7:00 PM  George Kohout opened Public Comment on items not otherwise on the agenda

There were none.

7:00 PM  George Kohout opened the Site Plan by Monarch Enterprises to create more than 6 parking spaces and parking in a residential district for commercial uses at 3 Wright Ave/118 Conz St, Map ID 39A-19, 20.

Ed Etherege, representing Grenat Green operating NETA, introduced clarified the applicant vs. the owner.

Leslie Laurie, presented needs for NETA and described the leasing agreement for additional parking spaces that they had from the hotel and other area businesses.

Christopher Karney, engineer from R Levesque Associates presented plan for the parking lot showing the site modifications.

Alan Verson asked about circulation of no spaces were available and whether the lot were for customers?
Laurie confirmed that the lot was intended for employee parking.

Janna White asked how that information would be disseminated.

Alan Verson asked if this is first come first serve. Verson then noted his need to recuse himself from the discussion since he received abutter notice (although he is not legally a party in interest).

Laurie clarified that the spaces are not going to be “assigned”.

Whitehill asked for clarification of where additional parking would be located and how they were connected.

Laurie confirmed that they would continue to rent 50 spaces at the hotel. This will take pressure off of hotel and could be used for customers.

Whitehill asked if they would continue to rent from the hotel?

Laurie stated they would but they ultimately would like to their own parking.

George Kohout asked where the existing dumpsters would be located since they were not shown on the plan.

Karney noted that there had been no decision about the dumpsters.

Whitehall asked about long term plan for police detail and why it continues.

George Kohout asked about trees.

Karney noted landscaping plan.

George Kohout asked about notice to the abutters, buffer to the abutter and bike parking.

Laurie described bike racks and NETA’s bike share sponsorship.

Christa Grenat asked about the cones on Conz Street.

The Board discussed options for re-opening public parking on Conz Street.

Laurie noted that they think it is safer for pedestrians with the cones.

Janna White asked about dumpster

Karney noted that dumpster could go back to the location it was originally in.

Board discussed conditions.

Upon motion by Sam Taylor and second by Euripedes DeOliveira the Board voted unanimously to close the hearing.
Sam Taylor asked about parking in residential districts.

Staff described provisions and permit requirements noting that this parcels is now split zoned.

Upon motion by Euripedes DeOliveira, and second by Sam Taylor, the Board voted unanimously (Alan Verson did not participate) to approve the plan for more than 6 parking spaces with conditions requiring updated plans showing compliance with Department of Public Works standards for materials and construction as noted in the Department of Public Works comments, removal of cones on Conz street to reopen public parking and location of dumpster.

8:20 PM Proposed Zoning Amendments:

George Kohout opened the public hearing on Section 350-3.4 Map Change to rezone 3 Wright Ave from Urban Residential C to General Business.

Staff described the petition for the change and consistency with the long range plan to expand the commercial district to the roundabout.

Ed Etheredge reiterated the petition for rezoning.

There was no public comment.

Upon motion by Sam Taylor and second by Euripedes DeOliveira the Board voted unanimously to close the hearing.

Upon motion by Sam Taylor and second by Euripedes DeOliveira, the Board voted unanimously to recommend the zoning change to Council.

Christa Grenat recused herself from the following hearing.

George Kohout opened the public hearing on the map change for Section 350-3.4 Map Change to rezone the following parcels on Conz St from Neighborhood Business to Central Business:

- 32C-102
- 32C-104
- 32C-105
- 32C-131 NB Portion Only
- 39A-002
- 39A-003
- 39A-008
- 39A-009

Staff described rationale for the proposed amendment.

Jim Olson, Wately and owner of Signature Sounds that has an interested in purchasing the World War II Club, spoke in favor of the zoning change. Noting that they intend to use the space in the same manner as the WWII Club.
Tetty Gorfine, 23 Smith Street, stated her concerns about legitimizing the night club use given the noise the use generates.

Matt Tebo, treasurer of the WWII Club spoke in favor of the change. He noted that they believed they were operating fully legally.

