

**HARVARD PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 28, 2022
APPROVED: MARCH 7, 2022**

Chair Justin Brown called the meeting to order at 7:04pm virtually, pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, An Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the State of Emergency and signed into law on June 16, 2021, and under M.G.L. Chapter 40A and Code of the Town of Harvard Chapter 125

Members Present: Justin Brown, Stacia Donahue, Richard Cabelus, Brian Cook, and Doug Thornton

Others Present: Christopher Ryan (Director of Community & Economic Development), Liz Allard (Land Use Administrator), Kevin Conover (Ross Associates, Inc.), Valerie Hurley (Harvard Press) and Kelen Blumstein

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public this evening

Approval Not Require Endorsement – 37 Peninsula Road

Donahue made a motion to endorse the perimeter plan entitled “Plan of Land in Harvard, Mass.”, prepared for Helen Tracey Wind, Job No. 28825, Plan No. L-14504, prepared by David E. Ross Associates, Inc., February 2022. Cook seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by roll call, Donahue, aye; Cabelus, aye; Cook, aye; Thornton, aye; and Brown; aye.

Disband the Community Resiliency Working Group

Donahue made a motion to disband the Planning Board Subcommittee known as the Community Resiliency Working Group. Cabelus seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by roll call, Donahue, aye; Cabelus, aye; Cook, aye; Thornton, aye; and Brown; aye.

Annual Appointments – Brown and Burson

Brown will not be seeking reappointment at this time. Burson has also has indicated that he will not be seeking reappointment as well. The Board can anticipate interviewing prospective candidates sometime in May in order to make recommendations to the Select Board.

Ayer Road Market Study Update from Howard Kohn of the Chesapeake Group

Kohn provided the data-driven results from the market survey. 88% of respondents were from Harvard. The survey results indicate a significant exportation of dollars by Harvard residents. The survey indicates poor market options in Harvard. Without an expanded tax base recreational activities are difficult to support in Harvard. Food, housing, and transportation are three things family’s general spend money on; with about \$10,000/annual at the grocery store; income levels in Harvard allows for more ability to dine-out. Harvard can capture these types of economical viable retail goods and services. The market share of the region is ~2 million square feet of retail.

Regarding housing, most communities want to provide housing to allow residents to remain within the community. The survey results show certain age groups in Harvard are going to move out of Harvard in the next five years. Kohn recommends action should be taken to accommodate those age groups; most are looking for smaller homes, which do not really exist in Harvard currently. Sixty-five non-senior attached single-family units for corridor are likely filled by current residents, with 75 to 100 units for 65-plus, also only from local population, and market share opportunities from growth 1,770 homes in Harvard, with between 300 and 400 additional attached units in the corridor, with a total for the corridor of 445 new units.

Office market is going to see a decrease in economical viable space due to increase of work from home, shared spaces and smaller per employee footprint. Kohn stated other than medical services, he does not see an increase in office space in the near future. A large portion of the population would like to see commercial recreation within the corridor. Kohn stated there are growing opportunities for industrial vertical and non-vertical agriculture, however housing for these employees does not currently exist in Harvard.

Defined opportunities thus far include:

- ~ 2 million square feet of retail goods and services space
- + 445 housing units
- ~ 50,000 sq ft office Commercial rec and others in progress

Demand forecasting details the actual demand that is possible today and capable of supporting the corridor at this time, however Harvard does not have the space for this demand. Cook wanted to clarify the numbers in the progress report so those out there are not scared by them; the presentation is not suggesting Harvard could support 1.8 million square feet of market retail, but does indicate the region as a whole could support 1.8 million square feet of market retail. Brown further clarified the progress report is indicating what could go in the commercial district, not what will ultimately be there. What could or will ultimately be in the corridor will be based on what the Town wants. The progress report does indicate Harvard could capture 5% of the market retail if the area could support it. Ryan stated the numbers are artificially high, not that there is something wrong with the numbers, the goal is to determine what could reasonably be supported that would provide a balanced tax return. There are types of uses that may not be acceptable in Harvard, such as warehousing. Once assessed the Planning Board will know if it is feasible to move forward in this process. This is not at all a target number and should not be considered as such. Donahue requested potential tax revenue be included so that it is clear to the community how taxes could be reduced by growth in the corridor.

