

**AMHERST PLANNING BOARD**  
**Wednesday, March 17, 2021, 6:30 PM**

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 Planning Board was conducted via remote participation.

**VIRTUAL MEETING:** <https://amherstma.zoom.us/j/85644106064>

The Minutes of the Planning Board are not intended to be a transcript. The meeting recording is located here: [Planning Board Mar 17, 2021 - YouTube](#)

**MINUTES**

**Planning Board Members Participating Remotely and Present by Roll Call:**

Maria Chao, Jack Jemsek – Chair, Thom Long, Andrew MacDougall, Doug Marshall, Janet McGowan, Johanna Neumann

**Planning Board Members Absent:** None

**Staff Participating Remotely:** Christine Brestrup, Planning Director  
Pamela Field-Sadler, Administrative Assistant  
Guilford Mooring, DPW Superintendent  
Alan Snow, Tree Warden

**Others:** Michael Kane, Community Relations Specialist - Eversource  
Michael Rosenburg, Engineering Department - Eversource  
Michael Liu, Berkshire Design Group  
Chris Farley, Kuhn-Riddle Architects

**6:31 pm:** Chair Jack Jemsek opened the meeting and announced this Planning Board (Board) meeting is being conducted via remote participation. Mr. Jemsek determined by roll call that all Board members were present. Mr. Jemsek explained the process by which to be recognized to speak or submit a public comment.

**I. MINUTES**

**1. March 3, 2021 Minutes**

The Board reviewed amendments to the March 3, 2021 minutes suggested by Ms. McGowan.

**Motion:** Ms. Neumann made the motion to approve the March 3, 2021 minutes with the amendments suggested by Ms. McGowan. Mr. MacDougall seconded the motion.

**Discussion:** The Board agreed to add the language “with any grammatical edits needed done by staff” to the motion. Ms. Neumann restated the motion.

**Motion:** Ms. Neumann made the motion to approve the March 3, 2021 minutes with the amendments suggested by Ms. McGowan with any grammatical edits needed done by staff. Mr. MacDougall seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote of the Planning Board:**

Chao – yes; Jemsek – yes; Long – abstain; MacDougall – abstain; Marshall – yes;  
McGowan – yes; Neumann - yes  
(5-0-2 motion approved - Abstain: Long, MacDougall)

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD - None**

**III. PUBLIC HEARING – JOINT HEARING WITH TREE WARDEN**

**Scenic Road tree removal – for a power reliability upgrade by Eversource on the south side of Bay Road – 165 Bay Road (Map 25B, Parcel 16)**

Public Shade Trees impacted by this project include the following trees (Sizes indicate “diameter at breast height” – DBH):

7 White Pines: 1 =11”; 1 =15”; 1 =17”; 1 =18”; 1 =19”; 1 =21”; 1 =26”

**6:42 pm:** Mr. Jemsek read the preamble and opened the public hearing; there were no Board Disclosures.

Michael Kane, Community Relations Specialist – Eversource stated that at this time the applicant is requesting to withdraw the application to remove trees. Michael Rosenberg from the Eversource Engineering Department explained the intention of the work on Bay Road was to install a three phase re-closing device for reliability; however, a more suitable location further down the road that would not require tree trimming was chosen for the project.

Mr. Rosenberg noted that the trees in the area are encroaching on the utility lines. Mr. Rosenberg said that Barry Croke of Eversources’ Vegetation Management Group and Tree Warden Alan Snow intend to create a list of trees that could be problematic.

Board Discussion and Questions

In answering a question from Mr. MacDougall, Mr. Rosenberg explained that a survey of local trees is normal and storm trimming is ongoing, but there are some trees in Amherst that Mr. Croke wants to address before they become a problem. He added that invasive species/vines are trimmed once they reach a certain height.

Ms. McGowan said she observed a pole during the site visit that was in rough shape. Mr. Rosenberg said in order to meet current standards, the pole would need to be upgraded and the pole would be taller which would bring the wires further into the congestion of the trees.

**Motion:** Mr. Marshal made the motion to accept the request to withdraw the scenic road tree removal for 165 Bay Road and close the public hearing. Ms. McGowan seconded the motion.

