

**COHASSET PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

**DATE:** WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2007  
**TIME:** 7:00 PM  
**PLACE:** COHASSET TOWN HALL – MEETING ROOM 2B  
41 HIGHLAND AVENUE, COHASSET, MA 02025

**Board Members Present:** Alfred Moore, Chairman  
Stuart Ivimey, Clerk  
Robert Sturdy

**Board Members Absent:** Peter J. Pratt, Vice Chairman  
Mike Westcott

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**MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT: 6:00 P.M.**

Chairman Moore opened with comments aimed at first defining the problems and needs for downtown before action, including by-law amendments is taken. A general discussion ensued including the following:

Ralph Dormitzer distributed a suggested agenda (attached hereto) and emphasized that downtown is an asset and then expounded and amplified the items contained on his suggested agenda.

Gary Vanderweil suggested that the downtown consultant study should address goal and principles. Zoning changes should encourage retail viability and maintain beauty.

Robert Sturdy opined that the town in general and the down town specifically is undergoing serious changes. The TOD development will hurt the down town commercial viability. The town erred many years ago by not instructing the “T” to build the rail station in the downtown. Attracting housing to downtown will not help encourage retail viability.

Elsa Miller suggested that an inventory of downtown residential units needs to be conducted because the town does not know how many units exist, their occupancy, condition, and/or the rents they command. The Atlantic Bagel building is worth approximately \$1M and therefore generates only \$10,000 in taxes. Rents are generally low in downtown apartments. Downtown has a history of failing businesses even in buildings that have second floor apartments. No mechanism exists for inspecting current downtown rental units.

David Calhoun opined that increased foot traffic is the only real way to improve the down town commercial viability. Town needs to encourage seasonal businesses.

Peter Brown of the Economic Development Committee noted that the EDC recommends responsible development. He provided and discussed a series of suggested revised by-law changes (see attached).

Chairman Moore opined that it was unreasonable that substantive by-law changes will be ready for the upcoming town meeting.

Gary Vanderweil echoed Chairman Moore’s comments.

Michael Malinowski of the EDC said that downtown zoning should be “up-typed” to allow more housing. New by-laws could be drafted and approved within 30-60 days. He suggested that by-law changes should be pursued now for presentation at Spring Town Meeting that will allow “some” development in downtown to go forward in the near term. He stated that a consensus exists among townspeople that housing should be encouraged in the downtown.

Gary Vanderweil stated that no consensus exists as to whether increasing housing downtown is a good idea.

John Tedeschi stated that the market will support higher than current rents if new rental units are built to attract higher markets. Current downtown apartments may have vacancies and low rents because they need remodeling. He anticipates charging \$1,800 per month for each rental unit if his project goes forward. He plans to construct a building containing eight retail units and eight second story apartments. He plans to have all parking on site.

Stuart Ivimey opined that downtown development must include historic façade protection.

Mike Milanoski suggested that the Planning Board have the ability to regulate façade restoration – possibility it could allow the construction of additional units in return for façade protection.

Chairman Moore observed that the Planning Board needs additional input before making by-law change recommendations. He also observed that the Planning Board resources are extremely limited since there is no funding for a fulltime professional town planner.

Clark Brewer from the Cohasset Housing Partnership stated that there is a need for additional housing even if the units do not improve the town's 40B status. He suggested that the Planning Board study consultant and the Partnership's expert review and issue opinions as to the quality of downtown housing ideas.

Charlie Higginson of the ZBA encouraged the Planning Board to prepare all by-law changes well in advance of presentation to Town Meeting thereby allowing sufficient time to review them.

**MEETING ADJOURNED AT: 7:20 P.M.**

**MINUTES APPROVED:           Stuart W. Ivimey, Clerk**

**DATE APPROVED:               January 10, 2007**