

Coolidge School Working Group
Meeting Minutes
3 pm Wed., Nov. 7, 2018
Finance Meeting Room, Town Hall, Maynard, MA

Committee Members Present:

Linde Ghere

Aaron Miklosko

Donna Dodson

Vicki Brown Stevens

Sarah Donnelly

Also Present:

Ellen Duggan

Katie Young, Assistant Town Planner

Bill Nemser, Town Planner

John Massaro

Rick Asmann, Building Commissioner

1. Minutes – The minutes of the Oct. 24, 2018, meeting were approved.

2. Q & A with Town Planners and Officials

Town Planner Bill Nemser and Building Commissioner Rick Asmann helped us understand Maynard zoning and building laws and procedures. The Coolidge School is a nonconforming (it exceeds 35-foot height maximum) building in the GR general residential zoning area. GR allows one living unit per 7,000 square feet of lot area, but for senior housing permits one unit per 2,000 square feet of lot area. Two parking spaces are required for a single unit but fewer are needed for senior housing. Multi-family use for Coolidge is possible in its zoning via special permit and is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Variances are possible and generally permitted if what's proposed is no worse than what is there now. Other points:

- **Senior Housing** - Bill Nemser noted that town boards will likely favorably judge variances for senior housing because housing for seniors is an ongoing need in Maynard.
- **Affordable Housing** – Rick Asmann noted there are many in Maynard nearing retirement who want to stay here but need more affordable, smaller and easier-to-maintain places to live. Maynard seeks to have 10 percent of all housing be affordable. Right now, we're at 8.4 percent, Bill said.
- **Snack Shack** – Rick said he didn't see any problem with constructing a snack shack with bathrooms on the Coolidge playground.
- **Duo Use of Coolidge** – Can two entities use the building? Rick and Bill said it is possible if the right pairing is chosen and then the requirements for them are meant.
- **Easements** – If the town maintained ownership of the property and granted a developer easement to the land, could the developer use the entire square footage of the park in figuring how many units could be built in the Coolidge? Yes they could.
- **Developers** – Bill encouraged us to talk to developers. We will be.

- **Addendum** – Since the Coolidge is nonconforming, any change to its use, including to an allowable use in the GR zoning, must go through the Zoning Board of Appeals, according to Rick who submitted this clarification after our meeting. From the Maynard Zoning By-Laws: *The Board of Appeals may award a Special Permit to reconstruct, extend, alter, or change a nonconforming structure in accordance with this section only if it determines that such reconstruction, extension, alteration, or change shall not be substantially more detrimental than the existing nonconforming structure to the neighborhood.*

3. **Timeline** – We think we should be ready to submit our warrant article for the May Town Meeting as soon as we can.

4. **RFPs** – Linde noted that the RFP we write needs to be open-ended to attract a great variety of potential uses for Coolidge.

5. **Updates**

- **Preservation Massachusetts** – Vicki contacted the agency which promotes preservation of historic buildings. They encouraged us to check out Epsilon, a firm in Maynard that often deals with preservation issues. Vicki researched the Coolidge Re-Use Task Force’s files to find that Epsilon inventoried the historically significant features of the Coolidge that would need to be preserved in order to get the federal and/or state historic tax credits. That report noted that preserving some of Coolidge’s features may be beneficial to some developers and could be “onerous” to others. The Maynard Historical Commission also weighed in in 2015 and recommended the town seek a developer who would renovate the building according to tax credit guidelines. The commission seemed to hope that a simpatico developer would maintain important features of Coolidge while restoring it for a new use.

6. **Next Meetings** - Wednesday, Nov.14, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

7. **Adjournment** - We adjourned at about 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Vicki Stevens

Coolidge School Working Group 10/24/18

High Level Tasks (the start of our Project Plan/Timeline)

- Deliver an RFP
- Re-survey the Coolidge plot.
 - Talking to Bill & Rick at Town Hall will help to inform us on the zoning requirements that will factor into our request to re-survey.
- Keep FinCom, BOS, Town Administrator in the loop as our project progresses
- Share draft RFP and new survey with FinCom & BOS to review prior to printing of warrant articles for May town meeting
- Gain approval of the warrant article at town meeting
- Schedule a public meeting to share information and listen to input
- Visit a few local properties that have successfully been converted into adaptive reuses
 - Note: Former school in Acton will be our first tour. Rick Lefferts could help identify a few others.
- Reach out to the Economic Development, Conservation, and Maynard Historical Commissions. Also, the Historical Society
- Investigate alternative funding options:
 - Tax credits for buildings placed on the National Historic Registry
 - Note: Rick Lefferts could advise regarding the timeline to apply for National Historic Registry status
 - Green building grants (solar, geo-thermal energy, etc.)
 - CPC funds

- Add public restroom or snack facility to Coolidge plot

- Investigate how Sudbury accomplished this.

Note: Sudbury received a \$250K playground grant that paid for installation, but we could still ask how they maintain the snack shack and restroom.