

## Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee

June 12, 2025 @ 7:00 PM  
REMOTE MEETING

**Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee Members Present Remotely:** Tracy Shriver, Gary Tondorf-Dick, Joe Fischer, Jed Ruccio, Eric Smoczynski

**Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee Members Absent:** None

**Also Present:** Emily Wentworth, Community Planning Director

At 7:01 PM Chair Shriver called the Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee meeting to order and stated the following:

*“This meeting is being held remotely as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2025 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. You are hereby advised that this meeting and all communications during this meeting may be recorded by the Town of Hingham in accordance with the Open Meeting Law. If any participant wishes to record this meeting, please notify me at the start of the meeting in accordance with M.G.L. c. 30A, § 20(f) so that I, as Chair, may inform all other participants of said recording.”*

Chair Shriver confirmed no other attendees requested to record the meeting.

Chair Shriver took roll call attendance of other members present including Gary Tondorf-Dick, Joe Fisher, Jed Ruccio, and Eric Smoczynski.

---

Chair Shriver opened the meeting by asking each member to give a brief background.

Chair Shriver presented the sub-committee’s purpose.

“The Residential Compatibility Standards Sub-Committee is formed by the Planning Board to review the merits of amending the provisions of the Zoning By-Law to codify Residential Compatibility Standards, and/or amend any other provisions of the Zoning By-Law related to the creation of residential Compatibility standards.”

Chair Shriver shared current zoning and site plan challenges and zoning changes which may have triggered the increase in projects requiring review. He moved on to discuss and share an example of the Hatfield Amendment. He stated that applicants often ask for clarity on project dimensions and felt it was due to lack of clear enforceable guidelines. He presented Policy 4.5 of the 2020 Master Plan which recommended establishing a maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR), amending zoning bylaws to set rear and side yard setbacks based on building height, and regulating the footprint of new construction. He gave examples of potential methods to regulate residential development while aligning with other town initiatives. He also advised the subcommittee of the October deadline to present findings and recommendations to the Planning Board.

Member Tondorf-Dick discussed neighborhood development and how new buildings relate to existing buildings. He discussed the proportional relationship between the lot and the residential buildings, the importance of maintaining neighborhood context and view corridors, the reduction of sunlight in abutting yards when residential buildings crowd the lot, maintaining a dynamic floor area ratio as a massing and proportional lot coverage metric, the loss of neighborhood landmarks and institutional memory when houses are demolished to make way for new homes, the sustainability importance of maintaining the embodied energy of existing residences, the option of an alternative renovation approach of the front part of houses to total teardowns to maintain the existing streetscape, and neighborhood identity and the importance of managing development to maintain neighborhood economic accessibility and diversity.

Chair Shriver asked for public comment.

Member Ruccio expressed surprise the town did not have FAR, similar to many other towns.

Chair Shriver referenced the research that planning staff had done on dimensional controls in peer communities. Member Tondorf-Dick noted that lot sizes vary within and suggested that a dynamic formula might be created to address discrepancies. He suggested the group look at how these are addressed in Needham and Wellesley.

Member Fisher asked if anyone looked at the economics of how the large homes are funding the town and if the changes being considered put that funding in jeopardy. Ms. Wentworth advised that the information could be accessed if the committee wants. She also shared examples of one-time fees associated with the larger home builds which add up significantly, one particular building permit example would cover the building department's salaries for a full year.

Member Tondorf-Dick asked about new development in relation to Proposition 2 ½. A brief discussion followed.

Member Fisher asked how to address neighborhoods where the change has already happened or is happening and how to make the regulations equitable for the remaining homeowners. He asked if any other towns had proposed FAR restrictions, failed, and if so, why they failed. Ms. Wentworth advised some towns had changed their direction during the process as information came forward. She offered to send a request to the Mass Planners Listserv for other experiences. She also advised that the Planning Department intern had done research on comparable communities and she offered to share it with the subcommittee as well as information about tear down activity over the last 14 years.

Member Smoczynski said he was also surprised that there was no FAR requirement when he did an addition to his home.

Charles Hayes, 228 Otis Street, observed most of the lots on Crow Point are non-conforming and most in District A don't meet the requirements. He asked, should another zoning district be considered. Member Tondorf-Dick shared most lots are pre-existing non-conforming and many are grandfathered.

Lee Vigil, 223 Wompatuck Road, stated she has have seen much of what has been discussed in her neighborhood. A ratio of open space to the home is something she has brought up to town officials. She agreed nobody expected the Hatfield Amendment would result in McMansions and that many of the

people who have been in their comparatively small homes for 50+ years are seeing their taxes skyrocket due to the tremendous growth.

Priya Howell, 26 Del Prete Drive, stated lot sizes in other towns like Lexington have a FAR based on lot size and as such she believed there is a way to be granular about lot size and FAR. She cautioned that it is hard to quantify harm to the other houses in the neighborhood. She also noted residents are taking the equity from sale of their homes in Hingham to purchase something larger somewhere more affordable.

Member Tondorf-Dick agreed there was a psychological impact to the loss of institutional memory. He proposed all tear downs require site plan review to discuss the potential of renovation versus raze and rebuild.

Lexy Lefort, 22 Colonial Road, shared that she grew up in Hingham in a modest house and felt that maintaining a stock of relatively affordable housing is important.

Chair Shriver mentioned that he understood the economics of people living in their homes 40-50 years looking to make profit for next generation of their family.

Member Smoczynski wondered if an analysis of what could be built before versus now would reveal less of an impact than anticipated. He noted that although he would not want to divert beneficial development, he imagined that most interested parties would prefer homeowners come in and renovate. He suggested managing the mix in such a way that smaller families would be able to move into and remain in town.

Chair Shriver discussed the timeline and potential expert speakers. A discussion of meeting schedules followed. Members agreed to schedule the next meeting for June 25, 2025 at 6 PM.

Tracy Shriver made a motion, seconded by Gary Tondorf-Dick, to adjourn the meeting at 7:23 PM.

The motion passed by roll call vote.

In Favor:	Gary Tondorf-Dick, Jed Ruccio, Joe Fisher, Eric Smoczynski and Tracy Shriver
Opposed:	None

Meeting Materials:

*Initial Presentation*