



TOWN OF  
**AMHERST**  
MASSACHUSETTS

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**Town of Amherst  
Special Meeting of the Town Council  
Monday, January 4, 2020  
6:30 p.m.  
Virtual Meeting  
Minutes**

Complete video is available online: <https://youtu.be/60sdpUVA64Y>

**1. Call to Order**

Councilors Participating Remotely: Bahl-Milne, Brewer, De Angelis, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schoen, Schreiber, Steinberg, Swartz

Councilors Absent: None

Others Participating Remotely: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Planning Director Christine Brestrup, Building Commissioner Rob Morra, Health Director Emma Dragon, Clerk of the Council Athena O’Keeffe, IT Director Sean Hannon

After confirming all participants could hear and be heard, President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum, called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and announced audio and video recording by Amherst Media.

Note: Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, this meeting of the Town Council was conducted via remote participation.

**2. Action Item**

**a. Zoning Priorities**

This motion was made and seconded at the December 21, 2020 regular Town Council meeting; Councilor DuMont used Charter Sec. 2.10(c) Right to postpone to postpone the vote until the next regular or special Council meeting. This motion is now on the table.

**MOTION:** Councilor Hanneke moved, second by Councilor Ryan, to direct the Town Manager to present zoning amendments that promote diverse neighborhoods, affordable housing, and new growth in downtown and village centers, in accordance with Town Council annual Policy Goal III Economic Vitality, in the following time periods:

- by March 15, 2021:
  - Adding B-L District to footnote b
  - Adding footnote a to maximum lot coverage and maximum building coverage
  - Proposed a revised SDU bylaw, similar to the 2018 Town Meeting proposal
  - Demolition Delay bylaw revisions
  - Work with the Council to begin a conversation on housing types expansion, in preparation for meeting the September 1, 2021 priorities below
  - Move apartments to SPR in more zoning districts
  - Remove Footnote m
  - Revise the Apartments definition
- by September 1, 2021:
  - Dimensional regulations in the R-G and R-VC
  - Lowering barriers to development of duplexes and triplexes
  - Frontage regulations for Residential zones

- Look at appropriateness of Use Table for V-C: What kinds of businesses are allowed or encouraged in V-C districts - food, entertainment, services - things that make community and meet basic needs, within walking distance
- Transportation issues (may not be zoning)
- Use of Consultant money:
  - Form based zoning / design guidelines

**MOTION:** Councilor Schoen moved, second by Councilor Bahl-Milne, to direct the Town Manager to present zoning amendment- options to the Planning Board and Town Council Community Resources Committee, and ultimately the Town Council that promote diverse neighborhoods, affordable housing, and new growth in downtown and village centers, in accordance with Town Council Economic Vitality Performance Goal for the Town Manager (July 1,2020 to June 30, 2021), and where possible consider Climate Action, Housing Affordability, and Social Justice Goals. in the following time periods:

- Design guidelines: Throughout the coming year begin discussions and development of design guidelines that could be added to current zoning bylaws, with a focus on the central Business District (B-G), Limited Business District (B-L), and Village Centers
- By March 15, 2021 review, assess, and recommend options regarding:
  - B-L (Limited Business) District lot size and building coverage dimensions
    - Assess the reasonableness and impact of adding footnotes “a” (Special Permit authority to modify dimensions) or “b” ( applies to residential lot dimensions)
    - Assess parking requirements
    - Assess need for design standards, including set-backs from the street, sidewalk widths, and provision for open space (e.g. small yards, patios)
  - The potential of a revised SDU bylaw, similar to the 2018 Town Meeting proposal
  - Demolition Delay bylaw revisions, including those from the Historical Commission
  - Work with the Council to begin a conversation on housing types expansion, in preparation for meeting the September 1, 2021 priorities below
  - Assess the impact of removing Footnote “m” in R-G District (General Residence) that regulates the lot size required for additional dwelling units
- by September 1, 2021 review, assess, and recommend options regarding:
  - In the B-G District (General Business) assess setbacks from street and whether to add step-back provisions for upper floors
  - Whether to move apartments to SP (special permit) in more zoning districts
  - Potential revisions to the Apartments definition
  - Potential revisions to the Mixed-Use Building Definition
  - Lowering barriers to development of owner-occupied duplexes and triplexes, with design guidelines
  - Look at appropriateness of Use Table for V-C (Village Centers): What kinds of businesses are allowed or encouraged in V-C districts - food, entertainment, services - things that make community and meet basic needs, within walking distance
  - Transportation issues, side-walk width, building setbacks from street standards (may not be zoning)
- Use of Consultant money:
  - Design guidelines and Form based zoning for specific neighborhoods/ zoning districts

