

NANTUCKET TOWN AREA PLAN WORK GROUP
Meeting Of January 21, 2022
DRAFT MINUTES FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Attending: Marsha Fader, Mary Longacre, Mickey Rowland, Lee Saperstein, and Henry Terry.
Absent: Liz Almodobar, Mary Anne Easley, Regen Horchow, and Alison King.
Attendance was verified by a roll call; there was a quorum at all times.

Chair Henry Terry called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm. Mary Longacre read the official notice about remote meetings and the fact of the meeting being recorded. Approval of the draft minutes for the meeting of January 4, 2022, was moved by Mary Longacre, seconded by Mickey Rowland, and approved unanimously by roll-call vote.

Henry Terry announced that the group would be discussing the Housing, December 6, 2021, preliminary report prepared by Marsha Fader and Mickey Rowland; the full report is appended to these minutes. Marsha Fader led the discussion and said that she would be following the order of issues in the preliminary report and that all were welcome to comment or ask questions.

1. Empty, Seasonal Houses

Ideas: a. provide tax incentives/Land Bank transfer fee exemption + encouragement for the use + sale of existing homes to businesses + organizations for year-round, executive level, professional housing. Example: NHA's Liberty Street house for their director; b. Aging in Place: provide tax reductions for year-round senior citizens.

Initially, the group skipped over this issue. Subsequently, it returned to it; the substantial discussion that ensued is reported here as if it occurred consecutively. Marsha Fader put the question succinctly: are we concerned with using these seasonal houses to provide housing or are we interested in revitalizing neighborhoods? In the latter case, we want "walkable, livable neighborhoods." Mary Longacre asked if we are allowed legally to determine tenancy for someone's private property. Lee Saperstein suggested that rent subsidies be provided to various classes of tenants so that high-valued seasonal houses can be rented when the owners are away. He thought that the Town might help its employees (school, emergency responders, public works, etc.) to rent these houses; equally, the hospital might wish to help its employees. The subsidy would be based on the owner's required rent and an assessment of the employee's ability to pay (a means test). Mary Longacre noted that this issue was a good example of the group's need to define goals before it discussed solutions. Marsha Fader said that the next version of this progress report would be helped if we knew all of the Island groups that are working on housing. Lee Saperstein suggested that the Town's Housing, Tucker Holland, Municipal Housing Director, Affordable Housing Trust, might be able to provide that list.

As mentioned, the group took up the second issue before completing the first.

2. Preservation of Historic Houses: *historic interiors at risk, historically-inappropriate side/lateral + deck expansions together with loss of open-space + historic streetscapes context; no architectural historian HDC staff review of ROH applications*

Ideas: a. promote/showcase historic interiors; b. land conservation easements; c. zoning bylaws restricting lateral expansion; d. create a transitional design zone between the ROH and rural outskirts of the town for HDC use; e. require professional HDC staff to review ROH applications

Acknowledging that the HDC controls do not extend into the interior of historic houses, most of which are in the Town's area, the group asked how best to protect historic interiors. Responding to the comment

that there is no architectural historian on the HDC, Mickey Rowland pointed out that Holly Backus, staff support for the Commission, was capable and reviewed applications carefully for architectural concerns. It was acknowledged that the HDC might consider promulgating rules specific to the Old Historic District for the preservation of historic houses. Mary Longacre asked whether or not there was an intention to revise the HDC guidance document, "Building with Nantucket in Mind" (BWNIM). It is noted that buildings must follow the Massachusetts building code, while the HDC document is guidance on how best to comply with HDC rules. Mickey Rowland indicated that there had been interest in a revision of BWNIM and possible a Community Preservation grant to do so but that nothing has happened recently.

Because this issue included a suggestion that zoning and usage could be changed in the Old Historic District to prevent the construction of inappropriate additions to historic structures, the group looked at Issue 6.

6. Zoning Relevance: *review historic properties to incorporate within the Residential Old Historic District + streetscapes where the demarcation is down the middle of a street (exs: Upper Main Street, Cliff Road, Liberty + N Liberty Streets have one side in the district and one side out. The Zoning follows suit, splitting down the street with one side in and the other side out.*

It was felt by all that both sides of historic streets should be incorporated in the Old Historic District and that district or zone boundaries should follow the back lot lines and not the middle of the street.

The group then returned to Issue 3. on Quality-of-Life Challenges.

3. Quality of Life challenges: *noise (landscapers, HVAC, helicopters); lack of sidewalk maintenance; ineffective street signage; swimming pools + spas; short term rentals; good, walkable, livable neighborhoods attract + keep year-round residents.*

Mary Longacre suggested that there be more detail and specifics in this section. Lee Saperstein reminded the group that the Planning Department had organized a work group to amend the Town's noise ordinance and we need to see if the revision will appear at the next Annual Town Meeting. Also, there are several citizens' articles on pools and spas proposed for the ATM that would constrain new installations in the Old Historic District. He mentioned also that the Town has a long-term project to rebuild sidewalks in the downtown area and along main streets leading into the Town.

There was general agreement that a limited number of convenience stores, Issue 4., in a residential neighborhood enlivened it.

