



TOWN OF
STONEHAM
MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD
781-279-2695

STONEHAM PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

(in accordance with provision of M.G.L. c.30A, §§ 18-25)

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Town Hall Hearing Room

7:00 PM

Members Present: Chair Frank Vallarelli, Vice Chair Kevin Dolan, Marcia Wengen and Brianna Kelly.

Also present at the meeting: Town Clerk Maria Sagarino acting as Clerk for the Planning Board and Planning & Community Development Director Erin Wortman.

Present Remotely: Housing Production Plan Consultants Jennifer Goldson and Austin Smith

The Chair brought the meeting to order at 7:04 PM. He introduced the Board and indicated that there would be no public hearings this evening.

Minutes

Mr. Vallarelli accepted a motion from Ms. Wengen to approve the minutes for September 10, 2025 which was seconded by Mr. Dolan. All four members present voted in favor 4-0.

Housing Production Plan

Mr. Vallarelli invited Erin Wortman the Director of Planning and Community Development to speak on the update to the Housing Production Plan (HPP). Ms. Wortman stated that the HPP was last updated in 2020 and is due to be updated every 5 years. She mentioned that the Town had engaged JM Goldson to consult on the update. She then introduce Jennifer Goldson and Austin Smith who were present remotely. Ms. Goldson indicated that they would give the Board a short presentation and go over the questionnaire that some of the Board members had recently completed. There were some technical difficulties and the Board had trouble hearing Ms. Goldson, so her colleague Austin Smith took over the presentation. He introduced Ms. Goldson as the owner and managing director of JM Goldson which was founded in 2006 and himself as a Community Planner II and project manager for the company. He explained that they planned to go over the results of the questionnaire and the project schedule this evening.

Mr. Smith began with the questionnaire. In looking ahead, they were interested to know what the Board members would like to see 3 years from now. Some of the responses included changes to the zoning bylaws, opportunities to increase the availability of affordable home ownership, less density, the Planning Board will have met with the Historical Commission to identify adaptive re-use and there would be an action plan for the municipal affordable housing trust. Next they looked at what the Board saw as challenges and risks. Some of the responses included building

faster than services can catch up, seniors that are over-housed as the population ages and not enough community input. As for opportunities, the responses ranged from the desire for sustainable projects, more economic opportunity and commercial activity and the reuse and redevelopment of areas in the downtown for housing. One Board member also hoped to see how the previous plan was implemented. Next they had ask what strengths in the community should be built upon. The responses ranged from more deeply affordable housing, the municipal affordable housing trust, keeping the small town atmosphere and worrying about the high housing costs and the pressure it puts on young people. Mr. Smith moved onto the next steps and the upcoming schedule. They planned to meet with the Board again on November 12th with the Select Board invited as well. They planned on community engagement sometime in December after the override vote. They expected to have a draft plan around mid-January with a final plan presented to the Planning Board at the end of January. Ms. Wengen asked about the draft and the original plan being well over 100 pages. She wanted to know how they would know what had been changed, added or taken away. She asks if this would be a brand new document. Mr. Smith said that they will lay out their own document and add pieces as they go along. Ms. Goldson jumped in at this point and explained that they will be giving the Board a whole new document. Every consultant does it a little different. They will carry over things that have not been implemented from the original plan. They will give a fresh plan and it won't have to be compared to the old one. There will be a needs assessment. They will shoot for a forty page range to start. Engagement pieces will help add what the community wants. You'll see that by January.

Ms. Wengen asked if the original plan was over 100 pages. Ms. Wortman said it is 104 pages. Ms. Wengen asked about the preservation contained in the original that hadn't been done. She would like that carried over. Ms. Goldson explained that her undergraduate degree is in historic preservation so it's near and dear to her.

Ms. Kelly wanted to know how the Board could help with the engagement pieces. Ms. Goldson said that typically they conduct the focus groups online with about 8 people. They would like some help in choosing candidates for the focus group. Ms. Goldson said it would be helpful if they were given an idea of who to talk to. It is typically other board/committee members, town officials, people who can help strategize on zoning ideas. A few Planning Board members and maybe a Select Board member, the Historical Commission, Municipal Affordable Housing Trust or Conservation Commission. People with diverse roles and perspectives. That is for the focus groups. For the community engagement they can provide flyers. They will give Ms. Wortman a list of suggested outreach. Sometimes a local cable show can be recorded. Announcing community engagement at Planning Board and Select Board meetings is helpful. The community survey is done online to capture the thoughts of those who don't come out in person.