David Murphy, 44 Conz Street owner, stated that he had no objection to the change from NB to CB and felt the uses allowed would help him. He raised a concern about not having the related design standards to go with the change, noting he could not support the change without knowing what the design standards would be.

Staff described the rationale for not having the standards, noting that they could be added instead of waiting for possible form-based code.

Gorfine, 23 Smith Street, stated that she did not receive notice of the hearing.

Staff described required notice.

Alan Verson noted that he did not receive notice even though the map showed the change for the parcel he owns.

Staff confirmed discrepancy.

Matt Tebo described the general operating hours that currently exist.

Sam Taylor stated that he would support the changes with the Central Business Design Guidelines to go with it.

Alan Verson asked why the zoning should be changed to allow the use?

The Board discussed options of moving the ordinance with a recommendation about design standards and other options.

Upon motion by Sam Taylor and second by Euripedes DeOliveira the Board voted unanimously to close the hearing.

Upon motion by Janna White and second by David Whitehill the Board voted 5-1 (Alan Verson did support amendment) to recommend the zoning map change not be adopted because it does not include design guidelines.

Christa Grenat returned.

George Kohout opened the hearing on Section 350-3.4 to expand Central Business by rezoning a portion of Map IDs 31D-222, 223, 224 fronting on Old South St/Clark Ave from Urban Residential C to Central Business.
Sam Taylor asked if the same issue is relevant regarding the design standards for this parcel? Board discussed fact that the sites were already split zoned CB and thus covered by design standards along parking lot frontage.

The Board discussed rezoning the entire parcels so they would not be split zoned.

Upon motion by Sam Taylor and second by Janna White, the Board voted unanimously to close the hearing.

Upon motion by Sam Taylor and second Christa Grenat, the Board voted 6-1 (George Kohout voted against indicating the entirety of the parcels should be included) recommend the change to Council.

George Kohout opened Section 350-3.4 Map Change 23 Laurel St, Map ID 38A-49 from Planned Village to Planned Village with Smart Growth Overlay Village Hill-C.

Staff described changes.
George Kohout asked for confirmation about notice of owners versus abutters.
Staff noted that Ward Councilor was notified and she sent notice to residents.

Upon motion by Janna White and second by Christa Grenat, the Board voted to close the hearing.

Upon motion by Euripedes DeOliveira and second by Christa Grenat, the Board voted unanimously to recommend the change.

George Kohout asked staff to provide information regarding Open Meeting Law Complaint by Stephen Callahan. (attached)

Staff described required response by the Board.

The Board discussed the complaint and the minutes and whether they reflected the content of the meeting.

Alan Verson asked why we would not just include the requested commentary.

The Board discussed whether there was a way to know that what was submitted was exactly what was stated and noted that it is not required to include verbatim testimony.

Upon motion by Euripedes DeOliveira and second by Janna White, the Board voted unanimously to have staff respond on behalf of the Board indicating that the minutes accurately paraphrase and are in-line with the summary of other people’s comments of the hearing of October 24, 2019.
Staff presented the Blackberry Lane ANR: Upon motion by Janna White and second by Sam Taylor, the Board voted unanimously to have the ANR endorsed.

10:30 Adjourn
OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT FORM
Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

Please note that all fields are required unless otherwise noted.

Your Contact Information:
First Name: Stephen
Last Name: Callahan
Address: 824 Burts Pit Road
City: Northampton State: MA Zip Code: 01062
Phone Number: 4135841507 Ext.
Email: umassx614@aol.com
Organization or Media Affiliation (if any): NA

Are you filing the complaint in your capacity as an individual, representative of an organization, or media?
(For statistical purposes only)
☒ Individual ☐ Organization ☐ Media

Public Body that is the subject of this complaint:
☒ City/Town ☐ County ☐ Regional/District ☐ State

Name of Public Body (including city/town, county or region, if applicable):
Northampton Planning Committee

Specific person(s), if any, you allege committed the violation:
Carolyn Misch, Senior Planner Responsible for creating the minutes of the meeting

Date of alleged violation: January 22, 2020
Description of alleged violation:

Describe the alleged violation that this complaint is about. If you believe the alleged violation was intentional, please say so and include the reasons supporting your belief.

