

Stoneham Zoning Bylaw Review Committee Minutes
Tuesday, June 11, 2024
Town Hall Second-Floor Conference Room
5:00PM

Members present: Peter Bracciotti, Kevin Dolan, Jessica Gerke, Ellen McBride, Cheryl Noble, Maria Sagarino, Tobin Schulman, Bill Sullivan, Tim Waitkevitch, Marcia Wengen, Erin Wortman

Guests present: Dennis Sheehan, Martin Wantman
Consultants: Chris Kushel, Ralph Wilmer

The Chair brought the meeting to order at 5:10pm.

Introductions were made.

Town Planner Erin Wortman introduced Fisher Associates, the consultants hired by the Town to provide guidance and assistance to the Committee in the recodification of the Town's zoning bylaws. The two representatives of Fisher present were Ralph Wilmer and Chris Kuschel. Each provided background on their experience and expertise in municipal consulting.

The first order of business was to review the minutes of the June 6, 2023 meeting. The Committee was reminded that the May 2023 minutes had not yet been reviewed and would be at the next scheduled meeting.

K. Dolan asked the consultants to provide the committee with an explanation and overview of their plan for recodification of the Town's zoning bylaws.

Fisher Associates PowerPoint presentation included the following highlights:

Project Purpose and overview

Primary Objective: Recodify and Update the Town's Zoning Ordinance

Focus on: the ease of use; ensuring the zoning bylaws function as intended; development; redevelopment and property improvements as well as changes that affect development outcomes and easy to implement.

This project will not include major policy endeavors such as developing a new zoning district.

Overall Approach

The approach will be to breakdown the process into manageable sections, starting with user-friendly aspects and moving towards substantive policy changes.

1) Reorganize the Bylaw - the zoning bylaw should be laid out in a logical manner and structured in a way that allows for future changes / additions to occur seamlessly, including:

- Articles organized according to best practices
- Collating uses into a table

2) Other elements to make user friendly

- User friendly formatting

- Updating definitions – collating definitions, removing unneeded ones, clarifying/updating terms as needed
 - Reviewing references and abbreviations
- 3) Section-by-section Improvements there are many instances where the Zoning bylaw can be streamlined, has potential issues, or is confusing
- Updating convoluted or obsolete language with focus on concise, clear language that avoids unnecessary legalese
 - Removing unnecessary provisions
 - Updating sign regulations
- 4) Streamline and clarifying the process. Addressing issues the Town has related to the process.
- Site plan approval by Selectboard rather than Planning Board?
 - Other issues
- 5) Address Policy Needs – There are a number of changes needed to bring Stoneham’s zoning code up to best planning practices, including:
- Potentially reducing the number of districts – Stoneham has a large number of overlay districts.
 - Updating parking requirements
 - Reviewing dimensional standards
 - Addressing other needs identified by the Town

Timeline

Scope of Work Tasks

- Establish the Process – May 2024
- Assessment – June 2024 to September 2024
- Draft of Recodified Zoning Bylaws- August 2024 – December 2024
- Draft of Recodified Zoning Map – November 2021 to December 2024
- Final Recodified Zoning Bylaw – December 2024
- Additional support for Town Meeting in May 2025

Meetings with Zoning Bylaw Review Committee

- June, July, August, October and December 2024

Milestones and Deliverables

- Zoning Diagnostic August 2024
- Public Event October 2024
- Final Bylaw March 2025
- Additional Materials April 2024
- Town Meeting May 2025

Following the presentation there was a discussion of next steps and who would be included in the process as non-committee member stakeholders. Suggestions included members of the Housing Production Plan Committee and active members of the public. There was a discussion of sharing the review process via public information sessions and presentations at Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals meetings. The Committee members agreed public engagement is key

to approval at Town Meeting in 2025. The Committee needs to ensure residents understand the process and why it is happening.

Kevin Dolan noted that the Committee will lean on Cheryl Noble, Stoneham Building Inspector and Tobin Schulman, Chair of the Zoning Board of Appeals for their expertise and years of experience with zoning concerns in Stoneham. He further suggested that all members should review the current zoning definitions in Chapter 15. (Found on pages 15-11 through 15-22) before the next meeting.

It was determined that the consultants will meet with Committee members Cheryl Noble, Tobin Schulman and Bill Sullivan before the next meeting to learn what issues are chronic and what troubles them about the current bylaws.

Erin Wortman assured Committee members that everything the consultants hear will be brought to this Committee before any public meetings.

Kevin Dolan asked Committee members and guests to each make a suggestion for an improvement of the bylaws. Member suggestions included the new bylaws need to be future-proofed, must include a robust public interest process, create user-friendly usage table and definition table, more streamlined, user-friendly permit process, more building department approval authority, provide more clarity and less ambiguity.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 23, 2024 at 5:30 PM in the second-floor conference room of Town Hall.

Action items: In preparations for the next Committee meeting, members should review and become familiar with the definitions in Chapter 15 of the Town Code found on pages 15-11 through 15-22.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10PM.