

WEST CONCORD TASK FORCE  
MINUTES  
JANUARY 5, 2011

Pursuant to notice duly filed with the Town Clerk, a meeting of the West Concord Task Force was held at 7:30p.m. at Concord Park.

Present were Phil Adams, Chair; Betsy Stokey, Vice Chair; Nancy Carey, Clerk; Bobbie Brennan, Gary Clayton, Sue Felshin, David Holdorf, Gary Kleiman, and Jimi Two Feathers. Also present were Planning Director Marcia Rasmussen and members of the community Ray Hanselman, Berni Jenkins, Betsy Levinson, Mari Weinberg, and Rick Wheeler.

Absent: Chris Sgarzi.

The Meeting was called to order by Phil Adams at 7:30PM.

**MINUTES**

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was UNANIMOUSLY

**VOTED:** To approve the minutes of 17 November 2010, as amended, and 2 December.

**BRADFORD MILL**

Mr. John Boynton, the owner of Bradford Mill, had requested time to update the Task Force on his renovations, but was unable to come to the meeting. Jimi Two Feathers reported that two buildings are currently being renovated and entrances have been moved so as not to encroach on Town property. As has been expected, rents have increased, but according to Two Feathers, tenants are generally happy. There are some new tenants, including some artists and some office space. Discussion included: could office space be like residential space in being "purple loosestrife" that takes over industrial space? Planning Director Marcia Rasmussen noted that the Bradford Mill site plan will come before the Zoning Board of Appeals in February and that changes to parking and access ways will be phased in over time.

**PLANNING BOARD**

There was a discussion of the two Planning Board meetings in December, 2010, at which warrant articles regarding Task Force recommendations were finalized for the warrant. Discussion included: the first meeting was frustrating because it was announced at the meeting that public comments were not going to be taken; Task Force members sitting in the audience could not speak to correct mistaken information or answer Planning Board questions regarding what Task Force intentions were; the second meeting repaired problems with the first meeting by making use of information not aired at the first meeting; while both majority and minority Task Force positions were stated, only minority positions were explained; the problem of inaccurate size calculations for existing stores, which contributed to the crafting of Task Force recommendations for store size limits, was discovered at the last minute; the articles as voted at the Planning Board's second meeting are more or less in line with Task Force recommendations; however retail store size was increased from 3,000 to 3,500 sq. ft., plus 20% additional size allowed by Special Permit and the former Chrysler service building was omitted from the Village District; the definition of grocery stores as devoting more than 50% of gross square footage, rather than public retail space, to food products, if not changed, will cause the article not to have the intended effect. In defense of the Planning Board, Ms. Rasmussen noted that at the first meeting, the Planning Board was viewing article language for the first time. She also noted that the level of public distrust leads people to want to see language in the warrant; she added that she has never seen such public involvement in Planning Board articles in all her years in the Planning Department.

Call to Order

Minutes

Bradford Mill

Planning Board

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Citizen comment: Mr. Ray Hanselman commented that he was struck by the lack of voicing of Task Force majority positions and that the new Planning Board chair who is also serving as the WCTF representative appears to have a conflict of interest. Ms. Mari Weinberg commented that she was confused about the role of the Task Force's Planning Board representative, who she thought was supposed to act as a liaison between the Planning Board and the Task Force and to report back to the Planning Board; however, other Planning Board members seemed unaware of Task Force work and during these meetings they were relying on the representative for information; she also noted a lack of voicing of Task Force majority positions. A Task Force member noted that the Charge for the Task Force does not refer to its Planning Board representative as a liaison.

**WARRANT ARTICLES**

In response to a request by the chair, Ms. Rasmussen explained the process of Special Town Meeting within Town Meeting. Discussion included: there must be 45 days advance notice of a Special Town Meeting; in addition taking the time to explain it, there are likely to be extra costs for a Special Town Meeting within a Town Meeting, such as a separate mailing of its warrant to every voter in town. Ms. Rasmussen commented that the Task Force should provide its opinions on relevant Planning Board articles to the Planning Board by their meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup>. She noted that Mr. Chris Hart has expressed concern about removal of the current combined industrial/business/residential option in the industrial district and that more conversations with property owners may be necessary to avoid opposition at Town Meeting.

Discussion included: The Board of Selectmen has grouped Planning Board articles together toward the end of the warrant, probably as articles 41–54; according to a conversation with Chris Hart, the Task Force has not yet followed up with him; Mr. Hart can potentially create combined residential use in the industrial district through the same overlay process that is being proposed elsewhere in the district this year; Mr. Nick Boynton has also expressed concern about removal of the current combined industrial/business/residential option in the industrial district.

