

**JOINT MEETING of the  
GLOUCESTER CITY COUNCIL & PLANNING BOARD  
Wednesday, March 9, 2022 – 6:00 p.m.  
REMOTE MEETING  
-Minutes-**

**CITY COUNCIL:**

**Present: Council President, Councilor Val Gilman; Councilor Tony Gross; Councilor Jason Grow; Councilor Frank Margiotta; Councilor Scott Memhard; Councilor Jamie O’Hara; Councilor Tracy O’Neil; Councilor Jeff Worthley**

**Absent: Council Vice President, Councilor Sean Nolan**

**PLANNING BOARD:**

**Present: Planning Board Chair, Rick Noonan; Shawn Henry; Beverly Bookin**

**Also Present: Mayor Greg Verga; City Clerk, Joanne Senos; Interim Community Development Director/Planning Director, Gregg Cademartori**

*This meeting was conducted remotely through Zoom  
All votes were ROLL CALL votes*

**Councilor Gilman** stated that this was an informational presentation on the Department of Housing and Community Development Draft MBTA Community Guidelines.

**Councilor Gilman** announced in the interest of government transparency with regards to deliberations and decisions made by the City Council and according to open meeting law, since this meeting was posted as a Zoom meeting, this meeting is recorded by video and audio and will be conducted by remote participation. Additionally, all votes taken by the City Council during this and future remote meetings will be by roll call vote.

**1. Call to Order of the City Council**

**Council President, Val Gilman**, called the joint meeting of the City Council with the Planning Board to order at 6:01 p.m. **Councilor Gilman** introduced the Members of the City Council.

**2. Call to Order of the Planning Board**

**Planning Board Chair, Rick Noonan**, called the joint meeting of the Planning Board with the City Council to order at 6:02 p.m. **Planning Board Chair, Rick Noonan**, introduced the members of the Planning Board.

**3. Informational Presentation on the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Draft MBTA Community Guidelines**

**Summary of Discussion:** **Mayor Verga** thanked the members of both the City Council and Planning Board. He explained that the draft MBTA Community Guidelines were not City-generated and that the timing was coincidental with the proposed zoning amendments that were currently under review. He explained that filling out the checklist regarding this matter did not commit the City to the MBTA Community Guidelines and

further stated that he had no intention of committing the City to anything until the State had finalized the rules and regulations for the MBTA concept.

The **Interim Community Development Director/Planning Director, Gregg Cademartori**, explained that this matter was a State initiative. He played a 30-minute presentation originally given on January 12, 2022, by Mike Kennealy, the Commonwealth's Secretary for the Department of Housing and Economic Development; Jennifer Maddox, the Undersecretary for the Department of Housing and Community Development; Chris Kluchman from the Department of Housing and Community Development; and Clark Ziegler from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership. After playing the presentation, **Mr. Cademartori** shared the following resources for additional information. He stated that information could be accessed on the State's webpage, as well as frequently asked questions: <http://mass.gov/info-details/mbta-communities-frequently-asked-questions>. He added that feedback could be provided directly to the State from this webpage and also that **Mayor Verga** had set up a unique email address, [MBTAfeedback@gloucester-ma.gov](mailto:MBTAfeedback@gloucester-ma.gov), for members of the public to send specific comments that would be catalogued and provided for the public to view, as well as the City Council. He also explained that information regarding this matter was available on the City's webpage at <http://gloucester-ma.gov/1197/MBTA-Community-Zoning-Information>. **Mr. Cademartori** emphasized that the guidelines were draft guidelines, as the State was in the process of collecting feedback. He shared the following important dates.

#### **What happens next?**

- **March 9, 2022 at 6pm** - A presentation will be made on the DRAFT guidelines to a joint meeting of the City Council and the Planning Board. Members of the public are invited to attend the meeting via Zoom, details will be available on the City's website under [Public Meeting Notices](#).
- **March 21, 2022** - Deadline to submit comments to Mayor Verga's office on the DRAFT guidelines. The public is encouraged to share comments on the DRAFT guidelines with the Mayor at: [mbtafeedback@gloucester-ma.gov](mailto:mbtafeedback@gloucester-ma.gov). All comments will then be shared with our City Council and the public.
- **March 31, 2022** - Deadline to submit comments to DHCD on the DRAFT guidelines. The public is welcome to provide comments via an electronic form that can be found on DHCD's website under Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities, [Submit Your Comments](#).
- **March 31, 2022** - Mayor Verga will submit comments to DHCD after reviewing the presentation, analysis from city staff, and input from the community.

