

## **TOPSFIELD PLANNING BOARD MEETING**

**Minutes of Wednesday, February 21, 2024**

**7:00 PM**

**Virtual over ZOOM**

Board members participating were Chairman Martha Morrison, Clerk Steve Hall (joined at 8 pm) and members Greg Mellinger (left at 8 pm) and Jennie Merrill. Member Josh Rownd was not present. Also present was Planning and Zoning Board Sr. Admin. Assistant Lynne Bermudez.

Attendees included Master Plan Committee Chair Gregor Smith, Laura Smead (JM Goldson), Jeffrey Rossman, Mr. and Mrs. Corbett, Gary Bergmann, Dick Gandt and Boxford Cable.

### **GOVERNOR'S ORDER**

Planning Board Chairman Morrison announced:

*"Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, this meeting will be conducted via remote means. Members of the public who wish to watch or listen to the meeting may do so in the following manner: Video conference (see log-in information below.) No in-person attendance of members of the public will be available, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Topsfield website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.*

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Morrison called to order at 7:01 pm.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairman Morrison made the following announcement:

*"A video recording is being made of this meeting for record keeping purposes. Is there anyone else present who wishes to record the meeting?"* No requests were heard.

### **94 SURREY LANE – Public Hearing**

Lynne Bermudez read the following legal notice which was published in the Salem News on February 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of 2024:

*Notice is hereby given that the Topsfield Planning Board will hold a public hearing during a ZOOM Planning Board Meeting on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 7:00 PM (instructions will be on the posted agenda on how to join the meeting via ZOOM) to consider the application of Jeffrey and Janet Rossman for premises located at 94 Surrey Lane requesting a special permit pursuant to Article VII, Section 7.03 of the Zoning By-law for a temporary accessory apartment. Instructions on how to join the meeting via ZOOM will be on the posted agenda.*

*Martha A. Morrison  
Chairman, Topsfield Planning Board*

Chairman Morrison recognized Jeff Rossman, applicant. Mr. Rossman explained that the accessory apartment had been in the house for many years before he and his wife purchased it. Pictures were shown of the existing apartment. New kitchen cabinets need to be installed. The Rossman's son will be living in the apartment. The Chairman asked the Board if they had any questions. They did not. She then asked for public comment and recognized Mr. and Mrs. Corbett who responded that they were in favor of granting the requested special permit.

Greg Mellinger made a motion to close the public hearing. The motion was seconded by Jennie Merrill and the motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Chairman Martha Morrison	yes
Member Greg Mellinger	yes
Member Jennie Merrill	yes

Jennie made a motion to approve the special permit for a temporary accessory apartment as requested. The motion was seconded by Greg Mellinger and the motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Chairman Martha Morrison	yes
Member Greg Mellinger	yes
Member Jennie Merrill	yes

### **DRAFT MASTER PLAN**

Chairman Morrison welcomed Chair Smith and Laura Smead and asked if they would like to make any opening comments. Discussion was then held on the following Planning Board suggestions on ways to strengthen and focus the Master Plan:

1. Add a municipal fiscal health goal and related strategies to continue to keep the Town on strong fiscal footing and maintain its AAA bond rating.
2. Add an additional strategy to the goal to support fun and cultural activities and events by updating and maintaining a town-wide shared event calendar to that events are less likely to overlap and possibly minimize the impact/attendance of each event.
3. Refer to and promote the Greenscape Coalition's guidelines for education on installing and maintaining sustainable landscapes on public and private lands, such as native landscaping, irrigation systems, removing invasives, mowing regulations, pesticide/herbicide use, etc.
4. Resurrect, and if necessary update, the existing Historical Commission's self-guided historic walking route centered around the Town Center. Publicize its existence via the website and consider making a virtual tour available.
5. Modify the strategy that speaks to encouraging the development of multi-family, non-age restricted housing in the business districts by including the words "and newly proposed" zoning as many new zoning articles are being proposed at this year's Annual Town Meeting.
6. Ensure that the strategy addressing beautification and placemaking initiatives downtown also includes maintaining the ones that exist. Several previous efforts at beautification have fallen into disrepair as the maintenance is often done by volunteers who move on to other activities/interests.

7. Add some details to the strategy that encourages/incentivizes the development of a restaurant or pub in the downtown area. Specify what financial incentives might be available.
8. Cross-referencing Existing Plans in strategies throughout. Include the Water Conservation Plan of 2007.
9. Modify the Land Use Map to remove Hill Street as a Connectivity Improvement Corridor and add Ipswich Road in its place. Ipswich Road could benefit from bike lanes.
10. Add an additional goal or strategy to improve the schools' overall ranking. While overrides for the schools occur every few years, the rankings are headed in the wrong direction.

Discussion was held on the strategy of evaluating implementing a Wastewater treatment facility in the Business Village, the fact sewage is a gating issue for downtown expansion, and findings from a previous evaluation. The Implementation Matrix was also discussed including whether it was part of the Master Plan and how it would be maintained/utilized moving forward. The next Master Plan draft will be provided to the Planning Board once suggestions/edits are incorporated.

## **MINUTES**

Deferred until the next Planning Board meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

At 8:14 pm Jennie Merrill made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Chairman Morrison and the motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:

Chairman Martha Morrison	yes
Clerk Steve Hall	yes
Member Jennie Merrill	yes

Respectfully submitted,

Lynne Bermudez  
Sr. Administrative Assistant

## **DOCUMENTS**

Per Open Meeting Law, the documents that were either distributed to the Planning Board before the meeting or at the meeting were:

1. Agenda
2. Draft Master Plan 1/17/24
3. Draft Meeting Minutes – 2/7/24

*Approved at the 3-6-24 Planning Board meeting.*

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law,' G.L. 39, § 23B, the approval of these minutes by the Committee constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting, the members present and absent, and the actions taken at the meeting. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion of any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Committee as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.