

Kelley's Corner Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes – 27 January 2016

These are the meeting minutes from the Kelley's Corner Steering Committee of the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. The meeting took place on 27 January 2016 in the Land Use Conference Room (Room 9) at the Acton Town Hall.

Present: Andrew Brockway, Eric Solomon, Larry Kenah, Margaret Busse, Peter Darlow

Not Present: J D Head, Jeff Clymer

Board of
Selectmen:

Planning Department: Kristen Guichard, Robert Hummel, Roland Bartl

Carol Rodman, a resident of South Acton, also attended the meeting.

Meeting Summary

The meeting was called to order at 7:29 pm by Andy Brockway.

The meeting was focused on preparing for the 4 February 2016 public forum.

Minutes (1)

- Minutes from the 22 December 2015 meeting were approved with one small change in wording.
- Minutes from the 13 January 2016 meeting were approved with no changes.

Draft Presentation

Andy Brockway presented a set of slides to represent the key points to be delivered at the public forum.

- Infrastructure improvements
- Zoning changes
- Implementation

The infrastructure improvements included

- Traffic management
- Complete Streets Policy – Walkable Town center
- Landscaping in the public right of way
- Utilities

The key concepts that are a part of the zoning changes include

- Master plan development process

- Dimensional requirements (including building height and increased density)
- Allowable uses (especially mixed-use residential)
- Design guidelines

Comments on Draft Presentation

People made the following suggestions as we went through the draft presentation.

- Put the motivation (for both infrastructure improvements and zoning changes) early in the presentation
- Why residential in Kelley's Corner?

Carol Rodman is a resident of South Acton who attended this preparation meeting. She proved to be a valuable sounding board because, unlike the rest of the committee, she has not been immersed in details over the past two years. Because of this, she was able to point out areas where key points would be lost on people who would attend the public forum. Here are some of her suggestions.

- Include specific examples to illustrate abstract concepts
- Add captions to pictures whose contents are not obvious
- Try to eliminate jargon (zoning or architecture)
- Impact of proposed changes on taxes or home values

One unknown component of the implementation project is the cost of land acquisition. We briefly discussed whether we could come with an estimate but quickly realized that the uncertainties would render any such estimate meaningless.

Another Approach to Zoning Description

Margaret Busse suggested a different approach to delivering the zoning messages.

- Economic analysis, etc (to answer the WHY question)
- Key points in zoning proposal
 - Master plan
 - Mixed use
 - Changes to certain dimensions

Financial Analysis Memo

Kristen Guichard and Robert Hummel put together a hypothetical financial analysis to estimate the overall impact of a proposed development on the existing K-Mart site. They made very conservative assumptions (higher costs, lower revenue) but still concluded that such a development would generate an annual new benefit of slightly less than \$50k per year to the town.

A second result from this analysis (again based on conservative assumptions) was that approximately 70 pupils would be added to the school-age population. The total increase due to this hypothetical development is 70 pupils. Current projections show a decrease of approximately 76 pupils *per year* between 2016 and 2027. The analysis concluded that such a development would have negligible impact on total school population.

Public Outreach (2)

The video is available on Acton TV, YouTube, and Facebook.

Plan Updates (3)

A final version of the Design Guidelines document was received from The Cecil Group. We agreed that we might make changes to this document in the future but probably not until after Spring Town Meeting.

Zoning Updates (4)

Roland Bartl sent the latest draft zoning amendments at approximately the same time that the meeting started (7:00 pm). We spent approximately the last hour of the meeting going through what had changed from the previous draft.

- Changes to language related to landscaping
- Details associated with corner properties
- Minimum building height
 - 20 feet if building front less than or equal to 80 feet
 - 25 feet if building front greater than 80 feet
- FAR in master plan reduced to 0.8
- Buildings built on hilly terrain (such as Massachusetts Avenue where Baker Oil and Verizon are currently located) can maintain their spring point.
- Roof dormers are not included when calculating mean roof height.
- The concept of “ground floor” was clarified.

There was also a discussion about whether exceptions would be allowed, by whom, and with what limits.

Administrative Updates (5)

Future KCSC Meetings

We tried to schedule several meetings between the public forum and Spring Town Meeting. All of these dates and times are tentative.

- 11 February 2016 at 7:00 am
 - This meeting never took place.
- 24 February 2016 – Planning Board public presentation of zoning changes
- 9 March at 7:30 pm
- 30 March at 7:30 pm

In Closing

The meeting adjourned at 10:12 pm.

These minutes were recorded by Lawrence J Kenah.