheets 8 & 9 of the original plans. The motion was seconded by Mr. Halm and passed by unanimous vote.

V. Discussion, Proposed Zoning Changes for 2004 Annual Town Meeting

In addition to the above proposed EAV zoning changes, members of the Board discussed the following draft zoning articles:

Outdoor Lighting Regulations

Mr. Bartl reported that the Outdoor Lighting Advisory Committee is rethinking their proposed zoning changes based on concerns from the Building Commissioner. Changes are being made so that commercial lighting will be handled under site plan review.

ARC District Changes for Skate Park

This article accommodates the proposed skateboard park on Hayward Rd. When asked how this would affect other properties zoned ARC, Mr. Bartl responded that it would allow buildings such as kiosks to be placed closer to the street. Since this only affects land owned by the Town and Acton Water District, it was suggested that the minimum lot area requirement in ARC be eliminated.

Multi-Family Dwelling in the South Acton Village (SAV) District

This change would allow more creative multi-family building designs without increasing density limits for residential development in the SAV district. When asked about ramifications on other properties in SAV, Mr. Bartl indicated that the special permit covers design issues. It was noted that West Acton Village has no requirements for the number of units in multi-family dwellings.

### Adjustments to Section 9B – Senior Residence

Developer Mr. Fenton and representatives from Stamski & McNary approached Mr. Bartl with concerns about the existing Senior Residence Bylaw. They indicated that it does not allow the maximum density under present zoning, even on parcels that do not have any significant constraints. It was noted that the Senior Residence Bylaw has never been used since it was adopted by Town Meeting in 2000. Mr. Bartl was asked to invite Mr. Fenton and Stamski & McNary to attend the next Planning Board meeting to explain why the Senior Residence Bylaw doesn't work. It was decided that if the proposed zoning change does not receive a favorable response at the public hearing it will be pulled.

### Housekeeping

Mr. Bartl explained that the proposed changes correct some errors discovered and are typical consent items.

### Citizen Petitions

#### Changes to the OP-2 (Office Park 2) District Boundary

A request to change property located at 80-84 Piper Road from Office Park 2 (OP-2) to Residence 2 (R-2).

#### Vehicle Wholesale and Storage as an Accessory Use

Allows vehicle storage and wholesale in the Light Industrial (LI) district. This article accommodates Enterprise Rent-A-Car's Regional Headquarters located at 20 Main St. by allowing the storage of up to 200 cars.

## VI. Upcoming Street Acceptances

Mr. Bartl reported that the Selectmen have initiated street acceptance procedures on the following streets and have asked for Planning Board input.

- Woodfield Road and Shady Lane (Maple Creek Farm Subdivision)
- Davis Road (STA 23+00 up), Briar Hill Road, and Bellows Farm Road (Bellows Farm Subdivision)  
Mr. Halm recused himself from participating in the discussion stating that he resides on Davis Road in the Arbors.  
Mr. Bartl reported that technically the roads are not ready for acceptance. Several construction and as-built plan items are outstanding, and a portion of Davis Road is not owned by the developer.
- Alexandra Way and Reeve Street (North Acton Woods Subdivision)  
Mr. Bartl reported that the developer has responded to his letter in which he expressed concern with the amount of outstanding items and seems to be making an effort to complete the subdivision according to the approved plan.

## VII. Reports

### Community Preservation Committee

Mr. Bartl reported that the Committee has been going through question and answering sessions with the proponents for CPA funding. The Committee has voted to reject one proposal so far. He noted that twice as much funding as been requested than what is available.

### Economic Development Committee

Mr. Bartl reported that the Committee is focusing on the search for the EDIC Board of Directors. Six individuals have expressed interest so far.

### Other Business

Ms. Mohsin announced that she is moving out of Acton and will no longer serve on the Planning Board. She was thanked for her dedicated service to the Town.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.