Public Comment

Shoshona King, Rolling Green Drive, asked Mr. Rosenberg to clarify who “Terry” is. Mr. Rosenberg said he mentioned Barry Croake who is part of the Vegetation Management Group for Western MA. He added that trouble trees and branches can be reported on the Eversource website.

Tree Warden Alan Snow stated he voted in favor of accepting the request to withdraw the application for removal of trees as presented.

**Motion:** Mr. Marshal made the motion to accept the request to withdraw the scenic road tree removal for 165 Bay Road and close the public hearing. Ms. McGowan seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote of the Planning Board:**

Chao – yes; Jemsek – yes; Long – yes; MacDougall – yes; Marshall – yes; McGowan – yes; Neumann - yes (7-0-0 motion approved)

While waiting to open the public hearing scheduled for 7:00 p.m., the Board took up the following items:

**VII. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS - None**

**VIII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS – None**

**IX. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS**

Ms. Brestrup reported that she expects to receive the complete application for a mixed-use building proposed to be located at 11 East Pleasant Street. Ms. Brestrup said the proposal would go before the Design Review Board (DRB) and the Disability Access Advisory Committee (DAAC). Ms. Brestrup expects this proposal to come before the Board in late April.

**X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS**

**Pioneer Valley Planning Commission** – Mr. Jemsek reported that the next PVPC regular meeting would be in early April. He noted that the latest meeting of the PVPC Executive Committee was cancelled.

**Community Preservation Act Committee** – Andrew MacDougall reported that the last CPAC meeting was cut short due to Zoom scheduling, but is expected to reconvene. In preparing for the next year, CPAC is discussing their proposal evaluation mechanisms with the intent of better communicating CPAC’s values and expectations to applicants.

**Agricultural Commission** – Doug Marshall reported that the last two Ag. Commission meetings were cancelled. He also noted there are two voting positions open on the Ag. Commission currently.

**Design Review Board** – Mr. Long reported that the DRB reviewed the proposed North Amherst Library addition project. The DRB positively recommended the proposed project and offered several comments regarding aesthetics and the architectural details. The DRB

also reviewed a proposed ramp project that connects the Boltwood parking area to the John Musante Health Center at the back of the Bangs Community Center. The DRB approved the proposal with recommendations regarding lighting and safety in the area of the ramp. Mr. Long said in addition to the ramp, there are some potential opportunities to add furnishings in the Boltwood parking area as part of this project if the budget allows. The DRB tentatively approved the additional furnishings pending on a more detailed review in the future.

#### **IV. PUBLIC HEARING – SITE PLAN REVIEW**

##### **SPR 2021-06 – North Amherst Library – 8 Montague Road**

Request Site Plan Review approval to add an addition to the existing building and add new parking, walks, utilities, drainage and landscaping

(Map 5A, Parcels 37 & 38, B-VC zoning district)

Ms. Brestrup recommended that the Board hear the applicant's presentation, share comments and questions, receive comments from the public and then continue the public hearing to a date certain. Ms. Brestrup said we are waiting to hear the outcomes of the reviews of the proposal by the Historical Commission, Conservation Commission and the DRB. Ms. Brestrup noted she had sent the Development Application Report (DAR) to the Board just prior to this meeting.

**7:02 pm:** Mr. Jemsek read the preamble and opened the public hearing; there were no Board Disclosures. Michael Liu, Berkshire Design Group, Chris Farley, Kuhn-Riddle Architects and DPW Director Guilford Mooring were in attendance for this item.

Michael Liu, Berkshire Design Group began the project presentation with a review of the site. The proposed project would involve work on two town-owned parcels and would include an addition to the existing building, add new parking, walks, utilities, drainage and landscaping at the existing North Amherst Library. Mr. Liu showed a rendering of the site and pointed out:

- The existing library building
- The existing south entrance that is not handicapped accessible would remain.
- The proposed addition which includes a handicapped accessible porch entry, a meeting room with a capacity for 49 people and bathrooms.
- The connecting area between the existing building and the proposed addition
- The 10 parking spaces proposed (2-handicapped accessible, 8-standard) on the north side
- A proposed sidewalk from Sunderland Road that would connect to the existing sidewalk at Montague Road
- The existing curb cut on Montague Road would be closed and a new entrance/exit would be constructed from Sunderland Road; closure of the curb cut requires approval by MA DOT.
- Additional pavement and a concrete pad on the north side is proposed to be removed and replaced with a grass swale to catch the north to south run-off. The run-off would go into a new catch basin and be piped into an existing catch basin on the Sunderland Road side.
- The crosswalks on Montague Road and Sunderland Road

- A mechanical area that would be shielded from Sunderland Road by a screen fence and shrubs.
- The planting beds on the east and west sides would be maintained with the addition of shade trees, 2 birch trees and foundation plantings. No plantings are proposed for the south side of the existing library.

