

**Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee**  
**September 4, 2025 @ 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, Lexy Lefort

**Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee Members Absent:** Anna McGarry

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 Mary Ann Donaldson, Joe Fisher, Lexy Lefort, Eric Smoczynski, Gary Tondorf-Dick, and Jed Ruccio

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Chair Shriver opened the meeting stating the evening would be spent hearing realtor and developer perspectives.

Realtor Kerrin Rowley of Coldwell Banker Rowley shared her thoughts on the Hatfield Amendment. She believed it was critical for homeowners of antique and non-conforming properties.

Chair Shriver explained the current zoning regulations including setbacks and height limitation. He also shared his belief that the lack of other common regulatory tools like floor area ratio (FAR) or open space requirements creates confusion. He also explained the challenges of the Site Plan Review design and performance standard C.

Ms. Rowley believed that many of the recently built homes will continue to remain “current” and felt the aesthetic was similar to the Cape.

Member Ruccio asked Ms. Rowley if the Subcommittee were to recommend restrictions on larger homes, as a realtor, what she thought the impact would be on the local real estate market. Ms. Rowley felt it would hurt the market and the residents. She stated many of the current changes are improving the streetscape and in her opinion restrictions would prevent owners from updating their homes. Member Ruccio asked if buyers choose Hingham because it is easier to get approval for raze and rebuild. Ms. Rowley did not recall any specific situation but did advise most buyers look for raw land in order to build to their preference. She also said that many buyers will walk away from historic homes because the process of owning one is difficult and restrictive.

Member Charles Hayes joined the meeting.

Member Fisher asked about effects on market value. Ms. Rowley stated values are affected if the potential buyer cannot make the changes they want or need. She asked what the committee is focused on. Chair Shriver explained the Subcommittee's focus. Ms. Rowley felt that lifestyles are different than what was in place when many homes were built and she felt people are building bigger homes because of family size, as well as the need for a home office. She shared market trends and sentiment of neighbors. Member Smoczynski stated his belief that many communities have some sort of control in place and Hingham would not be in minority they chose to enact some other forms of control.

Member Tondorf-Dick felt the reason the Board was able to lower the square footage parameters for Site Plan Review was because of water issues created from large homes built on small lots which caused water to flow into neighboring properties. He advised that the Subcommittee is trying to establish a balance with the regulations found in other towns. He wondered if there were a way to create a Site Plan Review requirement that would notify neighbors when a demo is happening striking a balance between owner's and abutter's rights. He asked Ms. Rowley her thoughts on economic diversity and if the value of a smaller home, in a transitioning neighborhood, decreased. Ms. Rowley responded a small home's value would be greatly increased regardless of condition and who the buyer is as it is difficult to find a home under \$1 million. She felt this made diversity tougher to achieve stating that prices in town rise about 3% per year. Member Tondorf-Dick asked if the return to office trend would change the demand or need for larger homes and home offices. Ms. Rowley said that her experience is that most people are working a hybrid schedules and would still need the work space.

Chair Shriver asked about Ms. Rowley's personal experience with "Hatfield". Ms. Rowley explained when she purchased her home, she had one child but later, with four children, she had to decide either to move or to add on to her home. She noted that an addition which went beyond the setbacks worked for her family however, any addition within the new setback would not have been of value to her family situation.

Chair Shriver introduced Lev Yazykov, local developer, and asked if there was anything in zoning that would help him and his peers. Mr. Yazykov shared that he had built seven houses on Wompatuck Road and is responsible for some of the change in the area. He shared that several residents had formed a Crow Point Development Association and had held meetings he found very productive. He felt their discussions were similar to that of the subcommittee. After explaining the position of the builder to the association, he felt the group was surprised by what was needed to make a project worthwhile. He said builders need to construct a marketable house and he believes a 4,000 SF, four bedroom home is the bare minimum to make the numbers work. Sharing that 4,000 SF by today's standards is not a large house. He felt that people were looking for 6,000 SF or more and would look in towns like Norwell due to availability. Mr. Yazykov's belief is that if there were a limit placed on size of the home, builders would not suddenly build smaller more economical houses and stated that there is not much difference in the cost to build a smaller home than a larger home. He felt the Site Plan Review Process needed to be mathematical and he supports setting an FAR. He felt FAR, setbacks, and other mathematically measured metrics are the better option. He also said there would need to be exceptions, pointing out most of Crow Point would be unbuildable stating again, anything less 4,000 SF is not economical from the developers point of view.

