

**SOUTH HADLEY PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING:**

**Proposed Design Standards for Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District**

**MINUTES OF JUNE 17, 2019**

**As Approved**

**Present:** Mark Cavanaugh, Chair; Diane Mulvaney, Clerk; Brad Hutchison, Member; Joanna Brown, Member; Larry Butler, Associate Member; Richard Harris, Town Planner; and Colleen Canning, Recorder

Chair Cavanaugh called the Public Hearing into order at 8:08 PM.

Ms. Mulvaney read the Public Hearing notice:

*Pursuant to Section 255-23A (17) of the South Hadley Zoning Bylaw, the Planning Board of the Town of South Hadley acting as the Plan Approval Authority under Section 255-23, will hold a public hearing to discuss/consider proposed Design Standards applicable to developments undertaken pursuant to the provisions of Section 255-23 within the Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning District as noted herein. The public hearing will be held as follows:*

*Place: South Hadley Town Hall, 116 Main Street - Selectboard Meeting Room,*

*South Hadley, MA*

*Date: Monday, June 17, 2019*

*Time: 7:10 p.m.*

*The complete text and maps (if any are applicable) relative to the proposed amendments is available for inspection during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) at the following place:*

*South Hadley Planning & Conservation Department Office  
Town Hall, 116 Main Street – Room 204  
South Hadley, MA 01075*

*Additionally, a copy of said proposed Standards is posted on the Planning & Conservation Department page of the Town's website in the folder entitled "Proposed Design Standards for Newton Street Smart Growth Zoning district."*

*Any person interested in, or wishing to be heard on, the proposed amendments should appear at the time and place designated for the public hearing.*

*Diane Supczak-Mulvaney, Clerk  
South Hadley Planning Board*

*Publication: Friday, May 31, 2019*

*Friday, June 7, 2019*

Mr. Harris opened with background. He explained that last year the Town approved the creation of Smart Growth Zoning Districts. In doing so, this required Mr. Harris to draft design standards to satisfy the State's requirements for Smart Growth Districts. The current draft was approved by the state regulatory authority, the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Any alterations made to the draft would not reflect approval from DHCD. It would be in the Board's authority to adopt the design standards as-is and then subsequently make amendments that would require DHCD approval.

Mr. Harris explained that the design standards discussed during the Public Hearing would only be applicable to the Newton Street Smart Growth District. When (or if) new Smart Growth Districts were formed, separate design standards would be created. In creating Smart Growth Design Standards, requirements could not be stricter than the underlying zoning of the existing area. The Newton Smart Growth District, consistent with 40-R Districts, aimed to create economically feasible housing. With DHCD approval of the design standards, it was up to the Planning Board's discretion to accept them as a requirement for development.

Mr. Harris explained that throughout his correspondences with DHCD, they discouraged of vague language in describing the design standards; terms such as "appropriate" and "New England Style". The design standard described as "consistent with the character of the area" was deemed satisfactory. Mr. Harris explained that the University of Massachusetts -Amherst performed an assessment of the Newton Street area to gather information about its design character. The assessment determined that the Newton Street area had a "commercial variation in character".

Chair Cavanaugh addressed the audience and shared that the intention of the Public Hearing was to adopted design standard for the Newton Street Smart Growth District. The Planning Board was not deliberating on a particular project. He recommended that the design standards be accepted to offer the Town some criteria to evaluate project proposals within the District. He explained that a sub-committee was created to develop the draft and public input on the draft had been ongoing.

Mr. Hutchinson addressed section 7.1.3 in the design draft. He inquired about the step-back requirement. He acknowledged the importance of protecting 'site lines' but thought it could be done through building orientation. He also noted the word choice of step-back and set-back in certain areas could be confusing.

Liz Austin, 47 Camden Street, submitted a written statement to the Board which detailed her comments regarding the proposed design standards as follows:

- She referenced Section 7.1.3 *Building Stepback Requirements*. She found the stepback requirement difficult to understand. She asked for visual examples to illustrate the concept
- Within section 7.2.4 *Roof Views*, she requested that the word "residence" be added to the section so it would read "...from street and residence views"

- Liz Austin questioned the purpose of section 7.8.1 *Building Elements Integrated*. Mr. Harris explained that the section was crafted following comments from DHCD. It was explained that the intention of the section was to allow for decorative charcterer in design and to allow for shielding of roof utilities; such as HVAC systems. The section could not be used for the purpose of adding additional vertical livable spaces.
- Liz Austin asked for clarity of section 8.1.7 *Landscaping Parking Areas* and advocated for the importance of trees. Mr. Harris explained that the section allowed reclaimed areas to be included in the greenspace requirement. For instance, if a site's existing conditions included a large asphalt parking lot and part of the parking lot was reclaimed for greenspace, it would be included in the greenspace requirement. However, the importance of trees in landscaping would be included in the landscape review.
- Liz Austin concluded my expressing her gratitude for the work that was done by town staff and residents in crafting the *Newton Street Smart Growth Design Standards*.

Barbara Callan-Bogia, 148 Stonybook Way, addressed the Board. She offered comment on the proposed design standards as follows:

- She referenced Section 5 *Vison and Objective*. She advocated for a “New England” aesthetic which she saw as colonial in character. She referenced the local Ameriprise Building which had the character she sought in new developments around town.
- Barbara Callan-Bogia inquired why a prospective developer was asked for comment regarding the *Newton Street Smart Growth Design Standard* draft. Mr. Harris explained that DHCD offered conditional approval of the draft. DHCD would approve the draft if the prospective developer was comfortable with the design standards. Mr. Harris explained that a prospective developer would only be subject to the design standards if they were endorsed by the State and the Planning Board. If an application for development was submitted without endorsed Design Standards, the developer would only be subject to underlying zoning.
- Barbara Callan-Bogia addressed Section 7.2.6 *Franchise Architecture*. She referenced an assessment report performed by the University of Massachusetts – Amherst in which gable roofing was recommend for new structures and flat roofing was discouraged.
- Barbara Callan-Bogia advocated for a shade study requirement for new structures three or four stories and higher to access their impact on existing developments.

Bret Johnson, 465 Newton Street, addressed the Board. He advocated for traditional character in the design of new structures within the Newton Street Smart Growth District.

Lucia Foley, Shadowbrook Estates, addressed the Board. She explained that she had prepared a slideshow to highlight other community's implementation of Smart Growth Design Standards. The slideshow is available on the Town's website.

Mr. Hutchinson suggested making an amendment to 7.1.3 *Building Step Back Requirements*. He acknowledged the intention was to protect site lines but thought it could be done in a more effective manner. Mr. Butler added that mandating stepbacks could take away from the aesthetic character of a structure. Lucia Foley, Shadowbrook, responded to the comments by the Board Members. She noted that public input largely favored the step back requirement. She added that

there was concern around creating “looming” structures that did not incorporate transition elements.

Brenda Warren, Woodlawn Street, addressed concerns for the financial impact on the Town that new developments would have. She cited that Town water, sewage, schools, and emergency services would be impacted by new development.

As there was no additional comment, Chair Cavanaugh closed the public hearing at 9:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
**As Approved**  
Colleen Canning, Recorder

Appendix

<b>Document</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Public Hearing Draft Public Hearing Draft of the <i>Newton Street Smart Growth District Design Standards</i>	Planning Files
UMass Amherst Newton Street Design Study	Planning Files
Liz Austin’s submitted written statement	Planning Files
Newton Street Smart Growth Design Standard Slide Show	Planning Files