



Holton/Cross/Swanton Streets Study - Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 28, 2022, at 7:00 pm – Zoom Meeting
Planning Board Regular Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 28, 2022, at 8:30 pm – Zoom Meeting

Members Present:	Diab Jerius, Chair	Sally Dale, Vice Chair/Clerk	
	Kurt Spring	Nicholas Rossettos	
	I-Ching Scott		
Also Present:	Brian Szekely, Town Planner	WinCam	
	Nancy Polcari, Recording Secretary		
Others Attending:	Richard Rohan	Jay Lubomirski	Josh Fiala, MAPC
	Mary Monteiro	Joseph Berry	Chris Hurd
	Susan Busher	Anne Sera	David Miller
	Eric Edwards	John Suhrbier	Arafat-e-Jahan Kosturi
	Jaden Yu	Marianne DiBlasi	Susan Verdicchio
	Meredith	Ellen	Joseph

Holton/Cross/Swanton Visioning MAPC Information/Feedback Session

Josh Fiala opened the meeting at 7:03 pm and summarized his agenda:

- He is a Principal Planner with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) working with the PB on the visioning for the Holton/Cross Street study.
- Focus for this meeting: introduction, present analysis details, define a vision, and review next steps.
- Seeking public feedback, via poll/survey questions, today and also via Town website on the Planning Board (PB) page.
- Presentation includes visual images that will be available on the Town website on the PB page.

First Poll (question and general results):

- Who is attending the meeting today: majority are residents of the Town.
- How often do you go in the Holton/Cross Street area: most visit more than once a day.

Mr. Fiala provided the Introduction as summarized:

- The Town's Master Plan of 2030 identifies Holton/Cross Street as a strategic opportunity area for redevelopment with the goal of encouraging commercial, mixed-use, and compact development.
- Purpose of this study is to proactively plan for the future success of this area by increasing the non-residential tax base, update the zoning, creating more predictability/reducing competing forces.
- This first phase includes an analysis of the existing conditions and zoning, and obtaining public input, including focus groups, workshops, interviews; stakeholders encouraged to email Mr. Fiala (jfiala@mapc.com).
- Mostly zoned for limited light industrial (IL), surrounded by residential neighborhoods.
- History: area originally contained industrial uses (mills, tanneries, factories, some worker housing); 1973 map shows more industrial than today; 1989 map shows added multi-family residential zoning.

Discussion (questions/comments from attendees, PB; answers from Mr. Fiala):

- Would like to see an increase in safety, harmony between industrial and residential areas, improvement in traffic.

Mr. Fiala presented a series of images representing the varying existing uses and character including: Holton Street, Cross Street, East Street, Lowell Avenue, River Street, Swanton Street, Chapin Street, McKay Avenue. He provided the current vision for Holton/Cross Streets, including increase the value of the non-residential tax base, update zoning to strategically respond to the market and buffer neighborhoods, and encourage multi-family housing.

Second Poll (question and general results):

- What is most important: safe place to walk/bike, a variety of activity.
- What words describe the ideal vision: walkable, bikeable, job center.
- How close is the existing to the vision you would like to see: not close.
- What is missing: safer walking/biking, more trees.

Mr. Fiala presented slides of the existing characteristics as summarized:

- The characteristics of the area: 37 acres, 48 parcels, 1 acre average size, 16 parcels are owner occupied, 40 buildings.
- Showed the zoning areas, including the two largest: IL and RA-120 (multifamily residential). Noted that the IL zone continues into Woburn.
- Showed the areas for the types of businesses and proportions (two highest are health care/social at 25%, construction at 12%); noted there are several businesses that support family uses such as a dance studio.
- Regarding the structures, most have been built before 2000, are single story and have a FAR between .5 and .1 (Floor Area Ratio = FAR, a density measure of total building area divided by parcel area).
- Most parcels (67%) have a separate owner mailing address (indicating that the property is probably not owner occupied).
- Most parcels (63%) have the land value greater than the building value (indicating that these would more likely change over time).
- Reviewed existing and missing sidewalks/crosswalks, curb cuts, bicycle connections.

Questions/comments from attendees (with responses):

- How does the building size affect redevelopment? Mr. Fiala: there are several considerations; it is not just the size of the building.
- Under the bridge is very unpleasant for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- What about Woburn and their district? Mr. Fiala: will have to reach out to Woburn to discuss.
- Can Town add a sidewalk along Holton now? Mr. Szekely: the Town has a list of sidewalks waiting to be built; he will check on where Holton Street is on the list.
- The intersection at Holton and Cross is a challenge. Is it on the list to address now? Mr. Szekely: this is on the list to address as part of Toole Design's development of a Transportation Master Plan.

Mr. Fiala presented images of the IL and residential zoning areas, identifying specific details of each.

Third Poll (question and general results):

- What uses would you like to see more of: arts/recreation, professional/scientific, residential.
- What uses would you like to see less of: construction/manufacturing, transportation/warehousing.
- What impacts are you most concerned about: traffic, noise, the environment.

Mr. Fiala presented a chart and discussed the existing zoning bylaw, specifically dimensional regulations.

Fourth Poll (question and general results):

- Are building setbacks appropriate: depends on the property, building, and use.
- Are building heights appropriate: depends on the property, building, and use.
- Is building density appropriate: no specific answer; all responses were spread pretty evenly over the answer options.
- What types of design guidelines help to address issues: street improvements, curb cuts, sidewalks, frontage design.

Mr. Fiala presented a chart and discussed the existing off-street parking requirements.

Fifth Poll (question and general results):

- Have you experienced traffic/driving challenges: several difficult intersections; people drive too fast.
- Have you experienced parking challenges: vehicles parking on driveways/sidewalks.
- Have you experienced pedestrian/biking challenges: missing sidewalks; feels unsafe; vehicles speeding.

