

Background Materials May 20, 2024– Planning Board Meeting

Prepared by Anne Capra, Director of Planning and Conservation, 5/15/24

Cable Access Channel 15 –The Cable Studio has indicated that this meeting will be live streamed on Channel 15.

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Background Reports for all Planning Board meetings are posted online:

<https://www.southhadley.org/1274/Agenda-Background-Materials>

AGENDA ITEM #1 Open Comment Period

This 10-minute period is set aside for the public to offer comments on items not on the posted agenda, in accordance with the adopted policy, as amended 9/11/23, posted on the Town of South Hadley Planning and Conservation Department webpage here:

<https://www.southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/View/11705/Policy-on-Open-Comment-Period---As-Adopted-2023-09-11>

Action Needed: Allow members of the public to offer comments to the Board.

AGENDA ITEM #2 Minutes

Planning and Conservation Coordinator Colleen Canning will forward minutes separately.

Action Needed: Vote to approve the minutes.

AGENDA ITEM #3 Correspondence

Planning and Conservation Coordinator Colleen Canning will forward correspondence separately.

Action Needed: No action needed.

AGENDA ITEM #4 525 Hadley Street Approval Not Required (ANR) Submittal

Application online here:

<https://www.southhadley.org/1408/15167/2024?activeLiveTab=widgets>

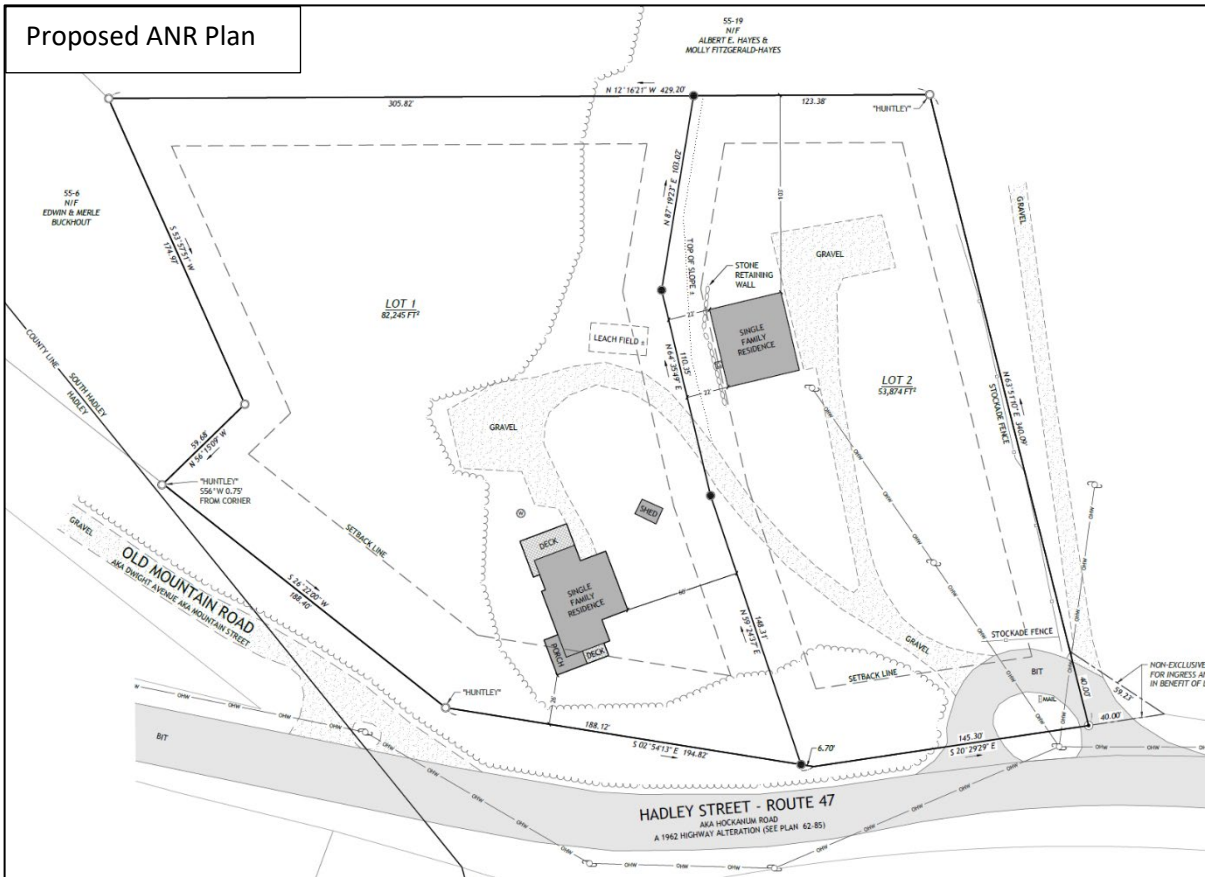
ANR Standards for Approval

1. **Type of Way:** Hadley Street is also State Route 47 and is owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and maintained by the Town of South Hadley. As such, the road is used and maintained as a public way.

2. Minimum frontage requirements for zoning district: The property is within the Agricultural Zoning District and the Water Supply Protection Overlay District. Minimum frontage requirement is 150'. (Minimum lot size in the WSPD is 40,000 square feet.) Proposed Lots 1 and 2 meet the minimum frontage requirements (Lot 1 – 188"; Lot 2 152). Both lots also exceed the minimum lot size.
3. Vital access: The existing driveway for Lot 1 would be located on proposed Lot 2, and would require an easement in order Lot 1 to maintain access to Hadley Street. Lot 2 would have direct access via the existing driveway to Hadley Street. That said, if these lots were undeveloped and this ANR was before the Board, I would find that vital access is feasible for Lot 1 given the amount of existing frontage.

Action Needed: The Board must either endorse the plan or file a notice of denial with the Town Clerk. If the Board votes to endorse the ANR Plan, the Board should also authorize the Director of Planning & Conservation to sign the plan on the Board's behalf.





AGENDA ITEM #5 Discussion on Hybrid Planning Board Meetings

At the May 8th Annual Town Meeting, a vote was passed to recommend the Planning Board go to hybrid meetings. Let’s discuss!

Vote results:

Article 28 - Citizen Petition: Recommend the Planning Board hold

74 YES

6 No

2 Abstain

7 No Vote/Blank

89 TOTAL TM Attendees

I have received a few questions from Planning Board members seeking clarification about the implications of the vote, and requested guidance from the Town Administrator:

1. There are other Boards that are currently meeting fully virtually - School Committee, Conservation Commission, in addition to a number of committees such as the Commission on Disability, Recreation Commission, and some others. Will Town Administration be asking them to consider meeting hybrid, and consider the same milestones that are being asked of the Planning Board (i.e. hold public hearings in person, choose a date to transition, begin holding some meeting hybrid in the zoom rooms available, etc.)?

2. The remote participation policy adopted by the Selectboard states that “all members of Town Boards should strive to attend meetings in person when possible”. However, this guidance seems to be in the context of Boards that have an in-person meeting component for their meetings as the regulations are mostly about when and how an individual board member may participate remotely. So, “is the decision about hybrid vs. fully remote Board meetings up to the discretion of the Chairs of the individual Boards and Committees or is it up to the Select Board”?

Response from Town Administrator Lisa Wong on 5/14/24 -

Town Administration has no plans to direct boards to conduct meetings in any way different than the last. Town Administration will help support any efforts that boards and committees undertake to have more hybrid or in person meetings, including understanding and limitations to space, schedule, etc. The discretion is still up to the board chair and as allowed by Open Meeting Law.

Action Needed: Discuss the possibility of hybrid Planning Board meetings. Possible milestones for considering hybrid meetings:

1. Set a date by which meetings will transition to hybrid.
2. Schedule public hearings hybrid.
3. Hold a pilot hybrid meeting at one of the two available “Zoom rooms” – COA Large Conference Room and Public Library Trustees Room.

AGENDA ITEM #6 Discussion of Flexible Development Bylaw and Associated Bylaws Amendments

Proposed bylaw amendments and 4/22/24 presentation online:

<https://www.southhadley.org/1318/ProposedDraft-Bylaws>

The Board conducted a public listening session on 4/22/24 to entertain comments on considerations for amending the Flexible Development Bylaw. At this point, the Board needs to determine the direction it would like to proceed in with amendments to the bylaw. The following are items that need to be finalized:

- 3-Tier approach to open space conservation and density standards
- Housing types permitted (within applicable Tier)
- Minimum acres threshold for Flexible Development - 5 acres (current), 3 acres, no minimum
- Density Bonuses (affordable units, small units, other??)