Ms. Wengen asked if she could get a copy of the survey. Ms. Goldson needs to know which survey is hers and they can print it out.

Mr. Dolan is curious to see how we did since 2020. We've added thousands of units and have complied with Chapter 40A 3A. He would like to see how we can promote home ownership. Most people's net worth is in their home. He'd like to see them bridge the wealth gap and help with home ownership. Please keep that in mind with part of the plan.

Ms. Wengen would like to see the schedule put off until after the Special Election on December 9th. Ms. Wortman indicated that they were mindful of that date and would work on planning the community engagement for a date after the election.

Inclusionary bylaw within the recodification process

Ms. Wortman explained that she was attending tonight to specifically see what the Planning Board wanted in terms of the inclusionary bylaw. She asked the consultants to give their opinion. They cautioned us from updating the inclusionary bylaw to incentivize home ownership say case in 1982 (CHR Gen Inc v Newton). The consultants didn't recommend changing the inclusionary bylaw in that manner but suggested other options. They need to know if the Planning Board would like to retain the fee in lieu of. If yes, they suggested that the fee be calculated in another way. Or the Board could decide it is fine the way it is. The Board may also determine that they would rather just build the units and not put themselves in the uncomfortable situation of saying no to a fee in lieu of. She reminds them that the conversation with Elm Street was hard. Do you want to put yourself in that situation? If so, do you want to talk about recalculation?

Mr. Dolan pointed out section 6.12.4(a) and read the part about the fee in lieu of only applying to home ownership units. He asked if that was still tenable given what Ms. Wortman had pointed out. Ms. Wortman thinks that section is fine. Mr. Dolan asked about Elm Street. He said they got payment on one, but what happened to the other one. Ms. Kelly didn't believe they got payment on any. Ms. Sagarino reminded them that they got one \$140,000 fee in lieu of and waived the other fee in favor of a \$60,000 donation to the Senior Center. Ms. Wortman points out that if the Board doesn't want to have those conversations, they can choose to not offer a fee in lieu of and to not be put in an uncomfortable position. Mr. Dolan likes the flexibility but stated that it didn't feel good to be in that position. Ms. Wengen asked if the discomfort was a good reason to do away with the fee in lieu of and what would happen. Ms. Wortman responded that you'd always require they build the affordable units. Ms. Kelly agreed but asked if they could come to the Board and ask not to build the unit(s). Ms. Wortman said that the Planning Board does have the power to grant a waiver. Ms. Sagarino reminded the Board that on Elm Street they granted a waiver of one unit. That is what they then accepted a donation for. Ms. Kelly doesn't want that path. Mr. Dolan agrees that they don't want a path to walk away without building any affordable units. Mr. Dolan does believe they should keep the fee in lieu of option. It's the only way to grow the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Ms. Wortman did explain that there is no land available to buy where the trust could build affordable units. They might offer down payment assistance. They might assist an affordable unit owner with their condo assessments. Like if the affordable unit on Christopher Street needed a new roof and help with paying the condo association assessment. She also pointed out that there are other ways to grow the trust by donations or adopting the Community Preservation Act which had previously failed in Stoneham.

There was more conversation about the trust and uses. Mr. Dolan ultimately believed that they should keep the fee in lieu of. He also didn't think there would be a time where they waived the requirement. Ms. Kelly and Ms. Sagarino reminded him that it was just done on Elm Street for one of the units. Mr. Dolan understands that Ms. Kelly would like to prevent waiving that fee and he agrees. Ms. Wortman believed that she heard consensus for keeping the fee in lieu of. Ms. Kelly stated what she'd like using an Elm Street as an example. They were required to build two affordable units. She is fine with making them build at least one and then taking a fee in lieu of

for the other. She wants a world where there is not an option to pay not to build both units. Mr. Dolan again brought up Elm Street and asked if with two affordable units he was building one. Ms. Kelly responded that he's building none. He paid one fee in lieu of and was waived on the other. Mr. Dolan thinks they need something where they have to build a minimum number of affordable before being allowed to pay a fee in lieu of. Ideally Ms. Kelly would like to see no fee in lieu of but she understands. She would like at least 50% built. So in the case of Elm Street, when two were required at least one should be built. Ms. Wortman asked if they'd like to see language for 50% required and then the possibility of a Special Permit for a fee in lieu of on the other units. It would be discretionary. Mr. Dolan agrees with Ms. Kelly on a minimum of 50% and then you can look at taking a fee in lieu of. Ms. Kelly would just like to avoid any waiver on a fee again even with a donation. That shouldn't be an option and Elm Street put the Board in a weird spot. Mr. Dolan agreed, no discretion to waive.

