1. Amesbury Planning Board Meeting Minutes

2. In Person Meeting – September 8, 2025, at 7:00 PM

3. Chairman Pascal Rettig called the September 8, 2025, Planning Board meeting to order at 7:00 PM.
4. *To submit a public comment ahead of time email Becky Frey at freyr@amesburyma.gov. To speak live at the meeting fill out a public comment form and turn it into Becky Frey. There will be a public comment portion of each public hearing discussed tonight.*

5. *The Chairman notes that tonight's Planning Board meeting is being recorded by Amesbury Public Access Television; this legal step has been taken but does not act as the official record. The written meeting minutes by the Recording Secretary is the official record.*

6. Pascal Rettig initiated roll call –
7. Keith Ratner – YES
8. Joel Nice – ABSENT
9. Michael Jewell – YES
10. Tracey Chalifour – YES
11. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
12. David Frick – YES
13. Pascal Rettig – YES

14. Also: Nipun Jain (Planning Director) and Becky Frey (Community Development Coordinator)

15. **Minutes – 6-9-25**
16. Tracey Chalifour motioned to approve the minutes from the 6-9-25 Planning Board. Seconded by David Frick.
17. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
18. Keith Ratner – YES
19. Joel Nice – ABSENT
20. Michael Jewell – YES
21. Tracey Chalifour – YES
22. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
23. David Frick – YES
24. Pascal Rettig – YES
25. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

26. **City Council Referral – Bill 2025-082**
27. Nick Cracknell provided an overview of both Bills 2025-82 and 2025-83. They are proposing rezoning a portion of 24 S Hampton Road and an advisory opinion on disposing portions of that property. They would surplus 4 acres on S Hampton Rd. and 12,000 sf of a

lot on Rowell St. The rest of the property would be retained as municipal property. The City referenced the Housing Production Plan, draft Master Plan, and Open Space and Recreation Plan to look at the goals, objectives, and strategies for how this would be redeveloped. They looked at a variety of scenarios and came up with design concept for the property. They looked at this critically over a 6-8 month timeframe and looked at what made the most sense. They wanted to provide affordable housing, support ADUs, and provide a neighborhood park. They considered the context of the neighborhood, open space, and drainage improvement. The goal is to limit development to the previously developed area, maximize net sales, and expand the local tax base. Right now, there are some chronic drainage issues on the site. They need to make sure the cost of the demolition is outweighed by the development revenue. They have had several experts look at the building and they agreed it is not worth redeveloping. It would be too expensive to bring up to code. The building will cost about 1 million dollars to demolish. They will need to recapture that expense. The Bill is defining what people can do on the property like the city did on School St. They will need to look at long-term implications for annual tax proceeds. The entire property is about 14 acres. The existing building is 60,000 sf and two levels. It has a footprint of about an acre and 75 parking spaces. The total area of disturbance is about 4 acres and there are 10 acres of open space. The current zoning on this property was originally an R8 and it was rezoned to open space conservancy because it was a municipally held asset. They are proposing in this bill to rezone it back to R8. The OSC includes the AES building and all of the open space. Everything abutting the bottom half of the property is R8. They looked at 3 development options for redevelopment. The first scenario was looking at smaller starter homes. They are trying to maximize return to the city without the need to install additional infrastructure. They used the crescent driveway for frontage and aligned the homes along the crescent drive. This plan fits 17 homes that are 800-2,000 sf in size. This plan would have 3 affordable units and no common open space. There will be public open space in the 10 acres of municipal open space. There would be 2 parking spaces per unit, which is higher than required in the code. They did not drill down deep enough to decide how they would be using the 3-acre open space, but all three scenarios include 20-30 spaces for public access. Scenario number 2 has larger (1,800 -2,400 sf) single family homes with a total of 12 units. It would need to be a planned unit development like 130 Market St. There would be 2 parking spaces per unit. The last scenario has the same limit of work but is a multi-family development with 37 units. The unit sizes would range from 750-2,200 sf and 6 of the units would be affordable. All scenarios have a single-family home on Rowell St. The multifamily scenario allows for a 1-acre park in the middle that fronts on all of the units and would be for the development. All of the parking would be on the perimeter of the development and would still have 2 spaces per unit. There would be 72 spaces and an abundance of overflow parking for the municipal area. The fiscal impacts are the critical part of this analysis. Each scenario has a draft proforma to compare the costs and values. At a bare minimum they wanted to make sure there were not any associated direct costs to the city for removing the building. Ideally, they are trying to create revenue that could be utilized to address some capital needs. The single family homes would need a half a million subsidy for the affordable units, and it would cost 1 million to demolish the existing building. The multi family would have the same demolition cost and .3 million for the affordable units. They prioritized the multi-family scenario because it would have a higher fiscal return. The acquisition cost is higher for the larger single-family homes because they are larger homes. The multi-family scenario is the least risk to the city and has the most benefits. Annual property tax revenue would be highest in the multi-family scenario as well. They would be in a good position to create something here with a positive cash flow. The density proposed here is lower than what has been built at 130 and 101-107 Market St. Both of those developments are about 5 units per acre. This is a little less or at least comparable. They will need the R8 zoning in place in order to do anything other than remove the school.

