



# Winchester Planning Board Report 2023 Spring Town Meeting

**Thanks!**

Spring 2023 TM PB Report  
April 24, 2023

**SUZANNE GILL**  
ENGINEERING & PLANNING ADMINISTRATION

NANCY POLCARI  
RECORDING SECRETARY

BRIAN SZEKELY  
FORMER TOWN PLANNER

KEN PRUITT  
SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR

AL WILE  
BUILDING COMMISSIONER

JANINE VIARELLA  
BUILDING DEPARTMENT

BETH RUDOLPH  
TOWN MANAGER & TOWN ENGINEER

BRYAN MANter  
ASSISTANT TOWN ENGINEER

HISTORICAL COMMISSION

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

HOUSING PARTNERSHIP BOARD

DISABILITY ACCESS COMMISSION

ADU WORKING GROUP

MASTER PLAN IMP. CMMTE

TREES WORKING GROUP

EVERYONE I'VE FORGOTTEN

# What does the Planning Board do?

## **Under Massachusetts Law**

- Study and prepare plans for the resources, possibilities and needs of the Town
- Develop a comprehensive master plan, extend and improve it
- Review, approve and administer Subdivision Control

## **Under Winchester's Bylaws**

- Special Permit Granting Authority for the Center Business District
- Advisory board to the Zoning Board of Appeals

## **Stewards of the Town's Zoning Bylaws**

# What does the Planning Board do?

## 2030 Comprehensive Master Plan Core Themes

- **Balancing Development with Preservation**
  - **Connecting People to Places**
    - **Ensuring Sustainability**
    - **Building Community**

## Monitor

- Changes in demographics
- Housing needs for existing and future residents
- Economic needs of residents
- Housing cost burden
- Economic Development
- Town Finances

## Study

- Current Conditions
- Possibilities
- Effective and Practical Approaches

## Revise Zoning Bylaws

- Address pressing issues
- Course corrections
- Framework for future
- Balance needs of residents

# Status of the Planning Department

1. Brian Szekely left in early January
2. Search committee vetted candidates
3. PB voted unanimously to make offer
4. Candidate accepted another offer
5. We have Re-posted Planner Position
6. Pursuing Interim Planner

**Currently we have no Town Planner**

# Status of the Planning Department

- **No redundancy in Planning Department**
- The full responsibilities of the Town Planner have now fallen onto the Chair and Vice Chair *who are volunteers*.
- No support for Planning Board and other boards who have relied upon the Town Planner.
- Major initiatives (such as MBTA Section 3A and Waterfield/Civico development) *require* professional support from Planner

## Winchester requires a Senior Planner and an Assistant Planner

- An Assistant Town Planner would have allowed continuity of service and process without undue hardship to volunteer members of the Board.
- The Planning Board has requested an Assistant Planner in its budget since 2019; this has not been reflected in the budgets presented to Town Meeting.
- Town Meeting created the position of Assistant Town Planner in Spring 2020.



# Updates on Multi-Unit Developments

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Developments	Status		Use	Market	Afford	Total	Type	SHI
735 Main St Skillings & Main	Approved (ZBA)	Affirmed upon Appeal	Mixed	4	0	4	Condo	0
654 Main St Fells Hardware	Approved (PB)	Affirmed upon Appeal	Mixed	30	6	36	Condo	6
416 Cambridge St Across from Whole Foods	Approved (ZBA)	Affordable Unit Lottery <b>OPEN</b> ENDS May 31, 2023	40B	72	24	96	Rental	96
19-35 River St	Approved (ZBA)		40B	110	37	147	Rental	147
10 Converse Pl	Approved (PB) Denied (ConCom)	Appealed to DEP Suit against Town	Mixed	37	6	43	Condo	4
87-89 Cross Street	Submitted to ZBA	Joint Application w/ Town (LIP)	Res	7	2	9	Rental	9
Washington/ Swanton	Pre-Application	Joint Application w/ Town (LIP)	Res	34	16	60	Rental	60
Waterfield Lot	Pre-Application	Town owned Land	Res	20	40	60	Rental	60

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SHI

Existing: 4.9%

Required: 10%

The Town *lost* safe harbor on March 18, 2022.