Ms. Rowley agreed with the point made about basements and stated her belief that most of the advertised higher SF homes include the basement in calculations. Chair Shriver asked if she advertised living space. Ms. Rowley said if the house has a finished basement she does include and disclose it, stating in her opinion finishing a basement is expensive.

Mr. Yazykov stated the calculation of average SF and living areas is very confusing stating there are no set standards and they differ greatly from town to town. He said excluding or including the basement affects ratios but not character and scale and that setting specific guidelines would be helpful to builders. He shared that he recently passed on two projects because of the uncertainty with the permitting process. In response to Ms. Rowley's question he explained FAR is a metric measuring the size of the home in comparison to the lot and that depending on town by-laws it could include garages, patios, and basements. He felt the intended purpose of FAR was to analyze the scale of the building to the lot size and it should include everything that sticks out from ground. He said most towns measure based on living area and he felt no town had gotten it right yet. Ms. Rowley felt 4,000 SF was a nice size but was concerned handcuffing the size would make all homes look the same. Mr. Yazykov reminded that 4,000 SF was a bare minimum. His belief is that if all homes were to now be restricted to 3,000 SF the cost per sf would become astronomical and price out many buyers. He referenced design at 6 Wompatuck where they ended up with better massing of the house than he would have from a reduction in size and that it does not appear as big as it actually is.

Member Smoczynski asked if the 4,000 SF figure was specific to rebuilds understanding there are few available buildable lots. He asked if adding a 1,000 SF addition to a 2,000 SF home were an option rather than a tear down. Mr. Yazykov felt from a neighbor's point of view and consideration of the street view, new construction would be preferable, an addition would just look like an old home with a new addition. He felt controlling the massing was the best option, stating how a house looks helps to meet the goals of scale and character and there was more opportunity to make new home appear smaller than with an addition on an older home. Member Lefort asked if in his opinion any towns got FAR correct and what would be the right balance? Mr. Yazykov said if the intent is to control massing and scale it would make sense not to look at the underground portion of the building, just the volume above ground and that including attics would not be realistic. He felt Hingham was close. Chair Shriver asked for a contact from the Crow Point Association and asked if Mr. Yazykov would share the names of the towns he felt had reasonable FAR guidelines.

Member Tondorf-Dick stated some towns have a relationship between FAR and lot size. He referenced Concord as having a dynamic formula and asked Mr. Yazykov if some of the towns he looked at did the same or were indexed into district minimum lot size? Mr. Yazykov replied that most towns consider lot size and proposed living area. The living area is where most towns differ. The goal should be make it a mathematical equation which is hard to do. It would allow the Board to make decisions administratively. He felt it would make the process easier and more predictable for the Board and the builders. Member Tondorf-Dick asked if it was a metric that defines proportional relationship. Mr. Yazykov said it could consider SF of an elevation or relationship between volume and proximity to set back line.

He felt is has to consider the volume or the elevations of the structure not just the square footage if massing is the primary goal. A basic FAR tighter may be too bland for Hingham with the smaller lots in play. He referenced the building code relating to fireplace mantles two page tables... that kind of guidance is what he would like to see.

While talking with the Crow Point development association, they were surprised that builders would welcome input on what home should look like. He state the community know what fits better and often buyers coming in are friends or family of a neighbors. 34 Kimball Beach was given as an example of not considering neighborhood aesthetics.

Chair Shriver asked for final comments and questions. There were none. He thanked Ms. Rowley and Mr. Yazykov for their time.

