

Marblehead Planning Board

Minutes of Meeting

January 22, 2024

The Board met in a remote session at 4:00 p.m. via ZOOM Conferencing

The chair did a roll call vote. The following members were present constituting a quorum: Robert Schaeffner, Barton Hyte, Marc Liebman, Edward Nilsson, and Steve Leverone Associate member. Others present -Rebecca Curran Town Planner.

The Chair called the meeting of to order at 4:00 PM

MBTA Zoning

The board proceeded to go through the proposed final draft MBTA zoning article line by line.

The board discussed the density of units per acre in various locations. The board discussed misunderstandings about the calculations and how they were calculated and presented. Rebecca noted that Molly Oberhof from Bohler Engineering had been directed by the board at our last meeting to lower the density and had proposed a uniformly distributed 20 units per acre. The team decided to accept the density at 20 units per acre.

The board discussed potential changes to dimensional regulations, with a focus on building height and parking requirements. The consensus was to maintain the building height limit at 35 feet, with the possibility of granting variances on a case-by-case basis. Regarding parking, concerns were raised about reducing the requirement from two to 1.5 spaces per two-bedroom unit in the downtown area. The group agreed that maintaining a strict parking requirement might negatively impact the feasibility of projects. Discussion ensued on the parking ratio debate particularly in relation to the number of parking spaces per unit. The proposed ratios of 1.5 and 2 spaces per unit were debated, with concerns raised about the feasibility. The team also noted that even if people didn't need a car, they still tended to own one. A motion was made and seconded to keep the ratio at 2 spaces per unit – a yes vote is for 2 spaces and a no for 1.5 spaces for the Pleasant Street area. Liebman, Christensen, Hyte Yes, Schaeffner & Nilsson No

Two spaces prevail in the Pleasant Street area.

No one had any issues with the two space requirements in the other districts.

Marc Leibman mentioned was a Redd's Pond this weekend and spoke to over 100 people there on this issue and he sensed an overwhelming negativity toward this mandate. He felt if changes to the bylaw be minimized on things like parking it would be better.

The board conversation, focusing on the issue of setbacks in residential zones. Ed Nilsson raised a concern about building a house up to the sidewalk, suggesting a minimum of a 6-foot setback. Rebecca agreed and mentioned the need to inform Molly about any changes to see if that

changes and of the numbers. The board agreed this seemed like a reasonable change to require a front setback.

The board discussed potential changes specifically regarding affordable housing requirements. The mandate does not require any affordable housing however town's may include an affordable housing component but cannot exceed 105 OR 80% AMI. The board discussed considering setting a 10% affordable housing requirement for all projects, but there were concerns about its applicability, particularly for smaller projects. They also discussed the fact that including affordable housing changes the Town Meeting approval to from 50 % instead of a required two-thirds vote. Marc Liebman expressed a desire for decisions to pass by a larger margin to avoid division and suggested putting the decision to a ballot if necessary.

The board then discussed the potential of setting a minimum threshold for units in a development project to ensure affordability and prevent exceeding 10% of the total units. There was a suggestion to cap at six units, but concerns were raised about potentially limiting the number of units that could be developed. The team decided to ask the relevant authority if a minimum of 6 units can be enforced, and if not, the fallback would be to have no minimum.

A motion was made and seconded to require 10% affordability on any project six units or over In Christensen, HYTE, Nilsson, and Schaeffner in favor, and Liebman opposing. The motion is approved.

Discussion ensued on adding a provision to the bylaws that would rescind the plan if it was challenged and overturned by the state. Rebecca will ask counsel but typically any amendment of any bylaw must be approved by the Town Meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to submit the article to the town subject to any necessary tweaks and changes made by counsel. All in favor.

The board discussed putting the MBTA zoning on all meeting agendas from now until town meeting.

The chair entertained a motion to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Cutting