**Need to permit at least 40 units/year to re-gain and then maintain Safe Harbor Status**

**MEETING SHI  $\neq$  MEETING NEED**



- The Zoning Bylaw was just approved by the Attorney General
- Working with Building Dept. on eligibility procedures

# MBTA Section 3A Multi-Family Zoning

## What is it?

- State law
- Requires a certain area and *zoned* capacity of by-right multi-family zoning districts in proximity to MBTA stations.

## What is its purpose?

- Create conditions for increased housing production and thus make housing more affordable

## Benefits to Winchester

- More housing for Winchester Residents
- Retain access to State Funding

## Is Compliance required?

- **Yes.** The AG has made it **very clear** that municipalities must comply. No exceptions.





# Current and Upcoming Projects

## MBTA Multi-Family Zoning (Section 3A)

- State has provided Town with paid consultants
- Consultants are modeling Multi-Family by-right scenarios which will be compliant.
- Working with Form+Place on North Main St. as part of the By-Right Multi-Family district.

Zoning @ Spring 2024 Town Meeting  
December 2024 Deadline

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/resources-for-mbta-communities>



# Current and Upcoming Projects

## North Main St Corridor Revitalization



- 2021 Phase I: Initial Conditions
- 2022-2023 Phase II: Exploring Options  
Integration with MBTA \$3A
- 2023-2024 Phase III: Design Guidelines, Zoning

## Holton / Swanton / Cross St (Light Industrial)



- 2022-2023 Phase I: Initial Conditions
- 2023-2024 Phase II: Design Guidelines, Zoning



THANKS!



# What does the Town Planner Do?

- Represents the Planning Board in applying and implementing of Planning Board policy.
- Supports the Planning Board in its duties, e.g. SPGA in the CBD, Subdivision control, etc.
- Advises the Planning Board on development, preservation, and zoning strategies related to the long-term physical development of the Town.
- Works with our specialist consultants to integrate their analysis and studies with the planner's encyclopedic knowledge of local conditions, priorities and directives.

# What does the Town Planner Do?

- Collaborates with the Building & Engineering Departments to interpret and apply Zoning Bylaws.
- Shares their expertise throughout Town Government
- Advises Residents, Home Owners, Architects, Designers & Contractors and on Zoning and Land Use
- Advises and collaborates with other Town Boards & Committees, such as Historical Commission, Select Board, Design Review Committee, Housing Partnership Board, TTAC, and the Local Historic District Study Committee, Council on Aging, etc.

# Impact of unstaffed Planning Department

- Important decisions are delayed because our consulting technical staff cannot meet with us in a timely fashion.
- Hearings are delayed or prolonged because of lack of experience and knowledge
- Little outreach to residents, other elements of Town Government
- Untold missed opportunities for collaboration, funding, and improved decision making
- Information flow is severely curtailed, as there is limited opportunity to engage with Town Staff.
- Little or delayed insight into what is happening at the regional and state level.



# Apartment Rental Costs in Winchester

Bedroom	Low	Average	High
Studio	\$1,225	\$2,103	\$10,000+
1	\$1,450	\$2,517	\$8,125
2	\$1,755	\$3,158	\$10,000+
3	\$2,400	\$3,346	\$9,522
4	\$1,100	\$5,498	\$9,600



# MBTA Section 3A Multi-Family Zoning

## From the Attorney General:

“All MBTA Communities must comply with the Law.”

“MBTA Communities cannot avoid their obligations under the Law by foregoing this funding.”

“Communities that fail to comply with the Law may be subject to civil enforcement action”

“Communities that fail to comply with the Law’s requirements also risk liability under federal and state fair housing laws.”

“The Law requires that MBTA Communities “shall have” a compliant zoning district and does not provide any mechanism by which a town or city may opt out of this requirement.”