28. David Frick commented that he was well versed in the options because he was on the committee that looked at all the options. The committee had a city councilor, architect, 3 members of the economic development staff, and the mayor. They stepped through all the options. Some people were more in favor of the smaller home environment but when you look at the economics of it, it did not make sense. It would cost the city money and would not provide the revenue downstream. Ultimately, the multi-family option is the best.
29. Keith Ratner commented that he lived a quarter of a mile from here and it's nice to see what's going on. Keith Ratner was in favor of the project, but did not agree with the concept that it was in the context of the neighborhood. He was not against buildings of that scale but across the street is only 2 units. The other issue is the drainage. That will be a key issue especially if that field is going to be used. Keith Ratner liked the multifamily scenario best and was looking forward to seeing it go forward.
30. Pascal Rettig questioned how the scale of the structures compared to the 130 Market Street development. Nipun Jain responded that the structures at 130 Market St. are duplexes. These are similar, but they are 4-unit buildings. During the discussion for 130 Market there was a 4 unit building proposed. In that streetscape it did appear as an outlier. That section of streetscape on S Hampton does not have a lot around it and the development will be set further back.
31. Michael Jewell clarified that they were voting on a recommendation to dispose of the property. Michael Jewell questioned if the next step would be to put it out to bid with all these concepts. Pascal Retigg responded that was correct. The city would put out an RFP and a developer come in with a proposal to take care of the demolition and construction. They would not come in and do whatever they want. They would come in with a proposal and the city would select them.
32. Nipun Jain commented the property is currently not free to be disposed of. This order allows the city to take it and put it out for sale. Then next step of what happens would be determined by the RFP. The proposal would be based on the assessment and goals defined in the RFP. Pascal Rettig added that the ordinance says up to 36 units. The unit count is part of the Bill but a specific plan is not part of it.
33. Pascal Rettig questioned what the guarantees and restrictions were on the development. Do they have to build the project they propose or are they free to do whatever they want? Nipun Jain responded that it would be similar to School St. They laid out clear objectives. If any proposal did not meet those objectives, then it would be rejected. When they put out the RFP, then the objectives will be important. The number of units and how they are laid out is important because they don't want to see a development without a public amenity.

They are hoping proposals meet most or all of the objectives. The city is in the driver's seat to select the right developer and proposal.

