

DEBRA OAKES CLERK
Judy Barrett
9/12/22 5:29pm



**GOVERNOR PRENCE PLANNING COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Monday, September 12, 2022

A hybrid meeting of the Governor Prence Planning Committee was held in the Skaket Room of Town Hall.

Regular Members Present: John Sargent, Mark Mathison, Fran McClennen, Tina Shaw, Debra Oakes, Alexis Mathison, Hadley Luddy.

Absent: none

Town Staff Present: Marsha Allgeier

Guest Speakers Present: Judi Barrett, Barrett Planning Group

John Sargent opened the meeting at 5:32 pm.

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment.

2. **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY:** Judi Barrett of the consultant Barrett Planning Group said that she was finishing up the final report and would be sending it by the end of the week. She said that the implementation strategy is straightforward, although the project will take some time to complete, as do all such projects. The Committee discussed several topics:
 - **Affordability of the housing:** Mr. Sargent pointed out the use of the term “affordable” may be misleading, as the Committee is advocating a mix of incomes, including affordable under 80% area median income (AMI), “workforce” housing up to perhaps 120% AMI, as well as market rate above that. The Committee did not want the RFP to limit the housing to only affordable housing but did not want all market-rate housing either. The point was made that a key issue is whether the housing is “committed” to remain affordable to whatever income level designated or whether the rents can rise with the market, as market rate housing can. Mr. Sargent said that the RFP needed to be flexible. Ms. Barrett made the point that developers want flexibility but also want predictability, and the two can be in conflict. She said that perhaps some discussion early in the report of the definition of affordability would be helpful and she will work on appropriate wording.

 - **Disposition of property through ground lease vs. fee simple sale:** Ms. Barrett said that the property can transferred either under a lease or fee simple. The lease ensures more Town control over the long term. In response to the question of deed restrictions to ensure affordability, Ms. Barrett said that the State DHCD has

authority to sign off (or not) on deed restrictions, and such limitations need to be enforced. Ms. Mathison said that the Affordable Housing Trust Board would need to make the decision, along with the Select Board, and had discussed the issue briefly in the past.

- RFI: Ms. Barrett is recommending using an RFI – request for expressions of interest – prior to issuing an RFP, and she can include a sample RFI in the report if desired. This would be a way to ask the development community some questions about what would be more attractive to proposers, e.g., ground lease vs. fee simple, or inclusion of market rate units. That could lead to a discussion with the development community that would be helpful in framing the RFP. Mr. Mathison and Ms. McClennen referenced the Town’s prior RFI for the Governor Prence site, which yielded one response, which was not helpful. Ms. Barrett said that it was important to keep the RFI simple, not require a lot of work to respond, and pose the important questions. She emphasized that you need to send it to the right people and convince them to respond to get multiple useful responses.
- Approval and permitting process: Ms. Barrett said that it was important to reduce developer risk that the development plan would be tied up in permitting with challenges by those opposed to the development. She cited examples of projects delayed by such challenges to the point of endangering the project’s viability. In the implementation strategy, she suggests consideration of ways to reduce the risk, such as through a Chapter 40R overlay district to avoid the need for a special permit and allow 20 units per acre on a by-right basis, or a “friendly 40B” Comprehensive Permit under the State Local Initiative Program. There was concern expressed that a 40R district, which requires changes to the zoning by-laws, requires approval at Town Meeting, which would require additional time and is not a sure thing. In response to a question about how long it would take, Ms. Barrett said that she had been involved in Sudbury’s efforts that took about five months, but she pointed out that only a majority approval at Town Meeting was needed. Ms. McClennen reminded the Committee that its current recommendations are based on adhering to the current zoning regulations with possible variances for height, parking, and number of units per building.

It was agreed that editing comments should be sent directly to Ms. Barrett by Wednesday, and she would send the final report by Friday so that the Committee has time to read it before the next meeting on September 26.

3. **NEXT STEPS:** The Committee discussed the presentation to the joint Select Board/Affordable Housing Trust Board meeting on October 19. It was decided that the Committee would give a short report, using a few slides, providing an overview of the process the Committee has taken, how the Committee arrived at its recommendations, and a summary of the recommendations. The bulk of the presentation would be by the consultant, taking no more than 15 minutes. The Committee will discuss this further at its next meeting.

The report will be posted on the Town's website two weeks before the meeting so that the public could review it. Mr. Mathison said that the typical procedure is for the Select Board to receive public comments and may decide to have a future meeting to discuss comments and make decisions.

Ms. Barrett requested that the item be late on the agenda, as she will be traveling from Maine where she will be at a conference. Mr. Mathison said that should not be a problem.

The next meeting is on September 26, and the Committee discussed whether an additional meeting might be needed to prepare for the presentation. However, October 10 is a holiday and October 17 is Town Meeting. October 3 could be used if needed.

4. **MINUTES OF MEETING OF AUGUST 22, 2022:** Ms. Shaw moved, seconded by Ms. Mathison, that the minutes of the August 22 meeting be approved. The motion was approved unanimously.
5. **ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 6:43 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Marsha Allgeier, Affordable Housing Coordinator