



# TOWN OF BURLINGTON

## Meeting Minutes

Email minutes to [meetings@burlington.org](mailto:meetings@burlington.org) or Bring to the Clerk's Office. Thank you

Minutes need to be posted within 30 days or 2 meetings of the board – Draft minutes can be posted and revised at a later date

**DEPT./BOARD:** Planning Department MBTA Communities Working Group

**DATE:** January 31, 2024

**TIME:** 5:00 pm

**PLACE:** Town Hall Annex Basement Meeting Room and remotely via Cisco WebEx

**PRESENT:** Elizabeth Bonventre, Barbara L'Heureux, Paul Sagarino, Monte Pearson, Melissa Tintocalis, John Keeley, Caleb Zimmerman, Bill Gaffney, Robert Buckley, Rick Parker, Luke Mitchell & Christa McGaha (VHB Consultants)

(The following were present on Zoom) Zi Wang, Mark Vaughan, Todd Fremont-Smith, Ernie Covino, Mark Woods, Sydney Boles, Frank DiPietro, Jessica Sutherland, Roger Riggs

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### Minutes

**The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm.**

**Discussion** – The strategy and potential options for achieving compliance with the MBTA Communities Law

Senior Urban Planner/Designer of VHB Luke Mitchell discussed a PowerPoint presentation in regards to Section 3a of MGL. C 40A which is a law that requires transit-adjacent towns to create special zoning districts to allow for denser housing. Multi-family zoning was discussed and how Massachusetts has the highest home prices with housing production shortages. New housing that creates walkable neighborhoods, closer to retail, and amenities would be beneficial to the town. The Town of Burlington has great economic development which is great for growth in new and existing businesses. The more people can walk between work, home, and retail the less need there would be for a car which would reduce traffic.

There was a video shown about how millennials are growing families and looking for urban living in suburban areas. The Town of Burlington has \$9 million dollars funded by state money, which would be lost if the town were not to comply with the law. Planning Director Elizabeth Bonventre discussed how 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue would not have been built without that state funded money. She discussed how the PFAS treatment and Life Science buildings were granted with this money also.

The group discussed how the state knows the Town of Burlington is building housing, following laws and regulations, and because of that the town gets rewarded. Through the law, The Town of Burlington is required to recreate a multi-family district of 50 acres at minimum. There needs to be at least 25 acres for one area and the other 25 acres do not need to be all together. The smallest areas can be 5 acres. The compliance deadline is set for December 31, 2024. The timeline was discussed where the draft to file for pre-adooption is February 13<sup>th</sup>, the final zoning articles will be printed on April 8th, and looking to present for May 13<sup>th</sup> Spring Town Meeting with Fall Town Meeting as a backup.

The areas where the law could be put into effect were discussed by the group. The goal would be to have a form-based code approach building that is walkable, cohesive, flexible, and fits it. Options were shown. There will be 10% percent affordable housing for this plan. The group discussed focusing on existing buildings rather than building new from the ground up.





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- Option 1 – The presentation showed the Kohls/Staples area as a key area and a great site to redevelopment to tighten up the footprint and create more height. Conservation Administrator John Keeley discussed how it may be a difficult area due to that area sinking in. The FEMA maps show the area being in a flood zone now as well.

Planning Board Member Jessica Sutherland asked if future alterations can be done after this zoning is completed and Ms. Bonventre replied how base layers can be kept and adhered to. The group discussed how the goal is to step towards different types of housing options. Town Administrator Paul Sagarino discussed how a major rezone of the Kohls/Staples area is being worked on currently. He discussed the potential of apartments on the other side and in different areas. He discussed how he is not opposed of a different plan, but how there could be better areas in commercial districts where the MBTA law can be applicable to. The group discussed how the town has a strong economy. There is no MBTA station and all of the plans are on bus routes. Due to the fact there is no MBTA station, this law can be fulfilled anywhere in town. There needs to 1,043 units included in the plan for compliance.

- Option 2 – The presentation showed the next area as being the Macy's area parking lot.
- Option 3- The presentation showed the next area being Beacon Village and the Macy's area parking lot.

Rick Parker discussed how the commercial sector is big in The Town of Burlington and housing is critical. He discussed the next wave of new business coming in and how housing is a huge part of backfilling buildings. The group discussed how they want to make this process simple and easy as it is a good thing for the town. Monte Pearson discussed this should be seen as a celebration of Burlington and the town will be rewarded by implementing and being compliant with this law. There was further discussion of plans and the overlay on existing buildings including Lord Baron and Beacon Village.

The group discussed many different ideas and the options were as follows:

- 1) Lord Baron, Beacon Village, Staples site and Kohls
- 2) Lord Baron, Beacon Village, and Macy's
- 3) Lord Baron, Beacon Village, Kohls
- 4) Beacon Village and Macy's
- 5) Beacon Village, Kohls and an unnamed property
- 6) Beacon Village and Lord Baron only, with increased density

The group discussed the most appropriate plan was Option 6) Beacon Village and Lord Baron only, which would only increase density. If necessary, there could be other smaller pieces of property worked on separately. There were no arguments against this approach within the group.

Economic Development Director Melissa Tintocalis discussed how there could be unattended consequences without more consideration and analysis. Robert Buckley discussed the Town's history of being proactive. Planning Board Chair Barbara L'Heureux discussed a Special Permit process.

Next Meeting: The next MBTA Working Group meeting is TBD.

The meeting adjourned at 7:13 pm.

*Respectfully submitted by Julie Faulkham, Recording Clerk.*