In addition, Member Watchilla submitted the following topics for discussion in relation to the Flexible Development Bylaw amendments:

1. Dimensional Regulations within the same parcel
2. Buffer/Screening requirements from the public ROW
3. Setback requirements of development from the public ROW (so we see open space from the roadway and development is pushed back on site)

4. Height limitations on buildings

Member Hutchison has provided the attached summary of the Skinner Woods Flexible Development, including an analysis of what the layout/density could look like under the alternative density tiers under discussion.

AGENDA ITEM 7 Planning & Conservation Department Report on Planning Projects and Development Updates

A. Old Firehouse Museum Local Historic District Study – Draft Plan Review

Plan online here: [Other Community Plans and Reports | South Hadley, MA - Official Website](#)

Planning Board will review and comment at their June 10, 2024 meeting @ 6:45 PM.

From the Historic District Study Committee:

The South Hadley Historic District Study Committee was established by the Selectboard at its April 2, 2013 meeting. The Committee was charged with exploring the possibility of establishing one or more historic districts in town. Extensive work has been done, specifically in the Falls, culminating in a proposal in 2019 for an historic district around North Main Street. The Committee held a public hearing and planned to continue work on the proposal to address concerns raised. Ultimately, Committee work was paused during Covid.

In 2023, the Trustees of the Old Firehouse Museum approached the Committee about the possibility of creating a local historic district to include the Museum and adjacent Fred M. Smith Memorial Green. As a result, the Committee is now proposing a “Single Property Historic District” as described under the Massachusetts General Law Historic Districts Act (Chapter 40C, Section 3). This District would consist of the town property that contains the Old Firehouse Museum, the Fred M. Smith Memorial Green, and the adjacent parcel.

The Old Firehouse Museum is one of South Hadley’s treasured historical resources, now housing important collections, while the Fred M. Smith Memorial Green is a valued green space, honoring a dedicated townsman. They are located just feet away from the remnants of the 1795 canal, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Establishing a local historic district would highlight the importance of the Falls and would ensure the integrity of these historical resources for future generations.

As the next step in the process under 40C, the Committee will hold a public hearing no less than 60 days after submission of this report (preliminarily planned for August 5, 2024).

Following the public hearing, the Committee will prepare the final report, incorporating the recommendations from the Planning Board, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and the community. The Committee will then submit the final report to Town Meeting for consideration. Under 40C, it must be adopted by a two-thirds affirmative vote.

B. Climate Resilience Planning - Community Feedback Needed!

South Hadley is engaged in a new project to improve the community’s resilience to the impacts of climate change by better understanding how people’s lives are affected by extreme weather.

Next community event and share your thoughts. Attendees will receive dinner and a \$10 gift card to Big Y! **Tuesday, June 4th 6-8pm – Buttery Brook Park Log Cabin, 123 Willimansett Street**

PLANNING FOR CLIMATE CHANGE IN SOUTH HADLEY

Come join us to talk about how extreme weather events such as heat waves, flooding, and more frequent large storms are impacting you and our community.

5/15/24: South Hadley Council on Aging (6-8 PM)

6/4/24: Buttery Brook Park @ 123 Willimansett St. (6-8 PM)

Register: <https://qrco.de/SHMVP1>

Register: <https://qrco.de/SHMVP2>

Attendees will receive dinner + \$10 gift card!

QUESTIONS??
acapra@southhadley.ma.gov | (413) 538-5030 x6128

Where did this project come from?

Funding for our project is through an MVP 2.0 Grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program provides support for cities and towns in Massachusetts to build resilience to climate change. In May 2020, the community identified the top climate vulnerabilities for South Hadley and developed an action plan for building resilience to these (MVP 1.0). Several projects have been completed and/or are underway to address the vulnerabilities identified. The MVP 2.0 program expands on the work of South Hadley to date and provides new methods, tools and resources for building climate resilience within South Hadley. In particular, MVP 2.0 focuses on updating community resilience priorities with a focus on social equity and translating these priorities into action through project development and implementation.

The social equity components of this project are focused on conducting outreach to

members of the community that may be under represented in community planning projects for a number of reasons. Other target populations include people and families that may not have regular access to transportation, low income, families with young children, food and/or housing insecure, people with disabilities, and seniors that may also meet some of these other criteria.