Note: This text field has a maximum of 3000 characters.

At the Northampton Planning Committee on 10/24/2019 meeting I spoke against the Planning Department’s recommendation to approve an “Amendment” to an existing site plan for a Burts Bog development. The minutes of this meeting were approved 3 months later on January 22, 2020. The minutes are supposed to contain enough information to allow someone not attending the meeting to have an accurate and factual understanding of the discussion and votes.

The published minutes provided the following 2 statements regarding my comments at the meeting:

1. “Steve Callahan, 824 Burts Pit Road suggested that there was a conspiracy to secretly approve changes since adequate notice was not given”.

I stated that I did not receive the notice for this meeting that other abutters received. I had to go to the Planning Department to complain of this “omission” one week before the meeting and finally received notice on the Tuesday before the Thursday meeting. I also stated that I never received the required abutter notice for the two previous meetings where votes on the site plan were taken. I stated further that at the last meeting (7/7/2018) to discuss moving 6 “affordable units”, required to be built at Emerson Way to Burts Bog was “illegal” because the published agenda omitted the location of the proposed action, Burts Bog. I asked Mr. Misch if he had written that agenda item and she said yes.

I also said that the changes to the site plan, 4 of 10 lots changed, addition of 3 more units, and a completely new storm water system that included an 8,000 sq foot retention pond in the middle of 9 units required more time to evaluate and should not be approved as an “amendment” to an existing plan.

2. “Steve Callahan, Burts Pit stated that it was too dense.”

I said that the addition of three “Accessory Apartments” to three lots under contract to Emerson Way was an obvious attempt to create the 6 duplex units that Emerson Way needed in order to complete the swap of required moderate income housing to Burts Bog. I said it was an attempt to create duplex housing where the originally “approved” site plan only showed single residences (and thus was not an “amendment”). Since I only had 48 hours notice I did not have time to research the following:

A. The area is zoned for only single family homes. A zoning change would be required to create duplexes.

B. The use of an “Accessory Apartment” designation is not possible because Accessory Apartments are required to be owner occupied and have an individual building plan approved.

The Planning Department knew what the zoning was, the requirements for approving an Accessory Apartment and whether adding 3 units to create duplexes would constitute an amendment to an existing single family site plan. The Department’s recommendation that the Planning Committee approve the “Amendment” was obviously intentional. Their decision to omit my specific, factual objections was an attempt to distort the public record of their action.

What action do you want the public body to take in response to your complaint?

Note: This text field has a maximum of 500 characters.

I request that the minutes of the meeting be modified to include the factual objections I made about the process and content (zoning issues, Accessory Apartments, changes to unit numbers, lot sizes and storm water plan). I would also suggest that they may want to delay final site plan approval until after the City Council and Mass Inspector General’s office have completed an investigation of the City’s ongoing violation of MGL 41-17, not sending Burts Bog Contracts to the City Clerk.

Review, sign, and submit your complaint

I. Disclosure of Your Complaint.
Public Record. Under most circumstances, your complaint, and any documents submitted with your complaint, is considered a public record and will be available to any member of the public upon request.

Publication to Website. As part of the Open Data Initiative, the AGO will publish to its website certain information regarding your complaint, including your name and the name of the public body. The AGO will not publish your contact information.

II. Consulting With a Private Attorney.
The AGO cannot give you legal advice and is not able to be your private attorney, but represents the public interest. If you have any questions concerning your individual legal rights or responsibilities you should contact a private attorney.