Mr. Liu discussed the need for an ANR because the proposed work would occur on two parcels (Map 5A/37 and Map 5A/38). The current property line runs through the area where the new building is proposed to be located so a new property line will need to be established. The plans show the new proposed property line about 27' north of the new building wall along the northern edge of the parking spaces. The lot to the north would remain non-conforming; the lot to the south could be non-conforming depending on if the setback measurement is to the foundation or the wood siding which is the dominant feature. Mr. Liu said he is working with staff to determine how to handle this and if a Special Permit would be required.

Chris Farley, Kuhn-Riddle Architects, introduced himself and explained he is the Project Architect for the proposed project. Mr. Farley explained the three main goals of the project are to:

1. Make the existing library building and building addition ADA compliant
2. Provide a library/community meeting room and accessible bathrooms
3. Upgrade the existing lighting and mechanical systems and provide a fire alarm system

During his presentation, Mr. Farley discussed the following:

- The integrity of the existing building will be maintained except at the north side where the addition will connect. The existing library can be closed from the public, but still allow the meeting room to be used beyond library hours.
- The existing library building is about 900 sf and the addition, including the connector, is about 1190 sf.
- On the north side there is a fully accessible path from the sidewalk and the accessible parking spaces to the new entry.
- A Book Return would be located on the west side that would be accessible when the library and addition are closed.
- The proposed north entry would open to a lobby; to the east would be the meeting room with a capacity for about 50 people and to the west would be the accessible bathrooms, maintenance closet and library storage space.
- Through the lobby, the connector would be accessible with new stairs leading into the existing library. To the west side is a set of stairs leading to the library basement only accessible to the library staff. A new wheelchair lift is proposed to the east of the stairs to provide full accessibility up to the library level or down to the basement level.
- The existing library would overall remain the same; however, the circulation desk would be replaced with a fully accessible desk.

Mr. Farley said the goal was to design an addition that would complement the existing library without overwhelming it. While providing exterior renderings, Mr. Farley discussed the following attributes:

- The addition takes its form from the existing library with similar roof pitches similar volumes.
- The main entry gable and gabled dormer windows and flanking windows looking into the proposed meeting space.
- Similar to the existing library, the material palette would include painted wood and natural wood.
- The proposed addition would have a standing seam metal roof, cedar shingle siding and painted wood trim. The design group is considering alternatives to painted wood trim and would present any proposed changes to the Board.
- The design group is considering a ground mounted monument sign for the project and would submit a proposal to the Board for review.

#### Site Visit Report

Mr. Marshall reported that a Site Visit occurred on March 16, 2021 with all Board members, with the exception of Ms. Chao, Mr. Jemsek and Ms. Neumann. Ms.

Brestrup was also present. He shared the following regarding the Site Visit:

- The group started in the parking lot and observed the former garage existing to the north of the proposed project. The group discussed parking and the potential need/location for overflow parking to accommodate the community meeting room use.
- The group saw where the mechanical units would be located on the Sunderland Road side.
- The group observed where the proposed addition would meet the existing building. It would require removing a section of solid wall, approximately four transom windows and the removal of an interior fireplace.
- At the front of the existing building, the group discussed the existing plantings and the many volunteers who maintain them.
- The group observed the cross walks and discussed access to the bus stop on the Montague Road side.
- Ms. McGowan added that the group observed where the grass swale would be located on the north side.

#### Board Questions and Comments

Mr. Jemsek asked if a Storm Water Report would be provided. Mr. Liu explained that a Storm Water Report is not required because the impervious area would be reduced. Ms. Neumann is in favor of the impervious area reduction and suggested that a rain garden could catch even more of the run-off. DPW Superintendent Guilford Mooring said that currently there is a minimal requirement for stormwater management because as we bring in the new intersection and roadway, stormwater improvements will be further addressed and more green space will be created. Mr. Mooring said the intent is to meet the requirements of the anonymous donor for the library renovation and not hold up the project.