**WEST CONCORD INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT AND MIXED-USE OVERLAY DISTRICT**

The chair noted that concern from industrial district property owners regarding removing the current combined industrial/business/residential option in the industrial district is sufficient to warrant a discussion. Ms. Rasmussen noted that the Planning Board wants the Task Force's opinion and commented that the Task Force working together with the Planning Board is needed as a brain trust to resolve this question. Several options were listed:

- Keep the current recommended option, to remove the current allowed use of combined industrial/business/residential by Special Permit and allow overlays to be created separately.
- Simultaneously remove the current allowed use of combined industrial/business/residential by Special Permit and add the ability to create combined residential use through overlays, which is the option currently recommended by the Task Force.
- Only allow the current allowed use of combined industrial/business/residential by Special Permit to be removed if and when an overlay is adopted.
- Abandon the overlay process and amend the Special Permit requirements to require 10% affordable residential (instead of the current 20%) and some affordable industrial space (currently not required) and some changes to open space requirements.

Warrant Articles

WCMOD

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There was discussion of how to include property owners in the discussion, whether it would be better for the Task Force to discuss the issue before or after hearing from property owners, and the logistics of scheduling meetings in time for the Planning Board to approve articles for a Special Town Meeting within Town Meeting. Further discussion included: the overlay is a higher hurdle, requiring a 2/3 majority vote at Town Meeting; we should bring Kevin Hurley into this discussion since he has experience in applying for an overlay via Town Meeting; we need a process that developers can trust; we must remember that citizens' input has overwhelmingly been against residential use in the industrial district, even though this conflicts with property owners' desires. The consensus was to contact property owners in the West Concord Industrial District and to invite them to the next Task Force meeting.

**COMMUNICATIONS**

Citizen comment: Mr. Ray Hanselman suggested that Task Force members be tasked to read the agendas of any other relevant committees in addition to the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen, and to attend meetings with agenda items relevant to Task Force work. Bobbie Brennan volunteered to read agendas of the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen and to inform task force members when issues regarding West Concord were to be discussed.

Communications

**MISCELLANEOUS**

The chair commended Sue Felshin for an admirable job of reading zoning documents and preventing mistakes, and for her eagle eye.

The Task Force discussed Town Manager Chris Whelan's request for the Task Force's priorities for the capital budget. The Task Force's consensus was that the priorities are, in this order:

1. Acquisition of 74 Commonwealth Avenue, "the Acadian property";
2. Acquisition of 51 Laws Brook Road, a residential parcel adjacent to Rideout Playground;
3. Acquisition of 120 Commonwealth Avenue (Concord Auto Sales parking lot);
4. Acquisition of #169/171 Commonwealth Ave., a residential parcel adjacent to the Warner Pond dam pocket park;

Miscellaneous

and that funding of a roundabout at the intersection of Commonwealth Ave. and Laws Brook Rd. is not a priority in comparison with the above land acquisitions. It was noted that Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding, if available, could contribute toward the portion of the Acadian lot to be used as a Town common, but not the portion to be used as a road; toward the entirety of 51 Laws Brook Road, since whether it is used for recreation space or for parking for the playground, it will contribute to the recreation use and qualifies according to CPA rules; and toward the entirety of #169/171 Commonwealth assuming it is used to add on to the Warner's Pond dam pocket park and could perhaps qualify under historic preservation for CPA funds. Gary Kleiman and Gary Clayton volunteered to draft a letter to be sent to Mr. Whelan. It was noted that Mr. Nick Boynton has shown interest in some properties as well, and that if Mr. Boynton were to purchase 20 Commonwealth Ave. and donate a portion to the town, the Town's capital budget would still be relevant for development of that portion.

**NEXT STEPS**

Next Steps

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Discussion included: The chair will draft a write-up for the Town's annual report, distribute to the task force via e-mail for feedback, and submit a final version to Ruth Lauer; the Task Force should write articles and submit them to the Concord Journal; the Task Force should identify endorsers to speak at Town Meeting in favor of articles recommended by the Task Force; the public will start to pay attention around the time of the Planning Board hearing and that is when the Task Force should get the word out; in prior years, the Task Force has held its own public forums, two in the first year, and one in the second year; should we hold a forum in east Concord?; Concord is small enough not to need separate forums; Alcott is a good location for forums; in prior years, our weakest point of communication was advertising forums in east Concord; we should perform outreach at the Planning Board hearing, by having handouts available and advertising our forum; Town Meeting process is intelligent and articles will pass or fail on their own merits; we should contact the Concord Business Partnership to seek support; we should contact property owners to seek support; we should do outreach to get people to show up to Town Meeting; we should seek the endorsement of town bodies such as the Board of Selectmen; the Natural Resources Commission, the Concord Sustainable Energy Committee, and the Concord Climate Action Network; we should seek the endorsement of local businesses; we should keep our Board of Selectmen liaison, Greg Howes, informed. Don Hawley was tasked with creating a schedule, with the help of Sue Felshin and Jimi Two Feathers.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting is scheduled for January 20, at 7:30 p.m., location TBD.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was UNANIMOUSLY

**VOTED:** To adjourn the Open Session and to conclude business for the evening.

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Felshin  
Approved: 3 February 2011

Next Meeting

Adjourn