Our community outreach will have three phases:

Phase I – Gather feedback from people about their top priorities related to how they are impacted by extreme weather.

Phase II – Share the community priorities and identify possible “seed projects” to address some impact of climate change.

Phase III – Share possible seed project concepts and identify final seed project to be implemented.

A Seed Project is a project selected by the Core Team that will advance the community’s resilience priorities, and that can be completed in 9-10 months. We received \$50,000 from the grant to complete a Seed Project.

C. Next Planning Board Meetings and Other Important Dates

Planning Board typically meets the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month.

6/10/24 – PB Mtg	15 Berwyn Street – Owner-occupied Short Term Rental SPR Old Firehouse Museum Local Historic District Study
6/24/24 – PB Mtg	
7/8/24 & 7/22/24	
8/12/24 & 8/26/24	
9/9/24 & 9/23/24	

D. Annual Town Meeting Results

Results from the May 8, 2024 Special and Annual Town Meeting are now available online on the Town Meeting webpage or in the Town Clerk's office. Please visit the Town Meeting webpage, or click the links below: <https://www.southhadley.org/1356/2023-to-2024>

[Click here to view the Special Town Meeting results \(PDF\)](#)

[Click here to view the Annual Town Meeting results \(PDF\)](#)

[Click here to watch the recording of the Special and Annual Town meeting \(LINK\)](#)

AGENDA ITEM #7 Other New Business (topics which the Chair could not reasonably expect to be discussed/considered as of the date of this notice)

No additional business has been submitted to me as of the date of this notice.

Skinner Woods Flexible Development

Total Lot Area = 11.41 acres

Flexible Development Area (developed portion) = 2.56 acres

Open Space Area = 8.85 acres

Percent Open Space = 77.56%

Allowable base number of units per 255-31(as currently written):

Agg. District/WSPD/not sewerred = .75 multiplier

$.75 * 11.41 = 8.56$ units (bylaw does not specify to round up or down)

Theoretical Max Density bonus per 255-31= 50% of base = $.5 * 8.56 = 4.28$

Theoretical Max # units per 255-31 = 12.84

Max allowable density per 255-31 = $12.84/11.41 = 1.13$ units/acre

Allowable number of units for Skinner Woods :

77% open space = 4 units density bonus

$8.56 + 4$ (density bonus for each 10% open space > 30%) = 12.56 (round down to 12 or up to 13?)

Density = 1.05 units/acre or 1.13 units/acre

Actual number of units for Skinner Woods:

10 units

Density = $10/11.41 = .87$ units/acre

Developed Area Density = 3.9 units/acre

Theoretical Density for Agg district/WSPD/no sewer = $43,560/40,000 = 1.09$ units/acre

Max. Number of Units by Trad. Subdivision : $(11.41-1.48(\text{for road}) * 1.09 = 10.8$ Units

Typical Lot Size of Adjacent Parcels along Amherst Road = 14,000 s.f. +/-

Neighborhood Density Along Amherst Road between skinner woods and Pearl Street=
3.11 units/acre

Proposed Flexible Development Bylaw Considerations:

Per proposed bylaw revisions Skinner Woods would qualify as a Tier 3 Flexible Development with 77% open space.

The minimum amount of open space for Tier 3 would be $.65 * 11.41 = 7.41$ acres

This would translate into a max. 4 acre flexible development (even though Skinner Woods only developed 2.56 acres, the hypotheticals below use 4 acres as the flexible development size since this is a more likely scenario for other parcels)

Some hypothetical scenarios with a Tier 3 multiplier of “3”, “2” and “1.5”:

Allowable Base number of units = $(3 * .75) * 11.41 = 25$ units or 2.19 units/acre gross or 6.25 units/acre developed

Allowable Base number of units = $(2 * .75) * 11.41 = 17$ units or 1.48 units/acre gross or 4.25 units/acre developed

Allowable Base number of units = $(1.5 * .75) * 11.41 = 12$ units or 1.05 units/acre gross or 3 units/acre developed

Some area single family detached neighborhood densities (standard subdivisions 0% open space):

Chatham Way (2010s subdivision) = 1 unit/acre

Chileab (1950s) = 1.97 units/acre

Charon Terrace (1940s) = 2.31 units/acre

Amherst Rd (between Pearl and Skinner) = 3.11 units/acre

Harvard Street (1940s) = 3.41 units/acre