**Councilor Gilman** added that there would be a possible vote of the City Council on March 22, 2022, to see if the full Council wanted to submit joint comments to the State.

#### **Questions from Councilors:**

**Q1. (Memhard):** Asked if the West Gloucester train station would be a factor in the overall response that the City was looking to provide.

**A1. (Cademartori):** Stated that it could be included and that the guidance thus far was that one district in the community was required, but that there was flexibility in that the district could be broken up to different areas within the City.

**Q2. (Worthley):** Asked how public input could be captured in 8 business days, as the deadline to submit comments to the Mayor's office was March 21, 2022.

**A2. (Cademartori):** Stated that this was the State's outreach and that the public could provide comments directly to the State via the avenues mentioned above.

**Q3. (Worthley):** Asked what would happen if the City, as a municipality, did not create a response.

**A3. (Cademartori):** Stated that there was no requirement to provide feedback, but that it was his understanding that the Mayor intended to provide feedback.

**Q4. (Grow):** Asked what would happen if the City already had the density required in the zoning. Asked if the City would still be required to come up with multifamily by-right. Asked where the district actually had to be.

**A4. (Cademartori):** Stated the district had to be within a ½ mile of the MBTA property that the station resided on. Stated that the density in that district right now was not currently allowed by-right and stated that there was a lot of focus on the number of housing stock required. Explained that there were many factors, but the City's capacity that the district had to have per the draft guidelines was 2,270 units and reiterated that it was available units and not additional units.

**Q5. (Gross):** Asked if senior housing was eligible to be counted in the required units.

**A5. (Cademartori):** Stated that the guidelines suggested that you could not create a district that restricted age but added that the guidelines were not clear regarding this issue. He added that a senior housing area may be disqualified which would ultimately reduce the overall density per unit area.

**Q6. (Gilman):** Asked if the West Gloucester train station was in large part wetlands regarding land that was able to be developed for this matter.

**A6. (Cademartori):** Stated, as the guidelines were draft, he had not evaluated the district but that wetlands would be disqualified.

**Q7. (Worthley):** Asked how the City would be in compliance to be eligible for certain grants if FY23 started in approximately four months.

**A7. (Cademartori):** Stated the grants he was referencing were through Housing Choice, MassWorks and the Commonwealth Local Capital Fund and added that the City only had to submit the online form that talked about the City's current zoning and had to prove that a meeting of the City Council was held on this matter which would keep the City in compliance for the next round of grants for FY23.

**Q8. (Worthley):** Asked if the City would be committed to passing zoning changes if the City was in compliance for this fiscal year.

**A8. (Cademartori):** Stated that there was nothing to commit the City to pass the zoning amendments. He added that the State had set up consequences if the City was not compliant, but that it would be a City Council decision to enact zoning.

**Q9. (Grow):** Asked what amounts of money were at risk in terms of the grant programs. Asked how the loss of that money impacted the community based on what the City had received in the past.

**A9. (Cademartori):** Stated grants administered by the Executive Office had requirements and that the City was not eligible for funding from the Housing Choice program, but that the City had received funding from MassWorks programs. He explained that the Commonwealth Local Capital Fund was revenue from the gaming industry and that he was unsure how that money was allocated. He also pointed out that the State had said that there could be further compliance requirements down the road for other grants issued by the Executive Office. Stated it could be millions.

**A9. (Gross):** Stated that item #11 on the guidelines stated that the DHCD may, at its discretion, take noncompliance into consideration when making other discretionary grant awards.

**A9. (Noonan):** Stated the City had received \$3.2 million from the MassWorks program to improve water and sewer when the new hotel was being built. Stated the City had also received approximately \$3 million for sewer improvements during the Fuller School redevelopment.

**Q10. (O'Neil):** Asked if **Mr. Cademartori** had stated that the district's distance from the rail station could be more than ½ mile.

**A10. (Cademartori):** Stated he did not say that.

**Planning Board member, Beverly Bookin**, proposed a working group composed of interested City Council members and Planning Board members to do the behind-the-scenes work on the technical aspects of the guidelines. Based on her experience as a land planner with over 35 years of experience, she urged that this opportunity be looked at as a positive opportunity to meet the needs of the community.