III. Submit Your Complaint to the Public Body.
The complaint must be filed first with the public body. If you have any questions, please contact the Division of Open Government by calling (617) 963-2540 or by email to openmeeting@state.ma.us.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read and understood the provisions above and certify that the information I have provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: __________________________

Date: 2/7/20
**Description of alleged violation:**

Describe the alleged violation that this complaint is about. If you believe the alleged violation was intentional, please say so and include reasons supporting your belief.

Note: This text field has a maximum of 3000 characters.

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The Planning Department knew what the zoning was, the requirements for approving an Accessory Apartment and whether adding 3 units to create duplexes would constitute an amendment to an existing single family site plan. The Department's recommendation that the Planning Committee approve the "Amendment" was obviously intentional. Their decision to omit my specific, factual objections was an attempt to distort the public record of their action.
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, Massachusetts 02108

OPEN MEETING LAW COMPLAINT FORM

Instructions for completing the Open Meeting Law Complaint Form

The Attorney General’s Division of Open Government interprets and enforces the Open Meeting Law, Chapter 30A of the Massachusetts General Laws, Sections 18-25. Below is the procedure for filing and responding to an Open Meeting Law complaint.

Instructions for filing a complaint:

- Fill out the attached two-page form completely and sign it. File the complaint with the public body within 30 days of the alleged violation. If the violation was not reasonably discoverable at the time it occurred, you must file the complaint within 30 days of the date the violation was reasonably discoverable. A violation that occurs during an open session of a meeting is reasonably discoverable on the date of the meeting.
- To file the complaint:
  - For a local or municipal public body, you must submit a copy of the complaint to the chair of the public body AND to the municipal clerk.
  - For all other public bodies, you must submit a copy of the complaint to the chair of the public body.
- Complaints may be filed by mail, email, or by hand. Please retain a copy for your records.
- If the public body does not respond within 14 business days and does not request an extension to respond, contact the Division for further assistance.

Instructions for a public body that receives a complaint:

- The chair must disseminate the complaint to the members of the public body.
- The public body must meet to review the complaint within 14 business days (usually 20-22 calendar days).
- After review, but within 14 business days, the public body must respond to the complaint in writing and must send the Attorney General a copy of the complaint and a description of any action the public body has taken to address it. At the same time, the body must send the complainant a copy of its response. The public body may delegate this responsibility to its counsel or a staff member, but only after it has met to review the complaint.
- If a public body requires more time to review the complaint and respond, it may request an extension of time for good cause by contacting the Division of Open Government.

Once the public body has responded to the complaint:

- If you are not satisfied with that the public body’s response to your complaint, you may file a copy of the complaint with the Division by mail, e-mail, or by hand, but only once you have waited for 30 days after filing the complaint with the public body.
- When you file your complaint with the Division, please include the complaint form and all documentation relevant to the alleged violation. You may wish to attach a cover letter explaining why the public body’s response does not adequately address your complaint.
- The Division will not review complaints filed with us more than 90 days after the violation, unless we granted an extension to the public body or you can demonstrate good cause for the delay.

If you have questions concerning the Open Meeting Law complaint process, we encourage you to contact the Division of Open Government by phone at (617) 963-2540 or by e-mail at openmeeting@state.ma.us.
April 9, 2012

OML 2012 – 29

Earl Bowen, Chairman
Town of Charlemont
Board of Health
P.O. Box 465
Charlemont, MA 01339

RE: Open Meeting Law Complaint

Dear Chairman Bowen:

This office received two complaints from William and Norma Coli on or about August 31, 2011, alleging that the Charlemont Board of Health (the “Board”) violated the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §§ 18-25. The complaints were originally filed with the Board and were dated March 30 and April 22, 2011.¹ The Board responded to the original complaints by letter dated August 10, 2011. In their complaints, the Colis allege that the minutes from the Board’s March 9 and April 13, 2011 meetings failed to provide an adequate summary of the discussions on each subject.

