

RESIDENTIAL COMPATIBILITY STANDARDS SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
July 24 @ 6:00 PM
REMOTE MEETING

Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee Members Present Remotely: Tracy Shriver, Gary Tondorf-Dick, Joe Fisher, Jed Ruccio, Eric Smoczynski, Mary Ann Donaldson, Charles Hayes, Lexy Lefort

Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee Members Absent: Anna McGarry

Also Present: Emily Wentworth, Community Planning Director

At 6:03 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, Eric Smoczynski, Mary Ann Donaldson, Charles Hayes, and Lexy Lefort

Chair Shriver opened the meeting introducing the existing members to newly attending members. He asked members Mary Ann Donaldson, Charles Hayes and Lexy Lefort to give brief backgrounds. The Chair then presented the Subcommittee’s purpose.

Chair Shriver shared with the Subcommittee that the reduction of Site Plan Review triggers to 5,000 square feet of disturbance had resulted in an increase in raze and rebuild and large addition applications and that he felt there are a few spots in town where this has had a greater impact on the character of the neighborhood. He stated the Subcommittee would look at available tools, possible by-law amendments, and whether concerns were from a majority or a loud minority of residents. The chair asked the members if they have any questions.

Ms. Wentworth gave a presentation on Hingham Residential Zoning. Member Fisher asked if a breakdown of non-conforming properties by district was available. Ms. Wentworth suggested it could be added to the GIS work that needs to be completed. She also presented benchmark community data advising this material is on the website. Member Smoczynski asked if any benchmark communities had something similar to the Hatfield Amendment. Ms. Wentworth responded that most communities follow Mass General Law Chapter 40A Section 6 and that she was not aware of any other town with a “Hatfield” Amendment. She did mention the Wellesley bylaw had a staggered standard allowing smaller lots to go to a higher percentage than larger lots.

Member Tondorf-Dick suggested one of the parameters for review should be whether the expansion met the scale and character of the neighborhood and shared some information about two dimensional and three dimensional controls. He stated his research indicates many towns have similar parameters around a minimum lot area, minimum frontage requirement, front rear and side set-backs. He also noted that the Town did not have maximum lot coverage or a minimum required open space.

Member Smoczynski advised that in reviewing the historic district language he found it to be subjective but would forward items that he felt may be helpful. He mentioned Cohasset's unsuccessful attempt to implement a Large Home Plan Review. Ms. Wentworth offered to reach out the planner in Cohasset for potential review materials.

Member Lefort asked how incorporating these layers of scrutiny would work. Chair Shriver explained that currently the Planning Board is limited to guidelines related to two and one half stories, thirty-five foot, setbacks and the scale and character statement and adding these layers of scrutiny would provide quantitative review guidelines. He shared examples from Wompatuck Road. A brief discussion of Site Plan Review triggers followed.

Member Smoczynski asked if Hingham had any Solar Access Law Review and if so suggested a size restriction. Member Roccio asked how much time was required for Site Plan Review. Chair Shriver said it depended on the quality of the application, but could be up to four months. He asked Ms. Wentworth about the application timeline. She responded the decision deadline is 75 days.

Janette Dunn, 28 Kimball Beach Road, asked what the timeline was to put forth a proposal. Chair Shriver responded that the Subcommittee needed to submit a report or draft language to the Planning Board by the end of October and that the Planning Board would have the month of November to react to or act upon it for the December 1 deadline to include a warrant at the next Town Meeting. He said it is also possible that the Subcommittee could ask for more time.

Chair Shriver presented a neighborhood data spreadsheet comparing year built, lot size, living area, gross area and FAR in two of the neighborhoods identified in the previous meeting. He reviewed the categories and his interpretation of the data. Member Tondorf-Dick noted his thoughts on the Wompatuck data and suggested the Subcommittee consider some changes in calculation of gross area and FAR as well as incorporation of maximum lot coverage. Chair Shriver re-explained the exclusions from living area resulting in a large mass of the building that is not included in the FAR calculation. Member Tondorf-Dick pointed out an example of perceived bulk.

Chair Shriver asked if the Subcommittee would like to see the same information as presented for the other neighborhoods previously identified. Member Tondorf-Dick asked if they could consider the waterfront areas of Crow Point because of the higher density. He also asked to include view corridors and add garages in the FAR calculations. Member Ruccio said he finds the neighborhood data helpful. Member Hayes also suggested looking at other ways to define floor area ratio as it pertains to lot coverage.

Chair Shriver asked Member Fisher for the status of builder and contractor outreach. Member Fischer advised he has received a commitment from one local builder and is awaiting response from others. Chair Shriver confirmed August 7 and August 28 as the next meeting dates both with a 6 PM start. He reminded the members that they would like to have the guest visits happen prior to Labor Day so that neighborhood discussions could begin immediately following the holiday.

Chair Shriver noted he would continue putting together a neighborhood analysis for the next meeting and asked other members if they would like to take on the research of the other areas discussed. Members Donaldson, Hayes and Lefort offered to assist in research when the list was available. Member Tondorf-Dick noted he would share the list with Ms. Wentworth for distribution.

Member Ruccio asked if an active Realtor had been identified for the meetings. Chair Shriver confirmed Member McGarry would be the Realtor representative. Ms. Wentworth noted she would reach out to Member McGarry to request she be prepared to present a Realtor's perspective at the meeting on August 7.

Joe Fisher made a motion, seconded by Gary Tondorf-Dick, to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 PM.

The motion passed by roll call vote.

In Favor:	Jed Ruccio, Gary Tondorf-Dick, Eric Smoczynski, Joe Fisher, Mary Ann Donaldson Lexy Lefort, Charles Hayes and Tracy Shriver
Opposed:	None

Meeting Materials:

Hingham Residential Zoning Presentation
Neighborhood Data Spreadsheet -Middle Street and Wompatuck Road