Mr. Jemsek asked how the future intersection work would affect this project. Mr. Liu said the future intersection work is proposed to be farther north and did not need to be taken into consideration while designing the library addition.

In answering a question from Ms. Neumann, Mr. Liu confirmed that the town owns both parcels involving the project.

Ms. Neumann asked if onsite renewable energy options had been considered. Mr. Farley said that renewable energy options had been discussed early in the design process; however, the project cost does not require adherence to the Zero Energy Bylaw. The design group is committed to proposing a building that is as efficient as possible and were told that if solar panels were to be used, they would be located off site.

Mr. Farley confirmed that the cost of the renovation requires that all the public spaces in the building be fully accessible.

The Board discussed the need to go through the ANR process to move the lot line versus combining the two parcels into one. Mr. Liu said both options were considered. However, when the future intersection and roadway project occurs, there will potentially be another shift in the property. After discussions with the Building Commissioner, the decision, at this time, is to move the lot line in order to reach 12,000 sf. Ms. Brestrup added that preserving the nonconformity of the lot to the north of the library in terms of lot coverage could be important depending on what's proposed for that location in the future.

Mr. Marshall noted that overflow parking would currently occur at the commercial lot on Montague Road or the school lot on Sunderland Road; parking in either of these locations would mean people need to cross the street. He asked if there is a timeline for the reconfiguration of the intersection and roadways. Mr. Mooring said discussions are presently happening to decide whether to start the public process this fall or wait until next spring. Once started, the construction project would take about 2 ½ to 3 years to complete.

Mr. Marshall would support additional study of the proposed addition's exterior color and how well it integrates with the existing building. Mr. Long suggested that Mr. Marshall might find the black and white renderings helpful when considering the consistency of the aesthetics and architectural design.

Mr. Long also noted that the double windows on the north and west façade seem out of scale when compared with the other windows. He suggested alternatives could be explored.

Mr. MacDougall said that during the Site Visit it was noticed that the traffic from both roads was loud and he asked if there were plans for noise attenuation. Mr. Farley said when the realignment of the road occurs, the traffic noise will be reduced from the

Sunderland Road side. He added that the air sealing and triple glazed windows will help in noise attenuation inside the building.

Mr. MacDougall asked about the environmental conditions of the site. Mr. Mooring said when the town purchased the property with the existing garage, all the environmental investigations done produced clean reports.

There was a discussion regarding site lighting. Mr. Liu showed the location of the two pedestrian scale lights proposed for the new east/west walkway that are 15' tall with an acorn fixture that meets the town standard. These lights will illuminate the walkway and the new entrance with some spillage onto the sidewalks on both roadsides. Mr. Farley said there is downcast lighting proposed for the entryway too.

The Board noted the crosswalks are dark and discussed the need for greater illumination in these areas. The question was raised regarding the possibility of moving the crosswalk on Sunderland Road farther north, installing raised crosswalks, adding crosswalk flashers, illuminating the signs or the use of florescent paint in the area due to the reduced parking on site.

Mr. Mooring said that upgrades to the crosswalks on Montague Road would be the prevue of Mass DOT and we could see if they can do anything. When the town's intersection and roadway project happens, lighting improvements will be included. Additionally, Mr. Mooring said that only a small portion of pavement is being removed for the swale. People will, and do, park all over the paved area of the gas station; this area will remain available for parking until the roadway project starts. A goal of the road project is to add more lined and designated spaces to the parking lot.

Mr. Farley said the fence intended to screen the outdoor mechanical equipment and some of the mechanical noise would be wood with plantings in front of it. The plantings would eventually become the dominant feature; however, the design group could explore the possibility of incorporating the fence with the building design in a better manner. Ms. Brestrup noted that the plan says the fence would be white vinyl.

Mr. Farley noted that discussions regarding the hours of operation for the library and the meeting room are ongoing.

#### Public Comment

Ken Rosenthal, 53 Sunset Avenue, shared the following in his comments:

- If the existing library wouldn't block the sun in the area of the south facing roof on the addition, the town could consider the possibility of solar panel placement there in the future.
- He is concerned about the flat roof on the connector being an area where snow and ice would collect causing future leaks.
- Why not just move the property line to the far side of the parking area now?