34. Michael Jewell commented that the open space field is basically underwater today and assumed it was the city's responsibility to make field usable. Nipun Jain responded that two things are possible. This project would be subject to the review process and would go through the Planning Board. In order to meet performance standards, they will need to make stormwater and drainage improvements, so some of it will be done during the developer process. Some of the costs got to the city to address as well. Most likely, they will need to contribute, but it is hard to say exactly how because there is no plan yet. A net positive cash flow proposal would give the city funds to address the drainage.
35. Tracey Chalifour questioned if this parcel was considered for a 40R district. Nipun Jain commented that he did not think it was discussed during the visioning process. The challenge with a 40R is if they do a multi-family, then they are required by law to have 12 units per acre. 130 and 101-107 Market St. are 5 units per acre. A 40R scenario would not keep with the character of neighborhood. A 40R is a by right development that just needs site plan review. They do not need a special permit. Tracey Chalifour questioned if it was considered for an overlay of the MBTA communities. The city seems to be jamming in development on one side of town and spreading it out on another. This parcel could have fit for some of the development we were talking about in other parts of town.
36. Pascal Rettig commented that the mayor was a proponent of small starter homes and that may have been a good use. However, given the fiscal situation and cost of demolition a higher density is needed to make the project work. The reality is they only have the 4 acres to work with and the rest is very wet.
37. Nipun Jain commented that they only used the disturbed area on the site and tried to manage what could be approved. The more units there are the pro forma goes up, but other goals lessen. It's all balance of the goals.
38. Tracey Chalifour questioned if the market would support doing something like this with the property. Nipun Jain confirmed it would, which is why they need to do something with this property. There was originally some push to use this as a public facility. However, after further investigation it was determined that it would not be financially feasible to bring the building up to code. They cannot delay the reuse of the site.
39. Keith Ratner questioned if the 4 acres would have to be cut off as a parcel from larger piece of property for this development. Pascal Rettig responded that depended on the development scenario. Nipun Jain commented that the goal is more important and the mechanism is secondary. The goal is to develop the site similar to what has been shown and permanently protect the rest as public open space.
40. Tracey Chalifour motioned to send a positive recommendation for Bill 2025-082 to City Council. Seconded by Keith Ratner.
41. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
42. Keith Ratner – YES
43. Joel Nice – ABSENT
44. Michael Jewell – YES
45. Tracey Chalifour – YES
46. Tom Salemi - ABSENT

47. David Frick – YES
48. Pascal Rettig – YES
49. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

50. Continued Public Hearings – 38-40 Prospect St.
51. Pascal Rettig noted that the Board has received a draft decision.
52. Nipun Jain commented that this project has two existing structures that will be restored with historical renovations approved by the Historical Commission. There is a proposed new single-family home and the design was reviewed by the Design Review Committee. They support the architecture design as proposed and it is a condition of the approval. Those are the two main conditions for the project, and they are included in the decision. The rest of the conditions are mostly housekeeping. There have not been any concerns in the public hearing process. Everyone is happy with the proposed access and parking. No changes have been made during the public hearing process. They need to make sure the project is built as per approved plans. The applicant is still working on the subdivision plan because the existing lot is being modified. The proposed site plan shows a driveway will be part of the lot with two existing units. The applicant will file an ANR plan once the special permit appeal period is over.
53. Pascal Rettig opened public comment. There was no public comment.
54. David Frick motioned to approve the decision for 38-40 Prospect St. Special Permit and Site Plan as drafted by staff. Seconded by Keith Ratner.
55. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
56. Keith Ratner – YES
57. Joel Nice – ABSENT
58. Michael Jewell – YES
59. Tracey Chalifour – YES
60. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
61. David Frick – YES
62. Pascal Rettig – YES
63. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

64. Tracey Chalifour motioned to close the public hearing for 38-40 Prospect St. Seconded by Keith Ratner.
65. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
66. Keith Ratner – YES
67. Joel Nice – ABSENT
68. Michael Jewell – YES
69. Tracey Chalifour – YES
70. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
71. David Frick – YES
72. Pascal Rettig – YES
73. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