Councilor Schoen spoke to the motion, stating that the intention of the proposed substitute motion is to continue the momentum toward a discussion of the zoning bylaws, with the goal of stimulating economic and cultural vitality and potentially providing more affordable housing while preserving open space.

Councilor Bahl-Milne spoke about public comments received by the Council regarding the zoning priorities, and spoke in support of the motion, stating that the Town is stuck with certain zoning limitations that are preventing housing from being built in the BL district and losing affordable housing.

Councilor Hanneke spoke in opposition to the motion, stating that it adds things that are outside what the Planning Department had agreed it could accomplish in three months, and that the Council tasked the Community Resources Committee to provide more housing not “potentially” provide more housing, and the proposed motion removed owner-occupied duplexes and triplexes, removes SPR for apartments, sets the department up for failure and does not appropriate funds to accomplish what it seeks to accomplish.

Councilor Ross spoke in opposition to the motion, stating it lays an undue burden on the planning department, adds to the list that Councilors have expressed is already too long, requires the Planning Department to provide options which duplicates its work. Councilor Ross stated that adding design guidelines for duplexes seems classist and objected to removing the dimensional regulation.

Councilor Pam spoke about the need for open air and green space in light of the pandemic, the public response to the proposed priorities, public input, and fear of changes. Councilor Pam spoke in support of the motion.

Councilor Brewer stated that the majority of letters sent to the Council regarding the zoning priorities were from white homeowners who fear change, losing money, and being excluded from discussions. Councilor Brewer spoke about the current form of government in comparison with Town Meeting, which was less transparent and provided less opportunities for public input.

Councilor Schreiber spoke about the outpouring of emails from residents regarding the zoning priorities, and spoke in support of the original motion, noting that any zoning change will need a 2/3 vote of the Council, will require hearings, and spoke about new growth and housing priorities.

Councilor Bahl-Milne spoke about the cost of a consultant, and suggested hiring from a local design school.

Councilor De Angelis stated the only new buildings which require a special permit are required to provide affordable housing, and stated that pending legislation would remove the 2/3 vote requirement for zoning changes. Councilor De Angelis stated the original list of priorities is too confining, and spoke in support of postponing a vote until the Council can discuss priorities.

Councilor Schoen spoke about zoning priorities developed by the zoning subcommittee of the planning board.

President Griesemer stated that the vote today will not change the zoning bylaw, and that any changes will come to the Council and may be referred to a committee for review and will require a hearing per Massachusetts General Law.

Councilor Hanneke called the question.

**VOTED** unanimously, 13-0 by roll call, to call the question.

**VOTED 5-1-7** by roll call (Councilors Bahl-Milne, De Angelis, DuMont, Pam, Schoen, voted Yes; Councilors Brewer, Hanneke, Ross, Ryan, Schreiber, Steinberg, and Swartz voted No; Councilor Griesemer abstained) to direct the Town Manager to present zoning amendment- options to the Planning Board and Town Council Community Resources Committee, and ultimately the Town Council that promote diverse neighborhoods, affordable housing, and new growth in downtown and village centers, in accordance with Town Council Economic Vitality Performance Goal for the Town Manager (July 1,2020 to June 30, 2021), and where possible consider Climate Action, Housing Affordability, and Social Justice Goals. in the following time periods:

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    - Assess parking requirements
    - Assess need for design standards, including set-backs from the street, sidewalk widths, and provision for open space (e.g. small yards, patios)
  - The potential of a revised SDU bylaw, similar to the 2018 Town Meeting proposal
  - Demolition Delay bylaw revisions, including those from the Historical Commission
  - Work with the Council to begin a conversation on housing types expansion, in preparation for meeting the September 1, 2021 priorities below
  - Assess the impact of removing Footnote “m” in R-G District (General Residence) that regulates the lot size required for additional dwelling units
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  - Potential revisions to the Mixed-Use Building Definition
  - Lowering barriers to development of owner-occupied duplexes and triplexes, with design guidelines
  - Look at appropriateness of Use Table for V-C (Village Centers): What kinds of businesses are allowed or encouraged in V-C districts - food, entertainment, services - things that make community and meet basic needs, within walking distance
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- Use of Consultant money:
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The motion failed.

