

ACTON HOUSING AUTHORITY  
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MEETING MINUTES  
October 15, 2020, at 6:00 PM  
VIRTUAL MEETING

Present: Bernice Baran, Ryan Bettez, Nancy Kolb, and Robert Whittlesey

Also Present: Kelley Cronin

Attending: John Winslow, Phil Reville, Maura Camosse-Tsongas, Matt Post, Peter Berry, Deepen Joshi, Lisa Franklin, David Martin, Beverly Hutchings, Joan Gardner, Maura Tsongas, Jon Benson, Jim Snyder-Grant, Janet Adachi, Lisa Franklin, Bonnie Lobel, Paulette Farmer, Terra Friedrichs, Karen Martin, Beth Farmer, Joe Will, Fred Kinch, Clare Siska, Andy Richardt, Tom Gillespie, Marian Maxwell, Alissa Nichols, Ronald Albuquerque, Amy Austin, Adiseshu Channasamudhram (this may not be a complete list of all who attended)

Mr. Whittlesey called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM via a virtual meeting platform with no Board members in physical attendance and broadcasted via Zoom.

Ms. Kolb read the script for remote meetings provided by the Town of Acton and conducted a roll call for attendance with all Board members being present remotely, (Mr. Bettez joined later in the meeting) and Ms. Kolb explained the rules of the meeting.

Ms. Cronin introduced the Main Street design team, John Winslow and Phil Reville from Winslow Architects and Maura Camosse-Tsongas, development consultant. Ms. Cronin let all those in attendance know that the Board was holding this meeting to solicit input from the community on the conceptual plans for Main Street. Ms. Cronin let those in attendance know that the design team would be making a presentation and then residents could ask questions or make suggestions. John Winslow introduced himself and Phil Reville and went through presentation, showing two different designs for feedback. When the presentation was completed, the Board opened the meeting to comments.

Mr. Bettez suggested there should be more entrances than just the middle.

Mr. Berry said he favored the traditional design and asked about the passive house that is being discussed.

Ms. Camosse-Tsongas explained that the goal of passive design is to get as close to net zero as possible.

Mr. Berry spoke in favor of Air Source Heat Pumps and against natural gas and said the new school will have ground source heat pumps and will reuse rainwater and that sustainability is an important goal for the Town.

Mr. Post said he would prefer the village look vs the single large building, the roof line will be lower, and he wants to talk about protections along Isaac Davis way during construction and landscaping.

Mr. Richardt asked if there was any difference in size of units between the different plans and how many two bedrooms there would be.

Mr. Winslow said no, they were the same size, other than the 2 bedrooms.

Ms. Siska said she prefers the colonial look and suggested center entrance with a large porch to interact with others and wait for rides.

Mr. Snyder Grant said he supported the traditional roof line and that we need more affordable housing in Acton.

Ms. Baran said she too preferred the traditional style.

Mr. Joshi said he lived on Isaac Davis Way (IDW) and was curious about the distance between buildings and IDW.

Mr. Winslow said IDW is about 60 feet from the closest building.

Ms. Franklin asked about stairs and relying on elevators for emergency exits.

Mr. Winslow said there are stairs available as emergency exits not just elevators and it meets all the MA architectural access board requirements , the handicapped accessible units will be on the first floor, so residents don't have to use elevator to get out.

Phil explained there is universal design through the building so people can age in place.

Ms. Maxwell want to make sure senior accessibility issues are addressed.

Mr. Whittlesey said he wanted to look at it more before making additional comments.

Mr. Bettez said it was exciting to see and that he was looking forward to getting more community feedback.

Ms. Cronin asked if there were other questions, hearing none then asked the Board if they had any more questions before the designers left the meeting. Ms. Baran asked what were the next steps and Ms. Cronin explained meeting today was to get feedback and the board would decide at the next meeting what direction to give the architects regarding design. Ms. Cronin thanked Winslow Architects and Ms. Tsongas for their presentation.

Mr. Bettez said the Board was now going to discuss the dog park and opened the meeting to public comment on the dog park.

Mr. Post said that the neighbors were totally in favor of the housing project and that there should not be parking over a leaching field, that the soils can't be compacted. He said he was not against a park on the space just concerned about parking and cars, concern about safety issues with a parking lot off of route 2 and people parking at housing to use the park. He said there were issues with safety and liability people slipping and falling on IDW going to the park, said probably the worst traffic area in Acton. He said for the reasons explained he was asking the board to vote not to support a dog park.

Mr. Joshi said he supported what Mr. Post said regarding the dog park. He said he does not want a dog park and will not be happy if even though they supported the AHA proposal the Town ignored their concerns about the dog park. He said their concerns have been ignored or diluted by the Dog Park committee when they raised their concerns.

Mr. Snyder Grant said he was speaking on his own behalf and not as a Selectboard member. He asked the AHA to explain their particular concerns when making a recommendation about the dog park.

Mr. Gillespie said he thought the housing project was awesome. Asked why the dog park would not be compatible and why the AHA should take a position one way or another. Asked for clarification of how the dog park would impact the AHA. Said up to the BOS and encouraged AHA not to take a position because he does not think he has heard anything to make the AHA take a position.

