

**HARVARD PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
SATURDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2023
APPROVED NOVEMBER 6, 2023**

Chair Richard Cabelus called the Saturday meeting to order which was held at the entrance to the Bromfield School Gymnasium at 11:31am.

Members Present: Richard Cabelus, John McCormack, Doug Thornton, Stacia Donahue, Arielle Jennings,

Others Present:

Frank O'Connor (Town Planner), Bill Scanlon, Erin McBee & Kara Minar

Public Hearings:

Continuation of a Public Hearing for Section 125-35: Open Space Conservation – Planned Residential Development (OSC-PRD)

Chair Cabelus informed those present that Warrant Article 3 would be to amend Chapter 125-35 Open Space Conservation – Planned Residential Development. Cabelus said he felt the proposal was ready and that he was aware of some blow-back. He added he had seen a few Letters to the Editor, specifically from a previous Select Board member and a previous Design Review Board member who listed their concerns.

Staci Donahue thanked the Planning Board members for their patience and understanding at the previous Planning Board meeting when there were some concerns voiced opposing the proposed bylaw changes. She mentioned the importance of staying cool when the conversation gets spirited. Staci said there was similar conversations when the proposed Erosion Control bylaw failed. She reminded everyone that it is a small town, and not to take what is said in Town Meeting personally. She concluded that the Planning Board has done great work. Richard Cabelus told Staci that her response was reasonably appropriate.

John McCormack said his perspective was that public sentiment was that a bit more work needed to be done but that residents had three months since the Public Hearing was opened in July to voice their concerns. John asked the Planning Board members if it were beneficial in the long run to withdraw the article and gather more input.

Donahue said the Planning Board has other items to get to such as MBTA-3A housing, the Harvard Center Overlay District for Subordinate Structures and decisions. She added that we will hear from others in the Town Meeting with support for the proposed amendments. She concluded that the best thing to do would be to proceed.

Doug Thornton mentioned that there was a quote in the Harvard Press (20 October 2023) on page 2 in Letters to the Editor about reducing residential development. Thornton stated that Gov. Healey had a new proposal that might allow for smaller accessory dwelling units by-right to be built on an owner's property with reasonable restrictions. Cabelus reminded everyone present that was not a direct quote from the proposed bylaw. Both Thornton and Arielle Jennings voiced their support to move forward with the proposed amendments.

Cabelus said the proposed bylaw amendments have the support of the Town's Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, the Conservation Commission, the Select Board and the Harvard Climate Initiative Committee.

Bill Scanlon mentioned that the development at Bowers Brook is about ten units per acre. Cabelus added that the proposed changes would still require a Special Permit. McCormack said that if the proposal were by-right, it would require just 50% + 1 to pass, rather than two-thirds.

Arielle Jennings asked the group what were thoughts on a quota for issuing the Special Permit related to the bylaw. Cabelus said that Stow has no quota. Staci Donahue asked about changing the density to a limit of five per acre. Cabelus said that would send it back to the drawing board because he felt nobody would build it. Cabelus said Harvard is under five percent for affordable housing and asked do we want to control the development or deal with another 40-B project.

Jennings mentioned the differences between by-right versus special permit and that it would be similar to a 40-B where the town had no control. Scanlon added that requiring the special permit means local control and that a 40-B project means the town has no control.

Cabelus asked if the minimum acreage were needed to be increased. Donahue said Hildreth House development failed but she would like to see it developed because it is in the Town Center but she realizes the ledge at the site makes it difficult. Thornton said he would like bigger acreage, more than the original four and a half acres. He added people move to Harvard not expecting dense development.

There was mention by McCormack about potential concerns being raised in the Town Meeting such as the Planning Board should not be able to give waivers to make it easier for developers. Jennings added if the potential developments will add many children to the schools and corresponding costs. Scanlan said there might be the potential if the density were too high and if the amended OSC-PRD bylaw will open Town to a wave of residential development, would it be possible that large lots with a single home could be redeveloped with an OSC-PRD approach.

Cabelus asked the Planning Board Members if they were in favor of proceeding with the warrant article in Town Meeting. All of the Planning Board members agreed to recommend the warrant article.

Cabelus asked for a motion to close the public hearing and adjourn the meeting. Stacia Donahue made the motion to end the public hearing on October 21st 2023 and adjourn at 11:52am. Motion was seconded by Doug Thornton. Motion passed unanimously with yes votes from: John McCormack, Stacia Donahue, Doug Thornton, Arielle Jennings, Richard Cabelus

Submitted by Frank O'Connor, Jr.