

Kelley's Corner Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes – 13 October 2015

These are the meeting minutes from the Kelley's Corner Steering Committee of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. The meeting took place on 13 October 2015 in the Land Use Conference Room at the Acton Town Hall.

Present: Andrew Brockway, Kat Hudson (via phone), Larry Kenah, Margaret Busse, Peter Darlow

Not Present: Eric Solomon, J D Head, Jeff Clymer

Board of Selectmen: Peter Berry

Planning Department: Kristen Guichard, Robert Hummel, Roland Bartl

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order at 7:16 am by Andy Brockway.

Introduction

Peter Berry indicated that there would be a Fall Town Meeting (scheduled for 10 November 2015). There would be articles addressing at least the following topics.

- Water resources
- Additional liquor licenses

The town would ask the state to increase the number of available liquor licenses. This would be a benefit for future businesses in Kelley's Corner as well as in other locations throughout town. The committee expressed support for this article.

Minutes (1)

The committee approved two sets of meeting minutes.

- The minutes from the 22 September 2015 were approved as is.
- The minutes from the 30 September 2015 were approved with one edit.

Document Review

Most of the meeting was spent discussing the various documents that make up the final set of deliverables. An initial step was to list the various documents and the current status of each.

- Overall Plan
 - Outline
 - Prototype section on transportation

- Design Guidelines
- Zoning text
- Executive Summary

We realized that committee members needed the latest revision of each of these documents to provide a current baseline for each document.

In these meeting minutes, the comments related to each document are grouped by document rather than in any sort of chronological order.

Current Status

The zoning text is currently being reviewed by town counsel's office. The remaining three documents are in the middle of being reviewed by committee members, planning department staff, and others (such as members of the Design Review Board).

Process

As a first step, Roland Bartl would resend the all documents other than zoning text to all committee members to provide a starting point for ongoing document review.

Note: Roland sent these documents shortly after the meeting ended.

Peter Berry reminded everyone that circulating review comments via email was inconsistent with OML.

The committee agreed that review comments from committee members would be sent only to planning department staff (Roland, Kristen, and Robert). They would in turn forward the comments on to The Cecil Group. If there were any conflicts in any of the comments, they would be dealt with in future KCSC meetings.

Draft Prototype (2)

Someone suggested that we divide this document into pieces and assign a committee member as the primary reviewer for each section. This suggestion makes sense but is perhaps premature in that only a single section exists so far.

Comments on Zoning (3)

Some of this discussion included feedback that we had received from our meeting with Stop & Shop. Here is a brief list of comments related to zoning.

- The committee agreed that a flowchart of the review process should be included.
- What zoning changes are part of the underlying zoning and what parts belong in the overlay district?
- The existing Kelley's Corner zoning district extends beyond what we and The Cecil Group have been discussing for the past twenty months or so. For example, the mall that includes Acton Hardware, Julie's Place, and adjacent businesses is included in the district but was not included in our efforts. Should we include these additional areas in proposed zoning changes?
 - The committee agreed that the new rules initially be restricted to the parcels that we have been discussing all along. We can decide to increase the areas covered by the new rules based on how changes in Kelley's Corner proceed.

- There is a sense of the committee that new development should include residential units on the street front.
- Peter Darlow suggested that we use two numbers for maximum building height: 40 feet on the street front and 55 feet when set back from the street. That is, we should be more flexible on buildings set back from the street front.

Andy Brockway Pictures

Andy distributed some line drawings that illustrated how two different building heights translate into number of floors with both flat roofs and gabled roofs. These pictures allowed us to have a useful discussion on maximum building height. Andy Brockway noted that designs with 12-foot floor-to-floor heights in residential units were aimed at the high end of the residential market.

In a similar vein, Andy argued that it was difficult to discuss details about setbacks and frontage without pictures like these. A couple of discussions were tabled until we have such pictures to illustrate the detailed cases. There were some initial comments about setbacks that we will consider at a future discussion about setbacks.

- Leave existing guidelines for setbacks as they are (20 to 30 feet).
- Guidelines should distinguish setbacks for residential units.

Design Guidelines (4)

- The design guidelines send a message about what types of development the town is looking for.
- Text and pictures should be consistent.
- The guidelines should be strict. We can then “negotiate down”.

The committee expressed concern about allowing double parking on the sides of buildings. Such a change would increase separation between adjacent buildings.

Executive Summary (4)

Margaret Busse had reviewed most of the documents several weeks ago and shared some of her concerns about the executive summary with the committee.

She indicated that this document reads more like an introduction than a summary document. The summary aspects of this document should be improved in future drafts. She made two additional suggestions.

- The document should include a section that stressed the alignment of the documents with Acton 2020 goals.
 - Current conditions in Kelley's Corner do not align with these goals.
 - The proposed changes described by the various documents do align with these goals.
 - The alignment references do not need to be scattered throughout the documents but can be covered in a dedicated section.
- Certain details such as building height should be included in the executive summary in simplified explanatory text.

Style

Margaret Busse indicated that she found some of the documents difficult to read. She suggested that some of the dense text should be replaced with bulleted lists. Andy Brockway disagreed. He did not want the public documents to read like a bunch of PowerPoint slides. There was no resolution but other members will take this into account as they review the various documents.

We did agree that organization is the key to each document itself and to the collection of documents.

Public Outreach (5)

The committee decided to cancel the neighborhood meeting. We will use targeted email messages to Kelley's Corner residents to deliver the key messages contained in the plan and related documents.

The Planning Board deadline is 8 March 2015.

Capital Request for Public Infrastructure (6)

Peter Berry indicated that an article would be included for Fall Town Meeting to direct \$318k for the next steps of the infrastructure changes. There was a very brief discussion that people did not think that the funding request was a good idea in the absence of a plan and accompanying documents.

Special Permit Application and 110 Grille (7)

Administrative Updates (8)

Someone suggested that Peter Berry invite a representative from The Cecil Group to meet with his committee that is discussing the roles of the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board on reviewing master site plans.

In Closing

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 am.

These minutes were recorded by Lawrence J Kenah.