

Charlemont Master Plan Action Committee Meeting
Thursday, May 11, 2006, 7 pm
Hawlemont Elementary School

Minutes

Present: Susanne Willard, Win Healey, Bill Stephens, Josh Smith, Dan Miller, Amy Wales, Ruth Cannavo, Andy Mueller, John Hoffman, Mary Campbell, Gisela Walker.

Peggy Sloan, Bill Labich – FRCOG Planning Department
Greg Lewis, West Cty. News

Reaching preliminary closure on the issue of zoning districts:

- How do we settle the discussion with the Sewer Commission?

The FRCOG reported that they used the maps to come to a rough estimate of how many additional units might be built in the proposed core Village District if we cut the minimum lot size in half: about 20 to 24 units. How would such volume impact the Sewer capacity? The MPAC would like – in the long-term – to work with the Sewer District to get an answer to that question. However, for the time being it was decided to stick with the one-acre minimum lot size in the Village. Ruth Cannavo offered to attend Sewer District meetings occasionally to keep the lines of communication open. The SD meets the same nights as the Planning Board: 1st and 3rd Thursdays.

R Cannavo also raised the issue of the lack of affordable housing in town for young families. P Sloan explained that because of the small amount of guaranteed low-income housing in town a State law called 40B allows a developer to come in and build multi-unit residential projects in town which can override local zoning bylaws requirements such as minimum lot size to increase density.

Committee then went over the exact locations of the three Districts under discussion:

1) Village Commercial/Residential and Village Residential District

The Village Residential District surrounding the commercial residential core would only be a separate district with a one-acre minimum lot size if town meeting approved to have the rest of town go with two acres.

- 2) **The East Charlemont Residential/ Commercial District** generated some discussion as some people questioned the wisdom of encouraging commercial development anywhere along the Trail while others felt it better to guide it where it would most likely happen anyway as there already is a fair amount of commercial activity in that stretch (Old Drive-In to be farmer market, the Big Indian, Crabapple, the Medical Center, Tatro's trucking). However, people agreed on the location and to go into the details when we get to the use tables for that District. Given the closeness of the river to Rte 2 there the District could only cover the

north side of the Trail.

3) The Mohawk Trail Scenic and Agricultural Overlay District

This District would respond to the overwhelming request for scenic protection of the Trail in the Master Plan and Town meeting survey.

FRCOG consultants had brought along the maps created by the Federal Scenic Corridor Study of the Mohawk Trail from Savoy to Greenfield. These very useful maps segmented the Trail into degrees of scenic priority. The Committee decided to align the extent of the Corridor Overlay with the priorities of the map. This means that the Overlay District extends west to the beginning of the Village Center.

Before the Committee could focus on the specific land uses in these three Districts, W Healey engaged in a role play with J Hoffman about the potential negative feelings by some landowners in town about the working of the MPAC. This generated a fruitful discussion about the need for more effective outreach, for greater transparency of what this re-zoning is all about and what the benefits and losses may be to landowners. The present polarization in town over issues like the gravel pit, the aquifer study and the paintball application needs to be bridged thoughtfully.

Sloan and Walker explained that the early emphasis within MPAC was on developing some drafts that can then be taken to the public to respond to; that these early drafts are totally up for discussion and that anybody is invited to join the meetings. W Healey encouraged greater use of the town website and reported that Selectman Paul Fantucchio had agreed to be the liaison to the Select Board but could not make today's meeting.

Walker said that much of the next meeting will be set aside for a discussion about doubling the minimum lot size outside of the new districts.

Other Business; Walker reported that the issue of a Visitor Center had re-emerged in town and would be given short exposure on next meeting's agenda.

Next meeting will be on June 8th, 2006

Each member is encouraged to and responsible for reaching out to neighbors and friends and either have them attend or talk to them about what the Committee is doing.

Submitted by Gisela Walker, chair