Mary Sayer, Pine Street, shared the following in her comments:



- Mass DOT had to be pushed to put the crosswalk back in after the resurfacing project.
- She said the North Amherst Library is well used, with much bicycle, pedestrian and stroller traffic. People also use the road to go to and from the Survival Center. She stressed the importance of safety including good lighting and planting maintenance.
- She and others in the neighborhood love the addition project design.

Dorothy Pam shared the following in her comments:

- Ms. Pam loves the plan for the library expansion.
- Driving in that area at night is challenging and she supports adding a well-lit parking area with the required 25 parking spaces now rather than waiting.

Cathy Schoen shared the following comment:

- Ms. Schoen suggested that in the future there may be additional parking off the corner of the existing school building on Sunderland Road.

Mr. Mooring responded to the Public Comments. Mr. Mooring said we are aware lighting improvements and parking upgrades are needed, but clarified that is beyond the anonymous gift for this project; the focus is on the building renovation. To move the project forward the parking and the renovation need to be separate.

Ms. Brestrup said there is potential add a condition to revisit the parking area design after the intersection and roadway work is complete. She also noted that the intersection and roadway will have a public process and everyone will have an opportunity to share comments and concerns.

Hilda Greenbaum, Montague Road, shared the following comment:

- One of the last things Town Meeting voted for was to allow parking at the cow pasture across the street to the north of the school building.

The Board and applicant team discussed a potential date to continue the public hearing. Ms. Brestrup reminded the Board that we need to hear from the Historical Commission and the Conservation Commission who will be holding meetings at the end of March. Ms. McGowan said she would like to see parking alternatives when the applicant returns. Mr. Liu said he could look at how many additional parking spaces could be achieved on the former garage parcel.

**Motion:** Mr. Marshall made the motion to continue the public hearing for SPR 2021-06 – North Amherst Library – 8 Montague Road to April 7, 2021 at 6:35 p.m. Mr. Long seconded the motion.

**Roll Call Vote of the Planning Board:**

Chao – yes; Jemsek – yes; Long – yes; MacDougall – yes; Marshall – yes; McGowan – yes; Neumann - yes (7-0-0 motion approved)

**8:45 p.m.** The Planning Board took a break and resumed the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

## V. OLD BUSINESS

### A. Review of the Comprehensive Housing Policy

Ms. Brestrup explained the Community Resources Committee (CRC) would be meeting on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and a topic of discussion would be the Comprehensive Housing Policy (Policy). Ms. Brestrup said the Board could choose to discuss this item or Board members could send her their comments for compiling.

Mr. Marshall said his understanding was that the Board's comments were due to Ms. Brestrup by the end of March and he is unprepared to share comments now. Ms. Brestrup said getting her comments by the end of March is fine; CRC has asked for comments by April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mr. Jemsek said a brief discussion was good. He shared the following comments regarding his Policy review:

- Include a definition section early in the document. Define terms such as adaptive re-use, supplemental dwelling, cottage, congregate housing, affordability (capital A versus small a) etc... Vacancy rate could be included in a definitions section with a description of how and when the rate is monitored in Amherst.
- Although Mr. Jemsek appreciates the importance of climate sustainability and resiliency goals, he suggested the priority level of this item should be reduced. The Zoning Bylaw and Building Code would support development that is energy efficient. The Policy's main focus should be to increase affordable housing in Amherst.
- Mr. Jemsek noted that a reference to the Market Supply and Demand concept or the Habitat for Humanity concept is not included.

Ms. Chao asked whose comments are in red on the draft Policy. Ms. Brestrup said she believes the comments in red are things that have been brought up by Town Council members or CRC members; the CRC Chair is compiling all of the comments. Ms. Brestrup said the Board members could provide an overall reaction to the Policy. Mr. Marshall requested a copy of the Policy without the redline comments.

Mr. Long shared the following comments:

- There are instances where recommendations are made for action; however, there are no mechanisms to support follow through of the action. This is especially true when funding recommendations are referenced. The Policy needs to offer solutions to the larger problems beyond zoning.
- Mr. Long is working with Town Councilor Shalini Bahl-Milne on an ad hoc basis to consider long-term strategies for a developing a community process. Part of the process would be community engagement; Ms. Bahl-Milne and Mr. Long are working on a questionnaire intended to gather information about people's real life experiences in order to consider how those experiences can inform decisions made in the future.