On the housing aspect, those under the age of 25 are planning to move, is there a breakdown of how many in each age bracket took the survey? Kohn stated that was an excellent point, but feels a portion of the survey results may have been biased, with a group of people answering things in a way to prevent anything from changing in the corridor. Kohn noted younger respondents were the least number of respondents.

Thornton felt office space for smaller services where work from home is not available would not be decreasing. Kohn stated that may be true, however the decrease in necessary office space is going to make available space more attractive rather than building new. Brown asked about housing demand. Kohn stated building permit patterns in the region show a lot of non-single-family detached homes being built, with very little growth in Harvard; small scale housing would do well in Harvard.

- **Public Outreach**

Kohn would recommend a discussion with the Director and Chair about how to go about public outreach. With a significant percentage of the community not wanting to see things happen in the district he would like to have an opportunity to discuss the strategies with both the Director and the Chair before discussing publicly.

Recommend Open Space Committee Representative

Donahue made a motion to recommend Cook as the Planning Board representative to the Open Space Committee. Cabelus seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by roll call, Donahue, aye; Cabelus, aye; Cook, aye; Thornton, aye; and Brown, aye.

Discuss the State's Multi-Family District Requirements

- **Review Schedule**

- Need to focus on the schedule for presenting the bylaw at the fall Town Meeting
- Comment letter due March 31, 2022

- **Draft Comments**

- No comments from members this evening
- Awaiting comments from Board of Health
- Meeting with Select Board tomorrow night
- Brown to meet with School Committee Chair, SusanMary Reddinger

Board Member Reports

- **Representatives & Liaisons Updates**

- *Parks & Recreation Commission* – Excited about the trail connection allowing students to bike to Devens at the end of Old Mill Road (see Transportation Advisory Committee below). The Department of Public Works will not be maintaining the trail between Lancaster County Road and Depot Road, which was recently reclaimed with help from the Harvard Snowmobile Club and a local Eagle Scout who repaired an existing bridge. Bob O'Shea will not be seeking reappointment.
- *Transportation Advisory Committee* – Outreach meeting on February 16th pertaining to the reopening of the trail at end of Old Mill Road to Devens through Red Tail Golf Course had a good turnout, with strong support. Those in attendance at that meeting were clear there was to be absolutely no parking, but realize a need for emergency vehicle access. There was also a concern with the access being used by motorized vehicles.

- **Community Matters**

- Lighting Bylaw on Nextdoor Harvard is pertaining to higher wattage and not the typical light trespass regulated in other communities; nothing formal has been requested by any residents as of yet pertaining to revisions of the current bylaw.

Director's Report

This item was discussed under other items this evening.

Approve Minutes

Donahue made a motion to approve the minutes of February 7, 2022 as amended. Cook seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by roll call, Donahue, aye; Cabelus, aye; Cook, aye; Thornton, aye; and Brown, aye.

Adjournment

Cabelus made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:10pm. Thornton seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion by roll call, Donahue, aye; Cabelus, aye; Cook, aye; Thornton, aye; and Brown, aye.

Signed: _____ Liz Allard, Clerk

EXHIBITS & OTHER DOCUMENTS

- Planning Board Agenda February 28, 2022
- Director of Community and Economic Development UPDATE, February 28, 2022
- Plan of Land in Harvard, Mass." prepared for Helen Tracey Wind, Job No. 28825, Plan No. L-14504, prepared by David E. Ross Associates, Inc., February 2022
- Harvard Market Analysis Progress Report, prepared by The Chesapeake Group, Inc., February 28, 2022