

Minutes
LARGE HOUSE REVIEW STUDY COMMITTEE
Thursday, May 22, 2014 8:00 AM
Charles River Room PSAB

Members Present: Imogene Hatch, Mark Gluesing, Jeff Kristeller, Jon Schneider, Krista McFadden, Lindsay Acomb, Elizabeth Grimes, Gary Kaufman, Gary Lesanto, Jeff Heller, Jeanne McKnight; and Lee Newman, Chris Coleman, David Roche, Karen Sunnarborg and Alexandra Clee, staff.

Not Present: Marianne Cooley.

The meeting is opened by Planning Board Member and Acting Chairperson, Jeanne McKnight at approximately 8:05 a.m.

The Committee members introduced themselves, their interest in the topic, their relevant experience and/or their affiliation with a Town Committee.

Ms. McKnight provided an overview of the project goals and the committee charge. She summarized the Committee Charge as drafted January 28, 2014.

Ms. Newman presented a PowerPoint presentation showing information from the last Large House zoning study of 1999 as well as some information about Needham's current zoning.

The Committee discussed the issue as a whole as well as how to move forward. Mr. Kaufman stated that he believes most of the Town does not want to see any restrictions and that economics play an important role in this issue.

Mr. Lesanto noted that what is needed is responsible growth, rather than delays. There was a brief discussion about historic preservation. Mr. Schneider stated that historic preservation is not the main issue here, as newer homes built in the 1950s and later are being torn down.

Three members of the audience introduced themselves; they were two Town residents and one Town Meeting member from Precinct E.

Mr. Gluesing suggested a few streets (Williams Street and Lehr Road and Ware Road) for members to drive down for a comparison of the whole neighborhood, to compare the feel of the density with the different setbacks from neighborhoods built at different times.

Mr. Roche stated that water can be an issue due to the house elevation, "islands". Wellesley takes building height from the "original grade". Mr. Lesanto noted that builders find a way around the Wellesley code.

Ms. Sunnarborg discussed the memorandum that she prepared with data about recent new construction in Needham.

The Committee discussed what information should be provided at the next meeting. Members asked for information including: more details about what the trend is in Needham; approaches of other towns; a map showing where the new construction has been; photos of existing homes; and, information about feedback the Town has received from residents.

Mr. Roche stated that he would like to see a change in where setbacks are measured from. He would like overhangs to be allowed in the setback.

Mr. Heller stated that he would like to see a simplified regulatory process.

Members discussed some questions: what do other towns allow in setbacks; what is allowed to be built in Needham's setback (decks, steps etc); how many of the teardowns are by-right; what percent of Needham's lots are nonconforming in size; what do other towns do about plantings and drainage.

Mr. Roche noted that a residential stormwater by-law would not be a bad thing to have.

Mr. Heller suggested that at the next meeting the Committee come to a consensus about the Committee's goal.

Mr. Kaufman reiterated that economics are a big issue here.

Mr. Gluesing added that the Committee will look to realtors and developers for information about specifics and what is accurate.

Mr. Lesanto said he thinks responsible growth is possible and that there are ways to reduce massing.

Mr. Heller stated he thinks the Committee needs to consider neighbors and buyers in addition to sellers and builders.

Wrap up – Next meeting Committee Meeting will be June 26, 2014 at 8:00 a.m. Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:40 a.m.