Ms. Wortman wanted to talk about another example. Rockville Park is 46 units and would require nine affordable. Would you be okay with five affordable and allowing for a possible fee in lieu of the other four? Ms. Kelly thinks they should have to do at least ten percent of the affordable units. Mr. Vallarelli said that would be five. Mr. Dolan doesn't want it falling below ten percent. Ms. Kelly would rather have the nine units but understands. Ms. Wortman asked if you'd like to have something for less than 20 units. Mr. Dolan thinks less than ten units. Ms. Kelly agreed. Ms. Wortman asks if 8-10 units, you'd allow the fee in lieu of by Special Permit and over ten units would always require them to build the units.

Mr. Vallarelli would like to build the trust. Ms. Kelly agrees but understands that there is no land to build on but building an affordable unit that a family can move into is a benefit also. Mr. Dolan thinks that by mandating the affordable units you might not get home ownership, you'll probably get rentals. Ms. Wengen understands that Rockville is now looking at building condos.

Ms. Wortman said that the Board can wait and discuss this again. It can be amended during the recodification or not. She'd like to do so with the consultants. Mr. Dolan believes they should take a run at some language. Mr. Vallarelli would like flexibility with fee in lieu of. Ms. Kelly asked what the Board thinks about a 25 unit development. She also asked about the recalculation of the fee in lieu of. Ms. Wortman said we could say 50% of the sales prices instead of the current 30%. Ms. Wortman said at 25 units, you need 3 affordable. You could change the threshold for under 25 units where you currently have round up.

Mr. Dolan would like to know the ratio of affordable rental to market rental and affordable sale to market sale. He wants to make developers think on even terms between sales and rentals. Ms. Wortman asks if you make the percentage higher to make it less advantageous to do the fee in lieu of which is currently only afforded to home ownership. If you have to pay \$300,000 instead of \$140,000, they may just want to build the unit. Should fee in lieu of still only be eligible for home ownership? Mr. Dolan believes so.

Ms. Wortman wants to capture the Board's thoughts so far. If she's understanding, the Board would like to keep the flexibility of fee in lieu of, perhaps change calculation. Are we creating a ceiling of eligibility or does the Board just want to have the authority? Meaning 20 units or below with homeownership are eligible for a fee in lieu of? Mr. Dolan would like to leave the number blank for now. He's not sure if he wants to add a unit number. The important thing is to get the fee in lieu of number about with a calculation change. Ms. Kelly would like to see if other communities have a fee in lieu of or they are choosing not to have that option. Mr. Dolan stated

they can look and see what Wakefield and Reading have. Ms. Kelly explains what Ipswich where she works does. If they have 7 units, you need to build 1 affordable and it goes up from there, but you also pay a payment to the trust.

Ms. Wortman asked if they want to retain Special Permit authority on the fee in lieu of. They agreed that they did.

Ms. Wortman stated that she will discuss with the consultants changing the calculation math and toying with the ceiling number or not. Ms. Wengen asked Google about calculations and AI came back with three - fixed fee, affordability gap calculations or fee per square foot. She asked what we used. Ms. Wortman responded that it is a math equation based on recent data from the Assessor's Office. The language is under 6.12.11. Ms. Wortman will run numbers with the Assessor to see what the different percentages might bring in. Ms. Wengen asked if we could change to one of the AI calculations. Mr. Dolan thinks square footage is unworkable. Ms. Wortman doesn't believe a flat fee would work. Ms. Wengen asked about the affordability gap calculation. Ms. Wortman responded that we have something similar to that form of calculation.

Mr. Vallarelli asked about other changes besides the inclusionary bylaw. Ms. Wortman mentioned the upcoming community outreach for the re-codification on October 22nd and asked Mr. Vallarelli to join. Ms. Wortman stated that a big change is to stream line the approval process. She gave an example of the Special Permit reviewing and approving a site plan. It seems redundant to then have the Select Board approve that same site plan that the Planning Board has already reviewed. Ms. Wortman mentioned that we'd like to make it easy for a restaurant in downtown to go in the downtown. We know we want a restaurant. Why require Special Permit and Site Plan Review?

Glendale Road Subdivision bond amount

Mr. Vallarelli indicated this item would be not be acted upon. The Board had previously voted the bond amount in August 2024.

Mr. Dolan made a motion to adjourn that was seconded by Ms. Kelly. All members present voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Maria Sagarino
Town Clerk