Medfield Insider – Jan. 29, 2024

Public feedback encouraged...

Town Boards Continue Review of Possible Development Sites

Last week Planning Board and Select Board members reviewed various paths to compliance with the **MBTA Communities Act** by discussing possible town parcels that could be zoned for multi-family housing developments.

(The MBTA Communities Act, a new state law, requires Medfield to enact a zoning bylaw by Dec. 31 that would designate areas in town totaling 50 acres that would allow for at least 750 multi-family housing units. The Act only mandates zoning bylaw changes, not actual development.)

Much of the latest discussion by town officials focused on:

- Understanding the role of former Medfield State Hospital (MSH) property in achieving compliance with the new law; and
- How to best narrow down additional town parcels that could be re-zoned and combined, either to supplement the MSH site, or replace it, if the state determines MSH cannot be counted toward compliance.

Town consultant Emily Innes explained that she used public feedback from the Dec. 14 workshop to run preliminary tests on various town locations to see how well they might comply with the MBTA Zoning mandate. In the end, she came up with a map of six prospective areas to discuss and consider, but she stressed, "Nothing is set in stone." The Planning Board ultimately added a seventh parcel, 12, as shown on the original map *(see last page of this document).*

Former MSH Site a Moving Target

Innes explained that her consulting team tested the Medfield State Hospital area to see how well it would comply with the MBTA Communities Act. Ultimately, the team determined that the site alone would not completely satisfy the state mandate for Medfield due to a variety of factors, including:

- The MSH property has to be currently tested as a single parcel since the town and Trinity have not yet closed on the sale.
- The core campus development plan for Trinity is about 29 acres, which is short of the required 50.
- The Trinity project, with 334 housing units planned, does not meet the minimum 15 dwelling units per-acre density that would be required under the new law.

Through extended discussion and **background information provided**, it was explained that the town could subdivide the former Medfield State Hospital property to achieve partial overall compliance, but that step posed risks and challenges, including lack of sufficient time to do so, and the precarious nature of the Trinity sale which has not yet closed.

Adding to the Medfield challenge is the absence of state feedback on how the MSH Land Disposition agreement with Trinity factors into the town mandate to comply with MBTA Zoning.

Narrowing Down Other Parcels

As a safety measure, the Planning Board agreed to continue analyzing the former MSH site, while also identifying a combination of other parcels in town that would likely achieve approval from the state Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

When looking at potential sites, the Planning Board took into consideration a variety of factors, including:

- A desire to keep residents in walking distance to downtown businesses so to preserve parking, limit traffic problems, and enhance walkability and sustainability;
- The need to identify contiguous/connected districts as part of compliance requirements; and
- The degree of likelihood that re-zoned parcels would result in mega developments that might reduce commercial space, increase traffic, and/or cause loss of town character.

Using the maps (as shown) as a guide, the Planning Board asked Ellis to focus more intensive testing of individual parcels, and/or parcel combinations, to see the different ways MBTA Zoning compliance could be achieved. Specifically:

- A1 & A2 (primarily downtown business area);
- A3-A & A3-B (primarily North Meadows Road, Frairy Street and Dale Street areas to encompass existing multi-family developments);
- 10-A, plus The Parc (West Street); and
- MSH core campus, combined with 10A with the Parc, plus parcel 12 (to encompass Medfield Gardens on Pleasant Street and Olde Village Square on Spring Street/Rte. 27).

More Opportunities for Public Feedback

Additional public forums and hearings have been scheduled before the final proposed MBTA Zoning bylaw is presented for a vote at **May 6 Town Meeting** and include:

Second public workshop
Monday, March 18, 7:30 p.m., Public Safety Building (in person)

Planning Board public hearing
Thursday, March 28, 7:30 p.m. (likely via Zoom)

Second Planning Board public hearing
Monday, April 1, 7:30 p.m. (likely via Zoom)

(See maps on next page.)

Map with locations based on public feedback from Dec. 14, 2023 workshop (with parcel 12 now in play):



Map with further analysis by consultant, as shown on Jan. 22, 2024 (prior to discussion; parcel 12 has since been added for consideration, along with The Parc property on West Street, and Medfield State Hospital):

