

## Meeting Minutes

### Newbury Planning Board

Monday, November 13, 2023

*FINAL – Approved December 20, 2023*

Planning Board Chair Larry Murphy opened the November 13, 2023 Newbury Planning Board (PB) meeting at 3:10 p.m. in the Select Board Hearing Room of the Newbury Town Offices at 12 Kent Way, Byfield, MA. Planning Board members present included Peter Paicos, Mary Stohn, and Larry Murphy. Planning Director Martha Taylor and Assistant Planner Kristen Grubbs were present. Ian Burns and Kayla Rennie of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission were also present.

Murphy welcomed Burns and Rennie and turned to the agenda: discussion of the MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning proposals for the Town of Newbury. Burns reminded the Board of the presentation and discussion held at the October 18, 2023 Planning Board meeting, and asked Taylor to display [those presentation slides](#) on the screen. Burns reminded the group that the MBTA Communities Law was passed by the MA Legislature in 2021. The law applies to all cities and towns that have MBTA transit stops or are bordering communities with transit stops. The goal of the legislation is to address Massachusetts' housing shortage, requiring communities to change zoning regulations to allow multi-family housing.

Burns walked through a description of the parcels under consideration for inclusion in the overlay district zones for multi-family housing by right. The proposed district in the North part of Newbury includes parcels located along Route 1 and Hanover Street proximate to the Newburyport MBTA station. Parcels proposed for the South district in Newbury include lots in Byfield located near Route 95 and the center of Byfield.

Burns reminded the Board that this project is focused on zoning for multi-family districts—not production, and, as such, does not require that parcels demonstrate access to public water or sewer nor have proven septic capabilities. He also explained that each subdistrict of the proposed overlay district can include specific parameters around design and other site characteristics, including, for example, a requirement for 40% of the parcel to remain open space, setbacks, height restrictions, and parking requirements. The regulation allows a community to choose to include an affordable housing requirement, such that up to 10% of units on a developed site to be affordable for 80% of the Area Median Income. The Town can also develop design standards and other site guidelines in regulations (separate from the bylaw), which can incentivize aspects of a project, including but not limited to higher affordability requirements, green energy design, or increased open space.

Board members discussed different parcels proposed to be include in the overlay district, considering pros and any cons. Discussion included conversation about how this initiative fits in with the Town's recently adopted Master Plan, emphasizing that the Town has control about where to implement this zoning and to consider design guidelines to fit housing in the character of the Town, discussing considerations such as roof height and restrictions on the number of floors in a multi-family structure.

The Board identified the need for more public engagement sessions to engage the public, as well as the desire to hold a joint meeting with the Select Board to discuss the proposed overlay districts. Taylor said she would reach out to the Select Board to see if they would be interested and available in a joint meeting of the two Boards to be held on Wednesday, December 6, 2023.

**Motion:** Paicos made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Stohn seconded the motion. Members voted: Paicos, yes; Stohn, yes; Murphy, yes.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:44 pm.

**Materials reviewed at the meeting:**

- MBTA Communities Update, Newbury Planning Board, October 18th, 2023 – [Presentation Slides](#)

Respectfully Submitted,

Kristen Grubbs  
Assistant Planner