We reviewed the March 30 and April 22, 2011 complaints filed with the Board; the Board’s August 10, 2011 response; the August 31, 2011 complaint filed with our office; letters to our office from the complainants, dated September 7, 2011 and December 14, 2011; minutes from the Board’s March 9, 2011, April 13, 2011, and July 6, 2011 meetings; and audio recordings of the Board’s March 9 and April 13, 2011 meetings. In addition, we interviewed Board Chair Earl Bowen by telephone on March 1, 2012.²

Following our review, we find that the Board did not violate the Open Meeting Law.

FACTS

Based upon our review of the material listed above, the facts are as follows.

¹ We note that the complainants did not use the complaint form approved by the Attorney General and available on the Attorney General’s website, as required by 940 CMR 29.05(1).
² For purposes of clarity, we will refer to you in the third person.
On March 9, 2011, the Board held a public hearing on draft licensing definitions. The Colis, along with their attorney, Robert Sacco, attended the hearing and made an audio recording. The recording of the hearing reflects that at least half of the discussion concerned the Board’s proposed definition of “Lodging,” including the source of the proposed language, the intent behind it, and the implications for local property owners. Several members of the public (including Mr. Coli), at least one member of the Town’s Board of Selectmen, and several attorneys participated in what was, at times, a very vigorous discussion of the issue.

On March 18, 2011, the Colis sent an email to the Board noting six perceived deficiencies in the Board’s draft minutes from the public hearing. Among the deficiencies noted in the email were the following:

Item 13: It was Win Healy (not Phil Banks) that asked for someone other than Mr. Bowen to answer questions about the “Motel/Lodging Establishment” definition, particularly whether the new definition would “bring any others not currently licensed/permited under the BOH perview”[sic]...

Item 14: My bringing up the March 25, 2010 letter from the Deputy Counsel of MA DPH was not about why the BOH did not use the Chapter 140 definition. It was to ask if everyone who had been on the Board at that time had seen that letter (answer was “no”), and pointing out that the letter clearly stated that Blue Heron Farm was not a hotel, motel, lodging house, etc. under Ch. 140.

The corresponding sections of the minutes from the March 9, 2011 hearing read as follows:

13. BOH was then asked by Phil Banks the purpose of the Lodging definition with a response from someone other than Earl Bowen. Robert Lingle replied that the definitions were to clarify language of public health issues.


On April 13, 2011, the Board held an open meeting. The Colis attended and made an audio recording of parts of the meeting. During the recorded portion of the meeting, the Board debated whether to discuss the content of a letter sent by the Colis. Board members noted that the meeting agenda for that night was very long, but also that the arguments in the letter should be discussed before the Board made any decisions on the proposed definitions. Board members acknowledged that the Motel / Lodging establishment definition was the one that would take the longest to work on, and could potentially result in a legal challenge. Following significant disagreement about whether creation of such a definition was even necessary at that time, and about whether the Department of Revenue’s definition was an appropriate definition to use for the Board’s purposes, the Board decided to table the discussion until later in the meeting, if there was time, or until a later date.

On April 22, 2011, the Colis sent a letter to the Board complaining of several alleged violations of the Open Meeting Law during the April 13, 2011 meeting. Amongst the allegations was a complaint that Item 6 in the minutes from that meeting read incorrectly because:
The minutes note the Board's opinions about the correctness of our counsel sending individual letters to Board members at their home address. However, absolutely no mention is made of the over 30 minutes of discussion between the Chair and another Board member (i.e., Mr. Robert Lingle) about the latter's wish to discuss said letter prior to any further discussion of its subject (i.e., draft definitions of businesses that require a license from the Board of Health).

The relevant sections of the minutes from the April 13, 2011 meeting read as follows:

6. Discussion of letters received by board members, addressed to each of their homes from Attorney Robert C. Sacco, regarding William and Norma Coli. Discussed that it was not correct to do so and that BOH mail should come to the town hall. Noted that the board will further discuss letter at a later date.

7. Discussion of BOH definitions and The Massachusetts General Laws. Noted that the Board will work on the BOH definitions [at] a later date.

