

Aquinnah Planning Board Plan Review Committee Meeting July 18th, 2018

Members Present: Peter Temple, Chairman, Sarah Thulin, Berta Welch, Jo Ann Eccher and Jim Mahoney

Not Present: Jim Wallen, Jim Newman and Isaac Taylor

Also Present: Mark Foster, Tom Murphy, John McDonald, Jay and Meg Bodnar, Lang Gerhard, Sam Hart, Hugh Taylor, Phil Weinstein, Spa Tharpe, Patrick Ahearn, Jim Feiner, Karen and Jared Salvatore, Bill Lake, Morgan Hodgson, Amy Irving, Ken Bowser, Vera Dello Russo

Meeting opened at 7:05pm

Peter gave a brief introduction and stated the purpose of the meeting which was to hear thoughts and concerns that the public has regarding the zoning bylaws and potential solutions to address the concerns. Peter announced that on August 14th there will be a public meeting and presentation with The Public Archeology Laboratory (PAL), an organization that has done most of the intensive surveys on the island. PAL will be presenting historical information that has come out of the surveys (over 100 site surveys conducted) conducted and information that has presented itself as a result of the archeological zoning bylaw. Peter informed everyone that the second listening session will be on August 9th at 7:00pm. Hopefully by January there will be a presentation of proposed bylaw changes for the public to comment on. The Committee members introduced themselves.

To begin the discussion, Peter asked the public what they felt was most important in town to protect for the next 20 years and whether enough was being done to ensure that. The following ideas and concerns were discussed:

- Maintaining the character of the Town was a concern and the following was what was described as the character of Aquinnah: natural look of the town (ruralness and proximity to the natural world), minimization of manmade structures (in reasonable proportions), beauty of Moshup Trail, maintain the vistas along Moshup Trail (have been closed off with overgrowth)
- There was brief discussion regarding the open space survey which resulted in similar response to the above comments
- Development of a Town master plan – it was suggested that the Town bring in a planner and setting up a dedicated planning citizen group to revisit the bylaws and propose changes that the Town wants to see in the next 20 years (master plan has already begun that includes core areas of commercial activity, the enhancement of Town center and potential small-scale dense housing)
- Using zoning to try and change the revenue base of the Town (longer process)
- Concern with the tree cutting bylaw – enhancing the vistas for property owners and the public but still ensuring that the man-made structures are screened (but not

necessarily from the water) and the correlation with property values and developing a solution that gives the ability to property owners to know what is allowable as of right

- Concern that the bylaws and process of building in Aquinnah is complicated and burdensome and needs to be clearer and efficient for the public
- Concern with power lines and down trees and accountability from electric companies
- Concern that the zoning bylaws are subjective and arbitrary and the need for better definitions that people understand (i.e. highly visible) – there was a suggestion to look at Chilmark zoning definitions
- Current deficit the Town is in and the need to increase the tax base – one suggestion was for the PB to work with the Finance Committee to try and figure out tax revenue and find a balance between commercial and residential - another thought was the possibility of room tax
- Concern with the cost of housing on the Island and keeping the community here
- A letter from Max and Cheryl Batzer was read into the minutes and the difficulty in the process of the planning board was stressed and the thought of streamlining the planning board process was suggested
- Change zoning code to encourage different types of activity such as a town center, commercial areas and dense housing which has potential to increase the tax base and enhance the community
- General concern with the DCPC as a “super hammer” that looms over development
- The Committee requested that the public send suggestions of other town’s zoning bylaws that work
- There was concern with the PBPRC design review input and perhaps defining scale and the surrounding space of structures rather than defining vernacular architecture
- The idea of a Town Center District with creating more density in housing was overall agreed upon, but there was concern with services increase (a direct response in increasing density)
- A letter from Jay Theise was read into the minutes where he stated that there is a looming concern with how to increase the tax base
- A suggestion to ease the burden of building in Aquinnah was made where a building envelope for a conforming lot which meets setbacks and conforms with the bylaws could go to straight to the building inspector and not get stuck in the back and forth between the PB and architects and engineers that burdens the

property owner

- The idea to reexamine the 2000sf footprint restriction without a special permit was suggested as well as looking at Chilmark's zoning as it relates to footprint
- Creating a zoning envelope to locate areas for potential development and having the Town define what they want to see in these spaces such as goods and services year-round verses seasonal and where they can go in the community that could also generate revenue and increase the tax base and increase the quality of life in the community – however, this may be difficult because a large portion of land is owned by the Tribe and conservation groups
- A term limit for the Planning Board was discussed as well as decreasing the number of members on the Board, however, it was noted that members usually run unopposed

With no other comments or discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:57pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Sophia Welch
Board Administrative Assistant*