After brief discussion Councilor Hanneke called the question.

**VOTED 8-5** by roll call (Councilors Brewer, Griesemer, Hanneke, Ross, Ryan, Schreiber, Steinberg, Swartz voted Yes; Councilors Bahl-Milne, De Angelis, DuMont, Pam, Schoen voted No) to call the question; the motion failed.

Councilor Brewer spoke about the legislative role of the Council, and that the Town Manager should provide updates to the Council through the process.

Councilor Ryan urged Councilors to vote in favor of the motion.

Councilor Bahl-Milne spoke about design guidelines and form-based zoning, and the need for the Planning Department to bring solutions to the Council.

Councilor Pam spoke about the need for design standards.

Councilor DuMont echoed Councilors Bahl-Milne and Pam's statements, adding that the Council was not mandated to make the types of changes that are being put forward, and that there were many other suggestions.

Councilor Schoen spoke about the Master Plan, and in support of adaptive reuse of high quality historic buildings in the downtown.

Councilor Ross spoke in opposition to prioritizing design guidelines above all else, and spoke about the development of the strategies that came from a real estate market study. Councilor Ross spoke about the urgency of the need for affordable housing and to make the community more accessible and affordable to more people.

Councilor De Angelis stated that lowering costs for developers will not automatically lower rents.

Councilors spoke about legislation that would change the voting threshold on zoning changes.

Councilor De Angelis called the question.

**VOTED** unanimously, 13-0 by roll call the question.

**VOTED** 10-3 by roll call (Councilors Bahl-Milne, Brewer, De Angelis, Griesemer, Hanneke, Ross, Ryan, Schreiber, Steinberg, and Swartz voted Yes; Councilor DuMont, Pam, and Schoen voted No) to direct the Town Manager to present zoning amendments that promote diverse neighborhoods, affordable housing, and new growth in downtown and village centers, in accordance with Town Council annual Policy Goal III Economic Vitality, in the following time periods:

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**3. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting -  
None**

**4. Adjourn**

President Griesemer declared the special meeting of the Town Council adjourned at 8:20 p.m.  
Respectfully submitted,



Athena O'Keeffe  
Clerk of the Council

**Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented**

- 00. 01-04-2021 Draft Motions for Town Council as of 01-04-21
- 00. 01-04-2021 Draft Motions for Town Council as of 12-23-20
- 00. 01-04-2021 FINAL Special Town Council Agenda
- 00. 01-04-2021 FINAL Special Town Council Agenda - Public Forum Appropriation Belchertown Rd Acquisition
- 01-04-2021 FINAL Town Council Agenda
- 12. Town Manager Report 01-04-2021
- 14. Proclamation in Support of a National Day of Recollection\_FINAL DRAFT
- 15. Election of officers script
- 2.a. Belchertown Road Acquisition Presentation 12-21-20 TC
- 6.a. 2021 MLK Jr. Proclamation Corrected - as voted at GOL
- 6.a. Black History Month Proclamation 2021 - as voted at GOL
- 7.a. COVID-19 Town Council Presentation 01-04-2021
- 7.b. Pomeroy Village MassWorks Grant Process Memo - 01-04-2021
- 8.a. Capital Inventory memo
- 8.b. DRAFT Memo to Jones Library re Ren Expan vs. Repair amended as of 01-03-2021(a1)
- 8.c. Memo re Required and Possible Agenda Items in 2021 as of 12-27-2020 \_Composite as of 01-03-2021
- Zoning Priorities Motion - Motion to Substitute a Revised Amended Motion. 1.4.2021 CS
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