Mr. Szekely: Noted several intersections have been identified as unsafe: Holton/Cross, Holton/Main (in Woburn), Loring/Cross, River/Cross when the 142 units are available. In addition, many comments related to not enough parking.

Discussion (attendees, PB, Town Planner, Mr. Fiala):

- Suggestion to add or require a buffer when have different zones adjacent to each other.
- Need infrastructure investments.
- Suggestion to include a shuttle bus instead of just considering pedestrian and bicycle modes of transportation.
- Why are the buildings not built to the dimensional zoning limits? Did the zoning change? Mr. Fiala: The buildings were probably constructed for their original purpose, that did not have a need for a second level. Some structures have a small area with a second story.
- What is the backstory for this area? Focus seems to add commercial. Mr. Szekely: Noted that in the 1990's this area was part of a Triangle Master Plan that included the light industrial district and the residential. That plan looked to expand the commercial uses, specifically medical robotics and other high-tech uses. That is not what occurred. Right now, about 95.5% of Town taxes come from the residential base and about 4.5% from commercial. To change that 1%, meaning to go to 94.5% and 5.5%, it would take several large commercial developments ("several Home Depots"). The changes in this area will not make a dramatic impact, but it will certainly help.
- Toole did a study of Cross Street that will be included in this study.
- Holton Street is one of the underutilized areas identified in the 2030 Master Plan.
- Trucking businesses are not compatible with residential neighborhoods; they are noisy and run very early and very late; the commercial businesses should have normal business hours.
- The PB will ask Town Counsel to advise on what legal limitations exist for changing a use of a property, and what protections are in place for pre-existing nonconforming uses.

Mr. Fiala noted the next steps for this study include:

- Putting this recording on the Town website, including the opportunity for people to take the survey (polls).
- Continue stakeholder interviews.
- Analyze the results of public input.
- Document the analysis.

Mr. Fiala closed the presentation at 8:41 pm.

Mr. Szekely encouraged attendees to join the regular PB meeting starting next.

Planning Board Regular Meeting

A quorum being in attendance, Chair Jerius calls the Winchester Planning Board (PB) meeting to order at 8:46 pm, noting that the meeting is being video recorded via WinCam and Zoom. Roll call of PB members: Dale, Rossettos, Scott, Spring, Jerius in attendance.

1. Updates - Chair Jerius: The Select Board voted to replace the current Town Council (Anderson and Kreiger) with Mead, Talerman and Costa.

2. Planning Board Meeting Minutes

a. Meeting Minutes for May 24, 2022:

PB Discussion: For 910 Main Street, the GBD should be 3 and not 2.

Mr. Spring moved to approve the PB Meeting Minutes of May 24, 2022, as amended. Ms. Scott second the Motion. Vote: Dale, Rossettos, Scott, Spring, Jerius in favor. Motion passes 5-0-0.

b. Meeting Minutes for May 31, 2022:

PB Discussion: none.

Ms. Scott moved to approve the PB Meeting Minutes of May 31, 2022. Ms. Dale second the Motion. Vote: Dale, Scott, Spring, Rossettos, Jerius in favor. Motion passes 5-0-0.

c. Meeting Minutes for June 14, 2022:

PB Discussion: Several comments and edits noted.

Ms. Dale moved to approve the PB Meeting Minutes of June 14, 2022, as amended. Mr. Rossettos second the Motion. Vote: Dale, Scott, Spring, Rossettos, Jerius in favor. Motion passes 5-0-0.

3. Position Description for Town Planner (TP):

Chair Jerius: The packet contained two versions of the TP job description, the old one and a new edited one. If acceptable, it gets sent to Human Resources. (Mr. Szekely noted it also gets reviewed by the Personnel Board).

PB Discussion:

- The specific activities have been taken out.
- They are incorporated in more general terms.
- The TP, Ms. Scott, and Chair Jerius developed this new version.
- Suggestion to add historic architectural details and structures under knowledge.
- The PB members are not historic preservationists. Other committees provide that expertise.
- Suggestion to add to the PB handbook, a member requirement to have "a general interest in and knowledge of" and include the list under Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities from the TP job description.

PB concurred to forward the edited TP job description to Human Resources.

4. Waiver of Site Plan Review 9.5.1.A Discussion:

Mr. Szekely: Section 9.5.1.A states that for a Site Plan Review where the expansion is 500 SF or less, the ZBA can waive Site Plan approval. However, the applicant has to petition the ZBA for the waiver because the ZBA does not meet outside of their regular meetings. The bylaw should say the Zoning Enforcement Officer (and not the ZBA) to make it an administrative process, instead of a board action.

PB Discussion, including TP:

- To put in perspective, the scale is the size of a large 2-car garage or two rooms.
- For large homes, this would be a small addition. For smaller homes, this could be more significant.
- Need to have legal counsel review.
- Should it require alerting the neighbors?
- Should be able to process like a building permit.
- What should be included for the criteria? 500 SF? Maybe something less? Include other criteria?
- Suggest changing the zoning bylaw or delete it because it is not working. Most applicants just apply for the Site Plan Review and skip the waiver, even if they are eligible.
- Suggest meeting with the ZBA to continue the discussion.

5. Adjourn:

Mr. Rossettos moved to adjourn the PB meeting of June 28, 2022. Ms. Scott second the Motion. Vote: Dale, Rossettos, Scott, Spring, Jerius in favor. Motion passes 5-0-0. Meeting adjourned at 9:50 pm.

Nancy Polcari, Recording Secretary

Sally Dale, Clerk