74. New Public Hearing – Bill 2025-083

75. Nipun Jain read the legal notice into the record.
76. Nipun Jain commented that the Board briefly discussed this Bill in the previous presentation. Basically, the parcel in question, shown in green, and two portions are identified to be rezoned to R8. This would ensure the area can be developed. They cannot do residential in the current OSC zoning. The rest of property will be retained as OSC to protect the open space. The only areas that will be developed are the areas that would be changed to R8 zoning.
77. Pascal Rettig commented that there was a little sliver of OSC remaining on Rowell St. and intention there is for it to be trailhead to access the open space. Nipun Jain confirmed that was correct. There is a secondary access point to the open space on S Hampton Rd.
78. David Frick commented that he was fully supportive of this.
79. Keith Ratner commented that it would be nice to have access to the open space and it should be maintained.
80. Pascal Rettig opened public comment. There was none.
81. David Frick motioned to approve the map change and send a positive recommendation to City Council for Bill 2025-83. Seconded by Tracey Chalifour.
82. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
83. Keith Ratner – YES
84. Joel Nice – ABSENT
85. Michael Jewell – YES
86. Tracey Chalifour – YES
87. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
88. David Frick – YES
89. Pascal Rettig – YES
90. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

91. Tracey Chalifour motioned to close the public hearing for Bill 2025-83. Seconded by Keith Ratner.
92. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
93. Keith Ratner – YES
94. Joel Nice – ABSENT
95. Michael Jewell – YES
96. Tracey Chalifour – YES
97. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
98. David Frick – YES
99. Pascal Rettig – YES
100. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

101. Administrative – Master Plan Update
102. Nipun Jain commented that they were working with MVPC and have a working draft that they will be able to put out for public consumption soon. They don't want to put out the land use section until they ensure it captures the essence of the requirements of section

and will flow well in the overall document. They hope to get draft to the Board shortly. Pascal Rettig noted that he has not received an update on the other items.

103. Tracey Chalifour commented that the next meeting has a large agenda, so they may not have time to discuss this then. Nipun Jain commented that the goal was to give it to the Board soon so they can start looking at it and can send comments to staff. Tracey Chalifour commented that most of the document has been reviewed. The land use component was missing.

104. Administrative – 65 Market St. Bond Release

105. Nipun Jain commented that this project has been complete for a while. The site plan had a requirement for a fence in the rear of the property and some landscaping along the driveway entrance. The fence was not put in because of the tight turning radius of the car. However, they have not received anything to that effect in writing. There are limited spaces for the fence to be located. There was supposed to be a tree planted in the large island and it was not. Most likely it was not planted because of access issues with trash and recycling. that was not planted. The project is completed and signed off and staff recommends that the Board release funds.

106. David Frick motioned to release the $5,016.35 bond for 65 Market St. Seconded by Tracey Chalifour.

107. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –

108. Keith Ratner – YES

109. Joel Nice – ABSENT

110. Michael Jewell – YES

111. Tracey Chalifour – YES

112. Tom Salemi - ABSENT

113. David Frick – YES

114. Pascal Rettig – YES

115. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

116. Administrative – 130 Market St. Bond Release

117. Nipun Jain commented that the applicant's representative requested a release of all bonds being held. There is one erosion control bond in the amount of $4,200. The Board had released $10,000 previously. There is also a performance bond in the amount of $25,000. There are certain conditions that had to be fulfilled before they are released. Factually, the project is complete, and all units have been sold. However, the applicant has yet to apply for a certificate of compliance with the Conservation Commission. The applicant is still responsible for the storm water mitigation system and the landscaping has not gone through 2 growing seasons. They are obligated to inform each property owner that there is an order of conditions for this project and make them aware they responsible for maintaining the property. There are still significant conditions that need to be met. The erosion is stable and everything is working with existing grades. The Board could release the erosion control bond at this time and retain the performance bond for now.

118. Pascal Rettig clarified that if something failed with the storm water, then the performance bond could cover it. Nipun Jain confirmed that was correct.

