

2024 MAR 14 PM 1:49

Board of Selectmen's Meeting
Open Session Meeting Minutes
Meeting Conducted Remotely via Zoom

Members Present: Joseph Botaish, James Anderson, Christopher Gallo, William Harrington, Michelle Rouse

Members Absent:

Also present: Kevin Sweet, Town Administrator; Amanda Vasapollo, Administrative Assistant; Gregory Enos, Assistant Town Administrator/Human Resources Director

Called to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30PM by Mr. Botaish. Followed by a roll call for attendance, all members and staff present.

Beth Bryson, Chair of the Economic Development Commission, called their meeting to order. Mr. Botaish recognized the subcommittee members from the Planning Board.

Vote to Sign Letters to Governor Healey, Senator Rausch & Representative Vaughn regarding MGL c. 40A §3A (MBTA Communities)

The Board discussed the purpose of the letters, noting the intent was to collaboration.

Mr. Rouse read excerpts from the following letter addressed to Governor Maura Healey,

On behalf of the Town of Wrentham, the Wrentham Select Board is requesting your support and guidance with the MBTA Housing Bill requirements. The town is well aware of the housing shortage and is doing its part to meet the needs of our residents, their families and all who would like to call Wrentham home.

Our residents are passionate about our diverse community of people with differing backgrounds of heritage, faith, and economic status. We were all drawn to this town for its small-town character. We are a town of open space, many farms, walking and hiking trails, beaches, and great recreation areas to help promote healthy living and a great quality of life. We'd love for you to join us sometime as we celebrate holidays, events, our history, and remembering all the sacrifices made to protect our freedoms, so you can see firsthand the real Wrentham.

Our residents are not objecting to increasing our housing supply. The town, with the help of Massachusetts Area Planning Council and many other state organizations, has made it clear the need for more housing and affordable housing. The MBTA Housing Bill requires us to increase our population by as much as 13% without any state funding. This would cause the largest one-time increase in population in our town's history. For us to commit to the 15 units per acre requirement would overload our infrastructure, police, fire, and schools. Wrentham, along with its elected officials, town leaders and residents, are willing to work to create smart growth, while addressing the needs of our longtime residents and generations to come. Wrentham, unlike most communities, lacks municipal sewage and is challenged with inadequate supply of water. The community is working to resolve these issues and hopes to fulfill the immediate needs and the needs for smart growth.

Wrentham has identified the housing shortage within our community. We recognize a shortage of affordable housing for our seniors and first-time home buyers. We have many seniors looking for a place

to live that reduces their home care maintenance, groundskeeping, real estate taxes and much more. They love the community they've called home and raised their families in. If we can find affordable options for these buyers, it would open the market to bring in young families and young adults who cherished their upbringing in this great town of Wrentham.

Wrentham is currently in the process of addressing many of those needs. To address the inadequate amount of available housing, we are working with a development group who is proposing to add a mixed-use community to our town. Our zoning meets the needs of Wrentham with a workable density supported by our infrastructure, which will likely put a strain on service, but not to the degree of the MBTA Housing requirement. The development plan created by Wrentham addresses the key points from our Master Plan, which we have worked diligently on over the past four years by listening to the residents, the town's department heads and elected officials to smartly address the community's desires. Wrentham has a plan and is doing its part, but the MBTA Housing Requirement ignores this effort and dictates changes that do not align with the goals of our residents and will lead to the destruction of the small-town New England charm we've come to love. We are no different than the quaint towns of Cape Cod, or tranquil seaports of Gloucester, Rockport or Manchester by the Sea, nor the wealthier communities of Dover and Sherborn.

We request your support as our Governor to assist us in obtaining a waiver or modifications to the MBTA Housing requirements. Wrentham is doing its part to address housing, but for us to create rental units at a density of 15 units per acre ignores this work and will place an unfunded mandate on our town and undue hardship to our current infrastructure.

In closing, we hope we have your full support and assistance as we grow and maintain our quaint charm. We invite you to come to Wrentham, let us take you on a tour, so you can see the picturesque landscape, we call home.

A discussion took place amongst the Board regarding the MBTA Communities zoning mandate, the hopes for collaboration and adopting the best zoning for Wrentham.

Motion made by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Gallo, the Board voted sign the letters to Governor Healey, Senator Rausch, and Representative Vaughn regarding MGL c.40A §3A (MBTA Communities). Followed by a roll call vote, Anderson – yes, Botaish – yes, Gallo – yes, Harrington – yes, Rouse – yes. Motion carries, 5-0.

Discussion of Proposed MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District Bylaw, Alternative Zoning Districts, and Community Outreach/Education

Beth Bryson of 226 Taunton Street, spoke as chair of the Economic Development Commission, shares the sentiments of the Select Board and supports the plan to take a step back to properly analyze the mandate.

Rebecca Zitomer of 41 Hancock Street, spoke as a member of the Economic Development Commission noted the importance of making sure the decisions being made are proper for the town and the overlay be in areas that have the most benefits to the residents, town and the state for access to public transportation.

A discussion took place amongst the Board, the Planning Board, Mr. Sweet and Ms. Benson regarding a proposed timeline for adoption of the MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District Bylaw and options for town meeting dates. Mr. Sweet proposed holding off until the November 2024 town meeting.

Mike McKnight spoke as a member of the Planning Board subcommittee, reviewed the process that Board went through with this zoning mandate so far and how the Planning Board prides itself on looking into the best interest for the Town, with a balanced approach for development and growth.

Jim Lawrence spoke as a member of the Planning Board subcommittee, noted discussions have been centered around the consequences of non-compliance and working towards compliance, welcomes the prospect of changing the rules to compliance. Find best possible solutions for compliance.

Chuck Woodhams spoke as a member of the Planning Board subcommittee, welcomes options for compromise with the State on the mandate. Noted the importance of a contingency plan to not fall in non-compliance and alternative avenues.

Ms. Benson provided a timeline for compliance on the zoning mandate.

The Board spoke in favor of scheduling the town meeting vote to November.

A discussion took place amongst the Board, Mr. McKnight and Ms. Benson process with the Planning Board Public Hearing; keeping the Hearing open, closing it, etc.

Ed Goddard, Town Moderator, spoke, agreed with the sentiments by the Board and the contents of the letters and provided input on alternative town meeting dates & timelines.

The Board requested additional information for alternative locations, updates from other communities who are in a similar place as Wrentham, and funding spent so far through technical assistance.

Harvey Gordon of 129 Lakeside Ave spoke, asked for clarification on site selection, potential for expansion once zoned, on the compliance model and if the zoning is required.

Ms. Benson responded, that it would be similar to any other zoning amendment process, clarified the compliance model, state approval, and this is not a production mandate.

Adjournment

Motion made by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Harrington, the Board voted to adjourn the open session meeting at 7:58PM. Followed by a roll call vote, Anderson – yes, Botaish – yes, Gallo – yes, Harrington – yes, Rouse – yes. Motion carries, 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amanda Vasapollo', written over a horizontal line.

Amanda Vasapollo, Executive Assistant