

Aquinnah Planning Board Plan Review Committee Meeting August 9<sup>th</sup>, 2018

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

Also Present: Gary Foster, Erik Berke, Max Batzer, Tom Murphy, Allen Rugg, Vera Dello Russo, John McDonald, Eric Stange, Rob Schiller, Fritz and Ingrid Reuter, Jeff Madison, Joseph Lee, Jan Niessen, Ben Hall, Debi Horan, Cindy Low, Victoria Brown, Barbara and Lawrence Hohlt, Susan and William Poduska, Jay and Meg Bodnar, Sam Hart, Jay Theise

Meeting opened at 7:05pm

Peter gave a brief introduction and synopsis of the previous listening session. Peter noted that the PBPRC met with the Finance Committee and discussed the impact of zoning on the tax base and possible solutions. The Committee reminded everyone that on August 14<sup>th</sup> 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 over 100 surveys conducted as a result of the archeological zoning bylaw. The Committee members introduced themselves.

The following concerns and solutions were addressed and discussed:

- A letter from resident Patrick Ahearn was read into the minutes where the following issues were brought up: the DCPC is used to override bylaws and the Board has interpreted the bylaws as they see fit, potential buyers and current land owners face the burden of development, DCPC has negatively affected the town and needs to be withdrawn, the need for a more straight forward process.
- Concern that the Committee seems to have an aversion to some buildings.
- A bylaw or policy to address building visibility was proposed similar to that of the glass policy – place a percentage of visibility on a building where one level/story must be screened or use trees to disperse the view of a building.
- Concern with “back door” zoning as described in the letter from Patrick Ahearn.
- Addressing farming and agriculture in town.
- Concern with the increase in the cost of running a town and the narrowness of the tax base.
- It was suggested that the Committee look at Plymouth, MA zoning where they address Smart Growth Districts. It was noted that Smart Growth is good for areas that have infrastructures to support growth such as transportation, Town water and waste facilities and density.

- It was suggested that the town build a hotel and/or lodging accommodation for events in town such as weddings which would bring in revenue and create employment.
- Concern that the tree bylaw has become overly enforced and what is allowed is too confusing.
- Allow for pre-existing non-conforming rights for lots – frontage for these lots was specifically addressed and the solution to allow driveway easements was suggested.
- There was general concern on presenting too many bylaw revisions for the Town to vote on at one time.
- Hiring a professional to look at Aquinnah and the areas that could be used for development was discussed.
- There was pushback on over developing Aquinnah (similar to Chilmark) and the peacefulness of the Town was praised.
- Concern that Committee members interject their own taste into the process and it was suggested that the Committee only review footprint, height, glass and visibility and not so much building materials.
- The Committee informed everyone that the town has been doing visioning sessions for the Cliff and Town center areas.
- The issue of foliage was discussed – specifically the overgrowth along Moshup Trail which used to give way to beautiful vistas. It was noted that 10 years prior the Town had done some trimming of vegetation along Moshup Trail and perhaps it was time to review that project again.
- The issue that property owners don't have much control over their property (specifically cutting trees) was addressed.
- The significance of town view channels was discussed, and the Committee suggested that they work with MVC to regulate view channels not only in Aquinnah but all over the Island.
- The correlation between views and the tax base was discussed and it was suggested that the Committee find a balance in the tree cutting bylaw.
- There was discussion regarding short term rental tax.
- There was general concern that the PBPRC is arbitrary and capricious when reviewing special permit applications.
- Concern in selling property in Aquinnah was discussed where the Town has a low

tax rate but is blessed with valuable land.

- The Committee noted that there are other issues outside of the Committee's control with land in Aquinnah such as water and soil. The Committee also noted that the bylaws contain state laws, such as the FEMA regulations.

- It was suggested that the wording in the bylaws need to be changed to reflect what people can do. It was also suggested that the Committee create a chart for the permitting process.

- Adam Turner, Executive Director of MVC, commended the Committee for opening the discussion for the Town. He noted that the town needs to first focus on the character of the town, which included looking at services. He also noted that there is a balance that the town needs to support so that the result of development, or whatever avenue the town takes, isn't negative.

With no other comments or discussion, the Committee thanked everyone for coming. The meeting adjourned at 8:43pm.

*Respectfully submitted,  
Sophia Welch  
Board Administrative Assistant*