Mr. Marshall shared the following comments:

- He views the distribution of housing as fundamental to the sustainability issue in that probably a third of our carbon emissions as a society are related to vehicular transportation. If we want to reduce the carbon footprint, one way is to live closer together and encourage walking, biking and the use of public transportation.
- The purpose of the document needs to be clear.

Ms. McGowan shared the following comments:

- Ms. McGowan said government policies are usually meant to be implemented; how this policy is intended to be implemented by the town needs to be clear.
- The Policy needs to focus on the fundamental issue that Amherst is a college/university town. The students do drive the housing market, but the college/university communities also enrich the town.
- Ms. McGowan agrees that the Policy doesn't really address the housing demand and seems to assume there is a constant demand. It is unclear how we will achieve the goals of lower housing prices, a more diverse community and more opportunities for people to buy homes, especially populations that have been excluded from doing so.
- Ms. McGowan would like to see a goal or an objective that addresses how to increase the utilization of existing housing.
- The Policy is unclear as to how, as a community, we close the gap between income, assets and homes.
- Ms. McGowan said the data in the Housing Production Plan is outdated. She would like to see a goal that provides for data collection such as rent, who is living in the new residential units, cost of land, rental unit conditions etc...
- Ms. McGowan suggested the Policy could be less specific. She noted there are many strategies in the Master Plan, Housing Production Plan and the Housing Market Studies that could be utilized. She noted that other college/university towns may have strategies that could be resources as well.
- Ms. McGowan is of the opinion that the Policy is quite long overall.

Ms. Brestrup said we need to think realistically about what can actually be accomplished given the resources that we have. The first Housing Policy was drafted by the Housing Trust and had very clear goals including a commitment from the town to develop 50 affordable units per year over a 5-year span which would cost the town approximately \$12,000,000. Ms. Brestrup questioned if the town is prepared to spend that much money. She also noted that staff are very involved in affordable unit projects. Ms. Brestrup asked if additional staff would be hired to accommodate for 50 affordable units, or possibly work with an outside organization that knows how to manage affordable housing.

Mr. Marshall reminded the Board about the new affordable housing overlay that is used in Cambridge. Mr. Marshall said that the overlay is used town wide and prescribes the requirements for developing affordable housing. Mr. Marshall suggested that if affordable housing development was “by right” and the permitting process was more streamlined, less staff time would be required for the projects. Additionally, Mr. Marshall noted that Amherst does not have a surplus of older housing that has aged out of the higher priced real estate market.

Ms. Brestrup said that the Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw and the Comprehensive Permit process each provide for the achievement of affordable housing in small increments such as the 11 affordable units at Aspen Heights or the 26 affordable units at North Square. She noted that the amount of staff time devoted is dependent on whether a project is initiated by the town, such as the Olympia Oaks project which has 44 affordable units, or is initiated by a developer. Town initiated projects can take several years of labor-intensive work for staff.

Mr. Long said that Ms. Brestrup’s comment is a good example of what he means when he talked about putting mechanisms in place to make a significant impact.

Ms. Chao agreed that the desire is to promote affordable housing and that the housing stock is low; the housing demand is high which is driving up the cost. Ms. Chao supports working on the zoning to provide more opportunities for incremental increases of affordable units in a variety of ways. She noted that although it would take years of work to create, she likes the idea of the Housing Overlay as used in Cambridge.

Ms. McGowan shared these additional comments:

- She encouraged an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw that would require any development with 10 or more units to include affordable housing with the Capital A.
- Ms. McGowan asked if UMass had managed housing for their expanded student population, would housing in Amherst be more affordable? She noted that the Master Plan describes strategies for working with UMass to have taxable properties on campus.
- Ms. McGowan suggested having conversations with UMass about the need for student housing and the impact on the Amherst community.

Mr. Long noted that students living off campus frequent the downtown businesses and that affects the Amherst community.

B. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting. - None

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

A. Pomeroy Village Intersection Improvements – presentation and discussion about infrastructure project financed by MassWorks Grant – seeking input from the Planning Board – What works? What doesn’t work? What needs improvement?