There was a brief discussion surrounding Transit-Overlay Districts (TODs) in different states and that TODs in other states had its own set of guidelines and requirements to follow. **Mr. Cademartori** added that the idea of focusing housing around amenities and transportation was not a new concept.

**Q11. (Worthley):** Asked how many acres were included in the “TOD map.”

**A11. (Cademartori):** Was unsure which map was being referred to, but stated that the ½ mile in the downtown area goes from the extension to the water.

**Q12. (Gilman):** Stated page 5 of the guidelines talked about unit capacity, setback requirements and parking space requirements under the zoning ordinance or by-law. Asked how the City would deal with the parking space requirement and guidelines. Asked if there was data on how many residents owned cars who would qualify for affordable housing.

**A12. (Cademartori):** Stated if the City was on the path of trying to create a compliant district, then the City could not have requirements that would prohibit the district from happening.

**Q13. (Grow):** Asked if his understanding that the City, per the guidelines, would have to have 50 acres somewhere within the 500 acres (the 500 acres which was encompassed by the ½-mile distance from the train station) with zoning that was allowed (multifamily by-right). Also asked if the whole 50 acres had to reside within the ½-mile requirement or could it start within the ½-mile requirement and continue outside the area.

**A13. (Cademartori):** Stated it was his understanding that the guidelines were stating that you had to have 500 acres to work with of which 50 acres was the minimum size of the district which needed to fulfill the capacity requirement.

**Q14. (Bookin):** Asked if the City could include units already built, including senior housing, into the 2,270 total units needed to satisfy the housing requirement.

**A14. (Cademartori):** Stated that it was the capacity created by the zoning and not the existing housing stock. Stated there were certain types of housing that would be excluded and that it also depended on how the district was drawn.

**Q15. (Gross):** Stated it was his understanding that it was only the existing three family and above; asked if it could be a three family with three single bedrooms (one bedroom for each unit).

**A15. (Cademartori):** Stated there was no restriction or limitation on bedroom or unit size, and stated that it had to be a minimum of a three-unit building.

**Q16. (Gross):** Asked if the two-family homes would factor into the unit count.

**A16. (Cademartori):** Stated that the two-family homes would not be counted.

**A16. (Gross):** Stated that it was his understanding that senior housing would not count either and that the district could be gerrymandered to include certain areas to form the district to satisfy the requirements.

**Q17. (O’Neil):** Asked if one-bedroom units could be included in the count as it was her understanding that the units needed to be family friendly.

**A17. (Cademartori):** Stated the requirements were infusing fair housing law by saying that you could not restrict by income, family type or size of family. He stated the guidelines were not about production or affordability and that it was about creating the environment to build multifamily by-right without restrictions. Stated there was more clarification needed.

**A17. (Grow):** Added that the guidelines stated that the environment shall be suitable for families with children and that generally a one-bedroom unit would not be suitable for families with children. He added that he did not think the anticipation of the legislation was to create multiple studio or one-bedroom apartments. He agreed that this issue needed more clarification.

**Q18. (Memhard):** Asked if congregate housing such as Lepage's or Top of the Harbor were the type of structures being considered for this district.

**A18. (Cademartori):** Stated housing could take on many forms and that the steps that would be taken would be based upon the finalized guidelines.

#### **Closing Remarks**

**Mr. Noonan** reiterated that the proposed zoning amendments were a separate matter from the State's new TOD law. He stated that there has been an enormous amount of time and effort focusing on the City's needs and that the nine technical proposed zoning amendments could possibly be used in meeting an undefined State mandate in which the City had no control over.

**Councilor Gilman** asked that everyone refer to the fact sheet on the City Council section of the City's website and provide any feedback concerning the Draft MBTA Community Guidelines, <https://gloucester-ma.gov/1197/MBTA-Community-Zoning-Information>.

#### **4. Adjournment**

**MOTION: On a motion by Councilor Gilman, seconded by Councilor Worthley, the City Council voted by ROLL CALL 9 in favor, 0 opposed, to adjourn the meeting 7:58 p.m.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Beverly Bookin, seconded by Shawn Henry, the Planning Board voted by ROLL CALL 3 in favor, 0 opposed, to adjourn the meeting at 7:59 p.m.**

**Submitted by: Sherry Karvelas, Clerk of Committees**

**Items submitted at the meeting:** None.

**Meeting Recording:** <http://gloucester-ma.gov/1097/Past-Remote-Public-Meetings>