

Marblehead Planning Board

Minutes of Meeting

January 12, 2024

The Board met in a remote session at 12:00 PM via ZOOM Conferencing

The chair did a roll call vote. The following members were present constituting a quorum: Robert Schaeffner, Barton HYTE, Marc Liebman, Edward Nilsson and Steve Leverone Associate member. Others present -Rebecca Curran Town Planner and Molly Obendorf Bohler Associates.

The meeting was convened to discuss a proposed compliance model for MBTA zoning.

The team clarified the calculation of units per acre, with Molly explaining that the proposed density was determined by existing lot sizes and the minimum lot size allowed by zoning.

The team then reviewed the changes, which involved removing the Coffin school and some connector lots, adding Arnold Terrace and a property on Green Street, and increasing the density in the Pleasant Street area. However, some confusion arose regarding the calculation of the average density, which was clarified to exclude excluded land, including wetlands and setbacks, but not right of ways.

The Board discussed the challenges of achieving the desired density goals for a land development project. They discovered that areas previously considered as part of the development were found to be excluded, such as wetlands, which increased the density requirements. The team also expressed concerns about the public's understanding of these exclusions and the complexities of the calculations. They considered adding more areas to reduce densities, specifically near Lincoln Park, but agreed to further investigate potential areas for inclusion. The team planned to circulate updated numbers and options by the community meeting on Tuesday January 16, 2024 for feedback.

The discussion then revolved around the discussion of increasing the density of housing in certain areas of the town to comply with state regulations. The participants deliberated over potential changes to the density and building height in different areas, such as Broughton Road and Pleasant Street. They considered the impact of these changes on the character of the town and the potential controversy it may create. The idea of amending the smart growth districts and the zoning bylaw was also discussed.

The board discussed the density of housing units in relation to the total acreage. Molly presented a model that showed an increase in density for certain areas, while keeping others at the same levels. However, the results indicated a total of 806 units, which was below the required count. The team expressed concerns about the density, and the need for education on how different densities affect the visual appearance of buildings. The board agreed on the need for community outreach to provide examples of what different densities look like. There were also discussions about the impact of exclusions on the total acreage and density calculations. The board was unable to resolve the discrepancies and confusion surrounding the density calculations.

Molly explained that the model takes into account various parameters such as densities, lot sizes, stories, setbacks, and parking to produce a number of units in each district and the dwelling units per acre. Barton suggested expediency in agreeing on the districts and proposed the addition of a triangle on the end of Lincoln Park. However, concerns were raised about the addition of Tedesco and how it might affect the existing smart growth. The team also discussed the issue of splitting up properties and the potential of adding Tedesco's parking lot across the street. However, uncertainties about property boundaries and the possibility of including part of Tedesco in Salem remained open questions.

The board debated the numerical values associated with the plan, especially the average of 15.5 units per acre. There was a consensus that these numbers were not what people expected and there was a need to educate the board on the meaning of these numbers. It was suggested that the plan could accommodate higher densities if minimum lot sizes were eliminated, which would also allow for non-conforming lots to contribute to the overall density and potentially increase the total unit count.

The team discussed the potential impact of zoning densities on the design of buildings in their community. Ed expressed a preference for townhouse-style buildings over apartment complexes, suggesting that the design of the building affects its acceptance by the community. Marc proposed the idea of specifying in the zoning that buildings cannot be apartments but can be townhouses or gardens. However, there were uncertainties about whether this restriction could be enforced. The team agreed that the preference of the residents of Marblehead should be taken into account when making these decisions.

The board discussed the specifics of the smart growth guidelines and their impact on density and unit count. The group acknowledged that the required density was higher than initially expected and that there might be resistance to it. They decided to familiarize themselves with the guidelines and share their findings with the public. The team also discussed the concept of alternative models but decided to present a compliant model as a starting point. They agreed to add some area in Tioga and to adjust the minimum lot size. The team also discussed the potential impact of these changes on the total unit count and density and decided to gather more information before making any decisions.

The board discussed a forthcoming meeting and the presentation of a model they believed to be compliant, seeking feedback. Rebecca planned to distribute materials to the board. The team clarified their goal for the meeting, which was to gather feedback on their work. They agreed to convene a quick meeting on the January 22nd to vote on the proposal and put it on the warrant. The possibility of including the model in the smart growth was also discussed.

The chair entertained a motion to adjourn. All in favor

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Cutting