On July 6, 2011, in response to the Open Meeting Law complaints, the Board met in open session and approved certain revisions to the minutes of the March 9 and April 13, 2011 meetings. The Board discussed the summary of Item 6 contained in the April 13, 2011 draft minutes and concluded that the discussion was sufficient for what was required by the Open Meeting Law. The minutes do not reflect any specific discussion of Items 13 and 14 in the minutes from the March 9, 2011 meeting, and the Chair does not recall any such discussion occurring.

On August 31, 2011, the Colis notified our office that they were “not fully satisfied with the remedial action taken” by the Board. On September 7, 2011, they clarified by letter that, in particular, they sought further review of the Board’s failure to include their proposed changes to Items 13 and 14 in the minutes of the March 9, 2011 meeting, and the Board’s failure to amend Item 6 in the April 13, 2011 meeting minutes.

Complainant requests that the Board be required to amend the minutes accordingly.

DISCUSSION

The Open Meeting Law requires that a public body “create and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions, setting forth the date, time and place, the members present or absent, a summary of the discussions on each subject, a list of documents and other exhibits used at the meeting, the decisions made and the actions taken at each meeting, including the record of all votes.” G.L. c. 30A, § 22(a). While the minutes must include a summary of the discussions on each subject, a transcript is not required.3

When reviewing meeting minutes for compliance with the requirement to create and maintain accurate meeting minutes, we look for substantial compliance with the accuracy requirement. OML 2011-55.4 By substantial compliance, we mean that the minutes should

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3 Note, however, that other statutes may impose additional requirements for public hearings.
4 Open Meeting Law determinations may be found at www.mass.gov/ago/openmeeting.
contain enough detail and accuracy so that a member of the public who did not attend the meeting could read the minutes and have a clear understanding of what occurred. Id.

Following our review, we find that the Board substantially complied with the requirement that it provide an accurate and sufficiently detailed summary of the discussion that occurred. The minutes do not cover every remark or opinion presented at the meeting, but the Board included the minimum that the law requires. Although the content of meeting minutes beyond those minimum requirements is left to the discretion of the public body, we encourage public bodies to include dissenting or minority opinions whenever possible. The Board's minutes—particularly those from the April 13, 2011 meeting—omit these types of details about the discussion that occurred. Where significant debate on a matter occurs and it's clear that one or more members of the body and/or the public disagree with the decision ultimately taken by the public body, public bodies should note the opposing viewpoints in the meeting minutes. While it is not necessary to record the comments of every speaker, and we acknowledge the difficulty of doing so where there are many speakers whose remarks may even overlap, if a particular individual speaks at some length or is the only one to offer an argument for or against a proposal, that person and his or her comments should be identified in the minutes. These best practices were communicated to the Chair during our March 1, 2012 interview.

CONCLUSION

For the reasons stated above, we find that the Board did not violate the Open Meeting Law. We now consider the complaint addressed by this determination to be resolved. This determination does not address any other complaints that may be pending with our office or the Board. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or believe any facts in this letter to be inaccurate.

Sincerely,

Amy L. Nable
Assistant Attorney General
Director, Division of Open Government

cc: William and Norma Coli
In response to the Complaint filed with the City Clerk’s office on February 7, 2020, The Planning Board reviewed the complaint at its February 13, 2020 regularly scheduled public meeting.

Upon reviewing the complaint and reviewing the minutes from the October 24, 2019 meeting, which were the subject of the Complaint, the Board voted 7-0 to affirm the minutes as submitted. In making the determination, the Board also reviewed the requirements of recording of the minutes as specified in the Open Meeting Law. Upon motion and second, the Board voted that the minutes accurately paraphrase and captured the essence of Mr. Callahan’s statements and that the record of the other members of the public who spoke were similarly summarized and reflected in the minutes. The Open Meeting Law does not require the level of specificity that the Mr. Callahan has demanded in his complaint. For these reasons the Board denies the complaint and declines to take remedial action.

Please see the attached copy of the Complaint, the entirety of the Boards minutes that are subject of the complaint.