119. Tracey Chalifour motioned to release erosion control bond in the amount of $4,200. Seconded by David Frick.
120. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
121. Keith Ratner – YES
122. Joel Nice – ABSENT
123. Michael Jewell – YES
124. Tracey Chalifour – YES
125. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
126. David Frick – YES
127. Pascal Rettig – YES
128. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

129. Administrative – 101-107 Market St. Covenant Release
130. Nipun Jain commented that they have received a request from the developer to release certain units from covenant. A covenant release requires Planning Board approval. The site has already had 2 units released and sold. The other units are still under the covenant. They are in process of closing on 2 units in the 4 unit building and 2 units in the 3-unit building. There would still be a total of 3 units in the covenant that the Board will need to release in the future. This request is to release Units A and B in 105 Market St. and Units A and B in 103 Market St. Staff recommend this release.
131. David Frick motioned to approve the covenant release request for Units A and B in 105 Market St. and Units A and B in 103 Market St. Seconded by Tracey Chalifour.
132. motioned to release. Seconded by .
133. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
134. Keith Ratner – YES
135. Joel Nice – ABSENT
136. Michael Jewell – YES
137. Tracey Chalifour – YES
138. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
139. David Frick – YES
140. Pascal Rettig – YES
141. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

142. Administrative – 37 Middle Road Eastern Lights Bond Release
143. Nipun Jain commented that they held this because they did not have the street layout and recording information. All of those outstanding items have been completed and staff recommendation is to release the bond.
144. David Frick motioned to release the bond for 37 Middle Road in the amount of $10,000. Seconded by Keith Ratner.
145. Pascal Rettig initiated a roll call vote –
146. Keith Ratner – YES
147. Joel Nice – ABSENT
148. Michael Jewell – YES
149. Tracey Chalifour – YES

150. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
151. David Frick – YES
152. Pascal Rettig – YES
153. Motion passed by 5-0 vote.

154. Administrative – Planning Board Postmortem Subcommittee

155. Pascal Rettig commented that the last thing on the agenda is establishing a Planning Board Postmortem Subcommittee. One thing that is missing in the process is a feedback loop. The Board hears from residents ahead of the meeting but generally doesn't hear anything after a project is completed. It is the same case with developers. It would be beneficial to hear from both residents and developers to help make more informed decisions going forward. The thought was to establish a 2-person subcommittee and task them with doing a post mortem on 2 specific projects. Then they would come back to the Board with those 2 projects and see if there is any value in the process going forward. Pascal Rettig volunteered to be one of the members on the subcommittee and asked if anyone else would be interested.

156. Keith Ratner confirmed that he would be interested.

157. Tracey Chalifour questioned how they would decide what projects to select and what would be the mechanism to engage developers in this process. Pascal Rettig responded that they can focus on projects that had a lot of public comment, and they would reach out to the public and developers to ask for feedback.

158. Keith Ratner commented that they could select projects based on which developers would want to engage in the process.

159. Nipun Jain commented that they need to be clear on what they are hoping to achieve. The goals may be to better streamline the process, identify issues, etc. Some issues may not be the Board's control. That is the majority of the complaints. The Board should determine what kind of feedback and data they want to collect to help inform the goals. It is good to do a postmortem a bit later to see how landscaping and finishings have held up.

160. Pascal Rettig agreed that was a good point and added that some of the noise and disturbance of the development itself will have faded and they will get better feedback. It is hard to determine if concerns are founded or just fears about how a project will come out. This will help evaluate how things have been addressed. It will help the Board understand what concerns they should take more seriously and things to check before releasing a bond.

161. Nipun Jain commented that they could send out a general survey to developers to understand their experience. Pascal Rettig added they could send a more project specific survey to abutters.

162. Pascal Rettig commented that he and Keith would work on this and report back to the larger Board.

6. **Adjournment**
7. Keith Ratner motioned to adjourn at 8:59 pm. Seconded by Tracey Chalifour.
8. Pascal Rettig initiated roll call vote –
9. Keith Ratner – YES
10. Joel Nice – ABSENT

11. Michael Jewell – YES
12. Tracey Chalifour – YES
13. Tom Salemi - ABSENT
14. David Frick – YES
15. Pascal Rettig – YES
16. Motion passed 5-0