Ms. Siska said she wanted to echo Tom and that she was not representing the dog park but expressing her concerns. She said she understands that AHA has been considerate and

concerned about neighbors. Reminded the AHA board that entire Acton community has supported the AHA not just the neighbors talked about the number of people who have dogs in town and that a park space was envisioned with a place for AHA residents to have a place to walk to. Does not understand Mr. Posts comment about leaching field and the dog park is proposed on leaching field not parking. Mentioned there is a traffic light being considered to help with traffic. She said she doesn't think there will be 30 parking spots needed for dog park, she said Mr. Post spoke mistruths.

Mr. Bettez asked people to not make it personal and just keep comments to the dog park. Bernice- asked people to make different points when speaking, appreciate the detailed response and asked people to add things that are new or different and not just a repeat of other comments. Ms. Siska said she does not believe the dog park committee has ignored the IDW and will make those points at dog park meeting.

Mr. Albuquerque said he lives on IDW and fully supports the AHA. He suggested people read the agreement the neighbors made with the seller of the property that there were no access rights on IDW and mentioned liability.

Ms. Nichols wanted to share that she agreed with Mr. Gillespie and Ms. Siska that the AHA does not need to take a position. She said she was against the Piper Lane development so understands people not wanting something. She talked about traffic and that there would be less cars at the dog park than the AHA development. She said the traffic study done at Piper Lane said no more traffic from that development so does not think there will be added traffic from the proposal. She said she was told by an attorney that liability concerns were "frivolous and the stuff of movies" based on her concerns about renting property of her own.

Ms. Channasamudhram said she lives on IDW, would love to hear from BOS and dog park, does not want to argue, want to speak for comfort of everyone, talked about concerns for safety of having a dog park next to a highway.

Mr. Joshi said he wanted to respond to Ms. Nichols comments, moved from other side of Acton to IDW so kids can walk to school. He said on the Haywood side of IDW people come through all the time trying turn around. He is concerned will add to traffic people trying to get to the dog park by going through their neighborhood. Concerned dog park will add more foot and car traffic.

Mr. Post said he works in insurance, so he knows there are real liability issues. Does want to get along with everyone, agrees with Ms. Channasamudhram, felt Dog Park committee has not treated them well.

Mr. Bettez said he believed the board should vote on whether or not dog park should be there. Said many boards in town have made recommendations on the dog park. Boards that aren't neighbors have taken position and the AHA will be a neighbor so there is a reason to take a position. Said the neighbors have supported the AHA from the beginning and the project probably would not be here without their support. He is concerned people are going to park in AHA property, nervous about creating an attractive nuisance. The skate park had graffiti and drugs and concerned the same thing may happen there at night when the dog owners aren't there, attractive nuisance off route 2, said rest areas in Harvard were closed down for that reason. Mr. Bettez said he was on the Main Street committee and the Main Street committee did not support the dog park but did recommend the Housing Authority. He said the committee could have recommended both uses and did not just the AHA. He said the Main Street committee was hoping the rest of the parcel could be used for other ways to generate revenue, and other people

wanted it to be an attractive gateway to celebrate Acton. Mr. Bettez said he was personally against having the dog park there.

Ms. Baran said she was planning to support the neighbors who have been extremely supportive of this proposal, have seen many projects where neighbors have been so opposed to other housing projects in Town and knows how much a difference neighbors can make. Feels it is up to the selectmen however and will probably abstain. Ms. Kolb said she has thought a lot about this. She said the AHA had looked at so much land while on the board and difficult to find a parcel as perfect as Main Street which is so close to shopping and that people can walk to Kelly's corner. She said abutters can make or break a project, abutters have been with the AHA 100%. She said she appreciates the total community support, but the total community does not live there, signed agreement with town that we could locate our septic on other side of IDW. She said she sees her responsibility to get the project built and because it matters so much to the abutters, she will support the abutters. Mr. Whittlesey said he did not know how to come down on this. Believes more trouble than we have talked about but has not really thought it through. The Board discussed how many votes were needed to pass a motion if one or two abstained. After discussion, Mr. Bettez made a motion which was seconded by Ms. Kolb to;

***Recommend that the Board of Selectmen do not use the Main Street parcel for a dog park at this time. Approve the minutes of the regular meeting for September 29, 2020.***

and upon roll call the “Ayes” and “Nays” were as follows:

Bernice Baran: Aye  
Ryan Bettez: Aye  
Nancy Kolb: Aye  
Robert Whittlesey: Abstained

Mr. Bettez asked if there was anything else on the agenda and Ms. Cronin said there was not. Mr. Bettez made a motion which was seconded by Ms. Baran and unanimously voted in the affirmative to:

***Adjourn the meeting at 7:55 pm.***

and upon roll call the “Ayes” and “Nays” were as follows:

Bernice Baran: Aye  
Ryan Bettez: Aye  
Nancy Kolb: Aye  
Robert Whittlesey: Aye

Respectfully submitted,

*Kelley A. Cronin*  
Kelley A. Cronin

Documents and Exhibits Used During the **October 15<sup>th</sup>** meeting:  
Winslow Architect Designs from October 2020