Medfield Planning Board Vacancy – Associate Member

Released March 7, 2024

The Town of Medfield Planning Board is seeking to fill a vacant Associate Member position. Anyone who may be interested should submit a letter of interest to Maria De La Fuente at mdelafuente@medfield.net by April 1, 2024.

The Planning Board is an elected town board of five members, each with a five-year term. The purpose of the Planning Board is to guide the development of the Town in the best interests of all its residents. The Board has very specific responsibilities and authorities as granted by Massachusetts General Laws and the Medfield Zoning By-Laws.

The Planning Board generally meets in the evening 2-3 times per month. Regular meetings are scheduled for the first and third Monday and there is often an additional work session scheduled. Associate members attend and participate in all meetings though are not considered voting members of the Board. This allows Associates to learn about the intricacies of the Planning Board in preparation for running in the local election.

The Planning Board is responsible for the review and approval of all subdivisions (the division of a tract of land into two or more lots) through a comprehensive process prescribed by MGL Chapter 41 Sections 81L-GG and Town Code Article 310 involving review by relevant regulatory agencies, public hearings, covenants with developers, performance bonding, and ongoing compliance monitoring.

Under “Site Plan Approval” and “Special Permits” in the Zoning By-Laws (MGL Chapter 40A and Town Code Article 300), the Board also has the responsibility to assure that prior to any new construction or significant changes to an existing structure, other than single family dwellings, such factors as community needs, abutters’ concerns, visual amenities, safety issues, and environmental and historic features on the site and in adjacent areas are considered.

Any requests for Zoning By-Law changes or amendments are also reviewed by the Board. Public hearings are held to allow input from any abutters or other interested citizens. The Board is required to provide a recommendation on any Zoning By-Law amendment at Town Meeting, where a two-thirds vote is required to approve the change.

The Planning Board, through the Town Planner, serves as a resource to assist interested individuals with the process of proposing plans or projects under the Zoning By-Laws. Communications are maintained on an ongoing basis with related Town agencies including the Zoning Board of Appeals and other planning interests within the Town such as the historical entities, Medfield State Hospital, and affordable housing.

Letters of Interest should describe your interest in the Planning Board as well as any professional experience or other qualifications that will complement the Board. Relevant experience includes land use law, real estate, engineering, and construction however; planning board members come from a broad spectrum of life. Ideal candidates must be open-minded, willing to learn and put time in between meetings, and be capable of reading and understanding the Medfield Zoning Bylaws. Accordingly, please contemplate the following in your letter of interest:

- Do you have ideas about the direction the Board should be headed? If so, have you thought about integration of those ideas (meaning how the idea coalesces into existing regulations or whether new regulations would need to be created)?

- Land use boards such as the Planning Board do not always have the kind of discretion to approve or deny a specific project that residents often think they have. It is important to recognize and avoid any conflict of interest, not to pursue special privileges, and maintain confidentiality. Are you prepared for being resented by some and appreciated by others?

- Planning Boards wear two hats, proactive and reactive, and the schedule is robust. The proactive hat is devoted to long-range planning and is often difficult to quantify as the effects aren't recognized for several years, if at all. The reactive hat focuses on development application and the effects are more immediately seen and felt in the community. How would you rationalize your reactive hat with your proactive hat? Do you see an overlap?

For questions regarding the Planning Board or this specific position please contact Maria De La Fuente, Director of Land Use, at mdelafuente@medfield.net