

Barre City Planning Commission

May 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Present: David Sichel (Chair), Jackie Calder (Vice Chair), Michael Hellein (Secretary), Rosemary Averill, Joe Reil, Becky Wigg

Absent: None

Staff: Janet Shatney (Director of Planning, Permitting & Assessing)

Visitors: Margaret Ferguson (Housing Task Force), Samantha Hiscock (Housing Task Force)

1. Call to Order

5:30pm

2. Adjustments to the Agenda

No adjustments.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Old business

A. Density

Shatney mentioned that there are complaints that the restrictions on density are preventing owners from fully utilizing existing buildings. Sichel mentioned a new development in Barre Town off of Rudd Farm Road. Hellein pointed out that Barre Town's density adjacent to Barre City is often much higher than the allowed density within the City. Hellein also mentioned that the current density standards were adopted based on input from homeowners who were concerned about houses being subdivided into multiple units. Hiscock agreed that it doesn't make sense that one street will be zoned for low density and then suddenly change to high density when you cross a town line.

The committee reviewed maps of current zoning districts in both Barre City and Barre Town. Hellein suggested that we should be looking to increase density for

infill where there is greater density allowed in Barre Town, but not everywhere across the city. Calder said maybe we don't need to worry about the cost of infrastructure at the edges of the city all that much because Barre City is relatively small. Calder wondered what the response of residents who live in R-4 and R-8 districts would be if the density in their area were increased. Calder pointed out that while the zoning was created with development in the densest parts of the city in mind, the demand for development is in more outlying areas out of the flood plain.

Ferguson encouraged the city to apply for as much funding to create housing as possible. Wigg pointed out that complying with federal funding sources requires a lot of work.

There was discussion about at what point development in Barre City can break even for developers, and what will be necessary to allow that development to happen. Hiscock observed that there are numerous lots walkable to downtown that could readily be developed with six units but density limits prevent it. Wigg asked if the Planning Commission has the ability to influence infrastructure investment, and Hellein answered that the commission create the Municipal Plan that directs the activity of the city when it's adopted by Council.

Shatney brought up some specific parcels that are held back by density. One of the parcels was primarily blocked by parking requirements, and Hiscock mentioned that the parking requirements seem to block a lot of development, and her properties utilize from 0.5 to 0.75 parking spaces per unit. Hellein stated that his policy recommendation would be not to regulate for residential parking, and to let the market handle it. Averill pointed out that winter is the hard part to handle, and winter street parking has an impact on Public Works' ability to plow.

Sichel asked Shatney what the next steps are. Shatney asked whether we should look at density or district boundaries. Hiscock suggested density. Hellein said it would make sense to address both: remove density limits for all UC districts, and add new denser residential districts without setbacks. Hellein asked if we could see a map of current dwelling units per acre and see how that lines up with current zoning. Wigg asked for our next session to have something like sample zoning language provided to make it easier for the Planning Commission to have input.

B. Cannabis

This item was postponed to the next work meeting.

5. New Business

No new business.

6. Staff Updates

Shatney had nothing more to report.

7. Roundtable

Wigg asked if it was possible to get our meeting materials a little more than two days in advance.

8. Adjourn

7:03pm, **Motion Calder, Second Averill, unanimous vote to adjourn.**