4. Loss of Mixed-Use Zoning

Idea: encourage the re-use of existing commercial uses such as Marden/Main Street, Lighting/North Liberty

Historically, Nantucket has had convenience stores in walking distances of residences in the Town area. The recent departure of the Nantucket Bake Shop is a reminder that convenience stores are being lost. Ryder's was a package store on Orange Street, Rebimbas's a convenience store on Pleasant Street, and Marden's plumbing shop was by the Monument on upper Main Street; 56 Union Street may be lost as a restaurant; the former Lightship Basket Museum may become a residence. There are inns and restaurants in the Old Historic District, presumably as pre-existing, non-conforming uses. A question was posed by Mickey Rowland whether or not existing non-conforming uses should be protected for the future. What would it take to establish a new special permit? Mickey Rowland pointed out that the current zoning use chart does not permit commercial enterprises in the Residential Old Historic, ROH, district, not even by special permit. He suggested that we could recommend a relaxation of that ban so that special permits,

which allow the Planning Board to control the intended use, would be permitted. Mary Longacre noted that the scale of the retail/commercial use to be permitted by special permits should be defined and, even, constrained. Marsha Fader said that the group would need to decide on how best to proceed: identify specific locations where retail commerce could be located or, by asking for special permits to allow a particular use, to allow the Planning Board to decide.

The last issue to be discussed was that of short-term rentals, STR.

5. Short Term Rentals: *extends the Commercial Downtown/CDT imperceptibly into the ROH*

It was acknowledged that the Planning Department and several lobbying groups are looking at the issue of STRs and how best to amend zoning rules to meet the needs of both renters and landlords. Mickey Rowland suggested that we ask the planners to be thoughtful; our group may wish to review proposals as they are published. Mary Longacre repeated that suggestions we adopt should be specific. In keeping with the group's desire to have our neighborhoods be livable, we need to ask how best to monitor renters' behavior. May we put the onus on property owners? If enforcement is the recommendation, should we recommend that Community Service Officers, CSOs, often called summer specials, be hired before Memorial Day so as to help control Figawi parties?

Mary Longacre pointed out, as the discussion drew to a close, that the Work Group, nine people in all, should not be a single source for the Town Area Plan. The community needs to be involved through surveys, open meetings, and public hearings.

At this point, it was 4:55 pm and Henry Terry suggested that it was time to adjourn; Mary Longacre so moved, Mickey Rowland seconded, and the entire group concurred.

For reference: Subcommittee composition.

2. Land Use: Liz Almodobar and Mary Anne Easley
3. Housing: Marsha Fader and Mickey Rowland
4. Economic Development: Alison King and Mary Longacre
5. Natural and Cultural Resources: Liz Almodobar and Marsha Fader
6. Open Space and Recreation Plan: Mary Anne Easley and Henry Terry
7. Services and Facilities: Regen Horchow and Mickey Rowland
8. Circulation; Mary Longacre and Lee Saperstein

Lee W. Saperstein, Secretary.

Concerns & Questions

The following concerns and questions were discussed at several in-person meetings:

1. How will this Town Area Plan function to be meaningful? The implementation sections for other area plans do not propose actions or appear to be connected to specific island improvements. We wish to create a plan that will be actively used.
2. In the preservation & management of our historic district, what is the intention: to restrict or enable additional housing?
3. Quality of Life is a consistent benchmark from which all of our discussions were derived.
4. To better understand Housing, we need to study our area + analyze the following information:
 - How was our area zoned and when? Is the rationale for its zoning still relevant?
 - Statistics: quantity of houses, year-round houses, secondary dwellings, commercial buildings, etc.

Housing Issues

1. Empty, Seasonal Houses

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3. **Quality of Life challenges:** noise (landscapers, HVAC, helicopters); lack of sidewalk maintenance; ineffective street signage; swimming pools + spas; short term rentals; good, walkable, livable neighborhoods attract + keep year-round residents

4. Loss of Mixed-Use Zoning

Idea: encourage the re-use of existing commercial uses such as Marden/Main Street, Lighting/North Liberty

5. **Short Term Rentals:** extends the Commercial Downtown/CDT imperceptibly into the ROH
6. **Zoning Relevance:** review historic properties to incorporate within the Residential Old Historic District + streetscapes where the demarcation is down the middle of a street (exs: Upper Main Street, Cliff Road, Liberty + N Liberty Streets have one side in the district and one side out. The Zoning follows suit, splitting down the street with one side in and the other side out.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION
ELEMENTS OF M.G. L. 41-81D**

Housing: identifies and analyzes existing and forecasted housing needs and objectives including programs for the preservation, improvement and development of housing. This element shall identify policies and strategies to provide a balance of local housing opportunities for all citizens.

From Sconset Area Plan:

3.1 Sconset has unique architectural characteristics based on different historical and economic origins. Those characteristics are best evidenced in different architectural neighborhoods. These neighborhoods will delineate areas where houses are similar in style, mass and height, and in some cases, historical periods. SAP recommends the establishment of these architectural standards through a professionally conducted study to be used as a purposeful guideline for the SAB and HDC in determining appropriate residential development within a specific neighborhood.

3.2 SAP recommends that the standards for determining development patterns with regard to these neighborhoods be codified in an architectural database to be used by the SAB and HDC for decision-making.

3.3 SAP supports the ongoing work of the SAB and their coordinated efforts with the HDC.

3.4 SAP supports the use and expansion of workforce housing at the USCG LORAN station while preserving the majority of the parcel as open space.

3.5 SAP encourages tax incentives for year-round rental properties in the effort to provide affordable workforce housing.

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