Chair Shriver asked members if they felt the conversation was helpful. Member Fisher shared that developer Bob Shepard was not available for this meeting but is interested in offering his opinion at a later date. He also has made calls to John Barry and asked if this would be helpful to the group. Chair Shriver agreed it would be good to get at least one additional opinion. Member Tondorf-Dick suggested Eileen Richardson could be another realtor to reach out to. Member LeFort agreed stating Ms. Richardson had a long history of real estate transactions in Hingham.

Chair Shriver moved on to discuss the subcommittee's work moving forward noting setting FAR guidelines would take a lot of time and effort.

Chair Shriver advised the subcommittee would need to put together their recommendations by end of October if they intend to pursue an article at the 2026 Town Meeting.

Members Fisher and Tondorf-Dick discussed methods and timing of notification to abutters for projects that raze an existing building. Member Fisher suggested using the building permitting process to notify neighbors and Member Tondorf-Dick felt abutters should be notified pre-permitting to give them an opportunity to ask questions and potentially mitigate concerns, to essentially give them a "seat at the table". A short discussion of the types of questions that may be raised followed. Member Fisher asked if this could be reduced to mathematical equation so you know parameters from the beginning not pending what the neighbor may say. Member Tondorf-Dick agreed the process needs less subjective.

Chair Shriver moved onto the next potential zoning change

1. Require additional Site Plan Review Application Criteria/Materials
2. Make edits/additions to language of Design and Performance Standard "c" to make it less subjective
3. Better define III-I Non-conforming Conditions (Hatfield Amendment)
4. Require additional SPR application criteria materials.

Member Ruccio asked if applicants volunteer the neighborhood analysis. Chair Shriver replied that there has been no push back when requested. Member Fisher thought the suggestions were great. He asked if there was some sort of database that made the neighborhood information accessible. Chair Shriver responded it is mostly the assessor's tax database and although not 100% accurate it is enough to provide a check. Member Tondorf-Dick said these analysis had great value as seen in a recent hearing. He also said that he was supportive of Mr. Yazykov's comments about elevation. Member Smoczynski asked if this was an extra site review. Chair Shriver said it would be added to list of material that needs to be provided as part of the Site Plan Review Application. There would be little to no additional costs. Short discussion about Site Plan Review triggers and neighborhood analysis.

Chair Shriver thought that these small suggestions could be tools for the Planning Board. He felt that to review FAR or lot coverage will take time and the subcommittee will not be able to have this done by the end of October or possibly the 2027 town meeting. He suggested using the next two months to continue discussions. Member Fisher felt there will need to be lot of public vetting. Chair Shriver looked at different areas in town he said it will not be simple as there is a need to be dynamic and relate to adjacency not simply the residential district. It will also require a lot of public input for buy in.

Member Tondorf-Dick supported refining existing review process stating criticism has included that is too subjective. He said the goal is to make it less subjective and the safer way is to incrementally proceed.

Chair Shriver moved on to the final potential zoning change suggestions.

5. Make edits /addition to language of define and performance standards “c” to make less subjective
6. Better define III-I Nonconforming Conditions: also known as the Hatfield Amendment

Chair Shriver questioned is there better way to define Hatfield and get back to the original intent. He suggested this was a bigger conversation and that he would provide visuals in next meeting.

Member Fisher going back to #3 could they come up with “safe harbor” language and leave it as is. He suggested in interim involved parties would know if they do xyz, they are fine, and it does not mean they cannot do more. Chair Shriver suggested adding a couple bullet points offering more definition and less subjectivity.

Chair Shriver said the committee could decide to recommend they need more time. He then moved on to discuss future meeting dates.

Chair Shriver moved on to approval of minutes. Member Tondorf-Dick asked to hold the vote on the June 12 and August 7 minutes to allow for amendments

Chair Shriver made a motion, seconded by Gary Tondorf-Dick, to approve the minutes for June 25, July 10 and July 24, 2025.

The motion passed by roll call vote.

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

Gary Tondorf-Dick made a motion, seconded by Jed Ruccio, to adjourn the Residential Compatibility Standards Subcommittee meeting at 7:18 PM.

The motion passed by roll call vote.

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