



TOWN OF STERLING PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Butterick Municipal Building, Room 205
1 Park Street, Sterling, MA 01564
March 24, 2022 - 6:30 PM

Present: Carl Corrinne, Patty Page, Kirsten Newman and Val Pruneau. John Santoro was absent.

MEETING:

Carl Corrinne called the meeting of the Planning Board to order at 6:30 pm. Mr. Corrinne discussed with the Board the importance of maintaining a professional meeting at all times and asked that all remain professional throughout the entire meeting. (i.e. no cross-conversations, interruptions, and being respectful to all.)

Agenda

1. MBTA Communities discussion
2. Proposed Zoning Amendments
3. Approval of Minutes: February 24, 2022

MBTA Communities

MBTA Communities is a multi-family zoning requirement enacted as part of the economic development bill in January 2021 creating a new section 3A of MGL 40A (the Zoning Act) that requires MBTA Communities and those communities adjacent to MBTA Communities to create at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right. This district would be required to meet the following criteria: minimum gross density of 15 units per acre; not more than ½ mile from a commuter rail station, subway station, etc.; no age restrictions; and suitable for families with children. The Board drafted a letter in response to these draft guidelines and sent to the state as part of the comment phase of the bill. The Board feels that this kind of density is unreasonable for a community without sewer, water supply that is not available in all areas, and with groundwater protection districts in the Town center (and other areas), would put an unfair burden on the community. The guidelines for "adjacent" communities (which Sterling is) were to provide a minimum of 750 units – this is approximately 25% of our entire housing stock. If Sterling does not comply with this new law, we would lose the opportunity to participate in several grants. We have obtained technical assistance from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to draft a bylaw to comply with the new law while waiting to see if the law will lessen the burden on smaller communities that fall into the category "MBTA Adjacent."

Proposed Zoning Amendments

The Board has proposed two zoning amendments. One will be reintroducing the rezoning of a portion of the Performance Zone I to Commercial. Last year, the article was defeated because there was some confusion about the cemetery in that zone. All cemeteries are zoned within the zone they are located. Furthermore, Sterling's own General Bylaws prohibit any other use of cemeteries other than for burial (see 38-3 of the General Bylaws). The second was to update the parking calculations by adding language for establishments without indoor seating, correcting an error and omission, as well as changing the parking calculation for Fast Food Establishments.

Minutes

Kirsten Newman made a motion to approve the minutes of February 24, 2022. Val Pruneau seconded. All in favor, 4-0.

Adjourn

Kirsten Newman made a motion to adjourn, Patty Page seconded. All in favor, 4-0.

Minutes were approved at the 4/28/2022 meeting. P. Page