View project information at:

[Pomeroy Village Intersection Improvements | Engage Amherst](#)

Ms. Brestrup explained that the Town Council would need to decide whether to encourage a roundabout or a signalized intersection for the Pomeroy Village Center. Currently, the goal is to elicit comments from various boards and committees, including the Planning Board. Ms. Brestrup suggested that Board members could send her comments individually or share them now.

Mr. Marshall said that he leans more to the signalized intersection concept. He is concerned that rotaries with a large diameter seem to push buildings away from the street. He suggested improvements should include sidewalks, granite curbing, accessible ramps at the corners and a pedestrian walk signal to make the area more pedestrian friendly and the intersection better defined.

Mr. MacDougall suggested a rotary could serve as a landmark and help define the identity of the location. Mr. MacDougall asked what is included in the scope of work for sidewalk improvements.

Ms. Brestrup said the original plan has been scaled back. The award from the MassWorks is \$1.5 million and the hope is to get sidewalks where there is existing development, roadway improvements and north/south bound turning lanes on Route 116 (West St.) with this money. A signalized intersection may cost more due to the signals; however, a roundabout may include pedestrian signals too in order to meet the needs of physically impaired pedestrians.

Mr. Jemsek asked about traffic flow and if there is an assessment describing how the East Pleasant St. roundabout is working. Ms. Brestrup said that some people see the East Pleasant St./Triangle St. roundabout as working really well and others do not; visually impaired people report that they avoid the roundabout. She said there have not been any serious injury accidents at the roundabout. Ms. Brestrup said that traffic engineers support a roundabout because a continuous flow of traffic is produced, unless someone wants to cross the street.

Ms. McGowan asked what are the goals of the project. Ms. Brestrup said that from the Planning Department's perspective we are trying to create a village center that is safer for pedestrians and easier to cross the street while lessening traffic backup during peak periods. We also want to make it possible to develop property on the four corners and improve the streetscape. Ms. Brestrup said there are a lot of opportunities for development in that area.

Ms. Brestrup said that speaking as a planner, she believes the signalized intersection would provide more opportunity to develop the properties that are available. Ms. McGowan agreed with Ms. Brestrup and said a roundabout seems a little less pedestrian friendly.

Ms. Neumann said she is a regular cyclist and finds the roundabouts much easier to navigate on a bicycle. She suggested that if the signalized intersection concept is used that there are things that should be done for bicycle infrastructure too. Ms. Brestrup added there is less pollution with a roundabout because vehicles are not idling at the stoplight.

Mr. Marshall said his preference for a signalized intersection has lessened a little because he hadn't considered the apparent need to add left turn lanes requiring the width of the signalized intersection to be greater and the curb to curb distance for pedestrians to increase. He said what concerns him about rotaries is pedestrians get pushed out and away from the intersection discouraging a visual interface with the pedestrian; the concept of a signalized intersection with turning lanes would seem to produce the same lack of interfacing.

Ms. Brestrup said that Board members can send her any additional comments and she will incorporate them into the ideas and comments shared tonight.

- B. Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours prior to the meeting
  - 1. Ms. Brestrup reported that a Moratorium has been proposed and Town Council plans to have this topic on their next meeting agenda. The proposal is for a six month Moratorium on building permits for new buildings in the downtown area that contain residential use. Ms. Brestrup said it is unclear how this proposal fits into the zoning amendments being worked on, but staff are moving ahead with them and hopefully the CRC and Town Council will too. If the Town Council decides to move ahead with the proposed Moratorium, then it would be referred to the CRC and the Board for a public hearing.

- X. **PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE & LIAISON REPORTS *continued***
  - Community Resources Committee** – Ms. Brestrup reported that the Planning staff presented five proposed zoning amendments to the CRC on March 9, 2021 including the B-L Overlay, Footnote “m”, Accessory (Supplemental) Dwelling Units, Mixed-use Building Standards and the Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw. The CRC provided some initial feedback and will be discussing the proposals further.
  - Zoning Subcommittee** – Maria Chao, Thom Long, Andy MacDougall, Doug Marshall and Janet McGowan – No Report

XI. **REPORT OF THE CHAIR** – No Report

XII. **REPORT OF THE STAFF** – No Report

XIII. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:                      Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pamela Field-Sadler  
Administrative Asst.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jack Jemsek - Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_