



Josh Chase <jchase@ashlandmass.com>

ZBA Hearing on non-conforming special permit

3 messages

Preston Crow <frompreston1725117lt@crowcastle.net>

Sun, Sep 17, 2017 at 6:17 PM

To: Josh Chase <jchase@ashlandmass.com>

Josh, please share this with the ZBA as part of their consideration on the special permit hearing they are conducting. Thanks.

To the Zoning Board of Appeals:

From time to time, you hear special permit applications for pre-existing non-conforming residential properties. At the Planning Board, we've heard that you're facing a fairly controversial proposal now, and while we have avoided discussing the details of the specific case, we have discussed the zoning and neighborhood in general. I would like to share with you some thoughts that may be helpful as you consider special permits under the existing zoning. Keep in mind that these are early discussions, and that I am writing on my own behalf, without any interaction with or direction from the Planning Board.

Typically with non-conforming lots, the long-term planning objective is to encourage redevelopment that will bring the lots into compliance, either by merging lots or positioning new structures within setbacks. However, in neighborhoods where most lots are non-conforming, the Planning Board would like to preserve these neighborhoods with their current character. Toward this end, we are discussing a pair of zoning changes, possibly for the May Town Meeting:

The first zoning reform that we're looking at is a new "Small Homes Residential Zone." We're doing an inventory of non-conforming lots, and our impression is that we have neighborhoods in Res-B that are mostly non-conforming. If this proves to be true, we would like to create a new zone or overlay district with a goal to bring 80% of the homes into compliance. Because these are smaller lots, we would put stricter size restrictions on houses in those lots, again, with the goal of having most of the existing homes comply with the imposed restrictions. (How we would measure the size restrictions, such as a combination of height restrictions, floor-area ratio rules, and other ideas, is still a matter of discussion.)

The second zoning reform that we're looking at is to update the non-conforming bylaw. We hope that with the above zoning change, this bylaw will apply primarily to odd lots in mostly-conforming neighborhoods. One idea that I had was to add a requirement that if the existing structure could, on paper, be relocated to within the required setbacks, any expansion or replacement should have dimensions that would maintain that ability (the goal being to keep the structure sized appropriately for the lot). We are also looking for other ways of ensuring that homes that don't comply with zoning still comply with more general neighborhood standards.

I hope the direction that the Planning Board is considering provides some useful insights as you deliberate. If you have any thoughts as to how the zoning could be reformed to better preserve the character of the existing neighborhoods, please share them with the Planning Board.

Sincerely,
Preston Crow
Chairman of the Ashland Planning Board
Writing on my own behalf

Josh Chase <jchase@ashlandmass.com>

Mon, Sep 18, 2017 at 9:01 AM

To: ZBA <zba@ashlandmass.com>

All,

Below is an email from Preston Crow in regards to applications in neighborhoods such as the Waushakum Pond neighborhood.

Let me know if you have any questions.