

MELROSE PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Zoning Subcommittee Meeting
Tuesday, April 23, 2024
7:00 PM
Cassidy Conference Room, 562 Main Street, Melrose

PRESENT: Greg Sampson, Beth Delahaij, Brian Gregory, & Anne DeSouza Ward

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Denise Gaffey, Director & City Planner, Lori Massa, Senior Planner, & Maya Noviski, Assistant Planner

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM by Ms. DeSouza Ward

ZONING ORDINANCE RECODIFICATION PROJECT

The Zoning Subcommittee met to discuss the initial revisions to recodify the zoning ordinance. Denise Gaffey, City Planner, explained that Planning Staff has collaborated with consultants from CommunityScale, paid for by a Housing Choice Grant that the City was awarded, to undertake the recodification effort. Two of the consultants involved with the project were also present: Nels Nelson and Attorney Jonathan Silverstein. The team discussed the purpose of the recodification effort as a way to streamline and clarify the code and that it will not involve recommending big policy changes. The process has consisted of striking duplicative and outdated sections, removing regulations from the definitions, clarifying language, formatting the code so it is more understandable, and codifying the current practices and expectations of the Boards.

The Subcommittee reviewed the revised table of contents and highlighted key changes to the code. The section regulating nonconformities was re-written and updated to comply with the State law. The variance hardship findings were also adjusted to be in-line with State law.

The Board discussed a section that was added to clarify how parcels split between two municipalities will be regulated.

Members supported removing the regulations from the definition. They liked the updated descriptions of the zoning districts and supported creating a Planning Board Rules and Regulations document, which they felt would more appropriately govern the application requirements currently regulated by the code. In response to whether the Bike Parking Guidelines should be included in the code, Members preferred setting bike parking minimums and keeping the dimensions and other regulations as guidelines. Members also discussed the existing fence regulations and agreed that they should remain unchanged.

Several possible edits were discussed including:

1. Is it necessary for the ZBA and the Planning Board to review each other's cases?
 - a. Members felt that this section could be revised so that either Board could selectively review certain cases, but that it would not be formally in the Zoning Ordinance for either Board to review the cases of the other Board.
2. Members also supported revising the code so that appeals of a Site Plan Review decision would be decided as is laid out in MGL 40A Section 17 rather than by the ZBA.
3. Should the URC & URD districts and the BB- and BB-1 districts be combined?
 - a. Members did not want to change the map as a part of the recodification effort and noted that the BB and BB-1 districts could not be combined because marijuana uses are only allowed in the BB.
4. Remove gas station specific signage regulations?
 - a. Members supported removing gas station specific regulations so that all commercial uses have the same rules.
5. Edits to the use table?
 - a. Members discussed specifically calling out where some uses fit within the use table that often come up as questions: gyms, exercise studios, physical therapy and clinics. They supported including uses that have been classified as personal and consumer establishments under the personal and consumer establishment use to clarify how those uses are defined.

Members were in favor of striking language from Article 12, which is no longer relevant and/or covered by Conservation Commission regulations.

Mr. Nelson added that he will be holding stakeholder meetings with community members that are familiar with the code to gather additional feedback.

The comments from the meeting will be incorporated into another draft of the Ordinance. The Subcommittee will meet again on May 21 at 7pm.

The meeting ended at 9:20 PM.