



**Amesbury Technical Review Committee
December 17, 2025**

**City Hall Auditorium
62 Friend St.
9:30 am**

In Attendance:, Nick Cracknell, Howard Snyder, Chief Serino, Amanda Armington, Howard Snyder, Jim Wilson, Lauren Blatchford, Lisa DeMeo, and Becky Frey

Absent: Nipun Jain, Chief Bailey, Joe Buckley, Joe Neipp

Nick Cracknell called the meeting to order 9:35 am.

Nick Cracknell commented that the Technical Review Committee was made up of city staff. It is made up of representatives from Police, Fire, Inspections, DPW and the Office of Community Economic Development who services the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Commission. The TRC is an advisory committee for the land use boards in the city. They provide comments to the Planning Board for Site Plan Review projects. They don't usually provide comments to the Zoning Board of Appeals, but have in the past specifically with 40B projects. The TRC focus is on horizontal construction, which is utilities, drainage, infrastructure, and ecological impacts. The Design Review Committee is a separate committee that focuses on design implications.

Presentation Review:

1. 27 Kimball Road

Nick Cracknell commented that on October 29, 2025, the city got notice from Mass Housing that they received an application for a proposed 40B project at 27 Kimball Road. They were doing their due diligence for the appropriateness of the site and financial feasibility of the project. This is at the state level. An initial step for a 40B is to submit an application to the state for a site approval letter. That is what Mass Housing is reviewing. The state invited city staff to attend a site visit on November 12, 2025. We did that to look at the existing conditions and hear from the state what their role is on this project. Mass Housing gave the city a 30-day window to provide comments on the submittal. They also noted that the city could request a 15-day extension to the 30-day comment period. They city was granted the 15-day extension to be able to have this informal public meeting. This is an opportunity for all of us to hear from the proponents about what they are trying to do and why they think it will work. This afternoon staff will package the department and citizen comments and submit another letter to meet the comment deadline.

Chief Serino noted he could only stay until 10 am.

Andrew Mackin from Marcus Partners commented that they were the applicant and developer. There is no formal application with the city, but this was a good opportunity



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to introduce their vision for the project. They have spent time and effort on the design and architecture. The engineering and how that fits into the site is still in the preliminary stages. It will be fully developed when they submit to the city. They have read all of the comments and letters that have been submitted so far. There were some consistent themes in the concerns. There were concerns on traffic and safety. They have engaged a traffic engineer to develop a traffic study. They are looking at the existing infrastructure and looking at the capacity. There were concerns on the scale and concept and how it fits into the local community and site. They continue to be mindful of that. This is in the Water Resource Protection District, and they will be including storm water management. They understand the importance of that. Across the state, Massachusetts is in a housing crisis. The underproduction of housing and population growth has created a crisis. Home values have increased 55% since 2020 in Amesbury. The average monthly cost of owning a home is more than renting. That is why they are looking to build a rental housing product. Amesbury has large development multifamily products and single-family homes. This is the missing middle. The build to rent product has all the benefits of single-family homes but is a rental product. There are no age restrictions to the community, but they think this will appeal to an aging demographic. It is a good downsize opportunity. They can stay in the community they love and open additional housing product for others to move into. This offers the ability to create a charming neighborhood with common areas, dog parks, and sidewalks. The site is approximately 9 acres and is a half mile up on Kimball Road off of Haverhill Road. The site currently has a single-family home and open space. The proposed development has 6-unit types. The single-story ranch products and two-story housing. They are a combination of one, two, and three bedroom products. The center has a neighborhood park that is 65 feet wide with pedestrian paths. The duplexes or paired homes are joined in the rear, so the architecture makes them look and feel like a single-family home. They have different roof lines and architectural feels. The neighborhood park provides opportunity for porches on both sides. They will continue to work through the programming of the space. They will present landscape designs with a formal submittal. Each unit has their own private yard space, own front porch, and three walls with natural light. The street is 24 feet wide with parking on both sides. The backyard will be a combination of hard surface and pervious material. The 40B is really a two-step process. It starts at the state level. They review a conceptual design and provide permission to proceed at a local level. If Mass Housing submits an eligibility letter, then they can file with the Amesbury Zoning Board of Appeals. That submittal would have a full design, and they would anticipate starting the local dialogue then.

Chief Serino commented that he provided written comments. It is his responsibility to see if it meets fire code and meets the capability for the fire department to respond to



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the development. This project won't make a large impact in response time, but Chief Serino did have a major concern with water capacity and flow. Moving forward they would need confirmation from engineers and would look at a third-party review for all fire protective systems. It is understood that the structures won't need sprinkler systems. They are not required in single family homes, but this development is essentially putting in an apartment community in the form of single-family homes. Chief Serino had concerns about this development working effectively and appropriately. Andrew Mackin responded that he appreciated the comment and would anticipate a third party review. They have an engineer working on an analysis.

Lisa DeMeo commented that they will need to incorporate contours in the formal plans that they submit. Andrew Mackin confirmed they would. There is a gentle slope from the street to back of the site. There is no road slope over 8% currently. Lisa DeMeo commented that they need to be considerate of ADA compliance on the sidewalks and drainage. Andrew Mackin responded that they were engaging with a third party to do and ADA compliance study for this.

Lauren Blatchford commented that Kimball Road is a corridor from New Hampshire into Massachusetts. There is high traffic, and the police departments has a lot of complaints from residents currently. The road is a windy narrow road with no sidewalk. There is concern about the added congestion this will bring. Lauren Blatchford questioned how pedestrians' access to the site would be mitigated. The sight lines are not be great here because it is at a curve. Andrew Mackin responded that they shared the police comment letter with their traffic engineer.

Amanda Armington commented that she knew they were intending to submit a Notice of Intent and would be filing a waiver to fill in the isolated vegetated wetland. Amanda Armington questioned if they would still be including that on the plans to evaluate the impact. Andrew Mackin commented that they did submit an ANRAD to delineate the wetlands. That will happen in a parallel path. There are two wetlands on the site. The smaller one is an isolated wetland in the middle of the site. Amanada Armington commented that it did not look like they were proposing any replication. Andrew Mackin responded that there were not at this time. They will be looking at that during the NOI process.

Andrew Mackin commented that they appreciated the opportunity for early dialogue. They have worked in Amesbury in the past did with the Munters facility.

Nick Cracknell opened public comment.



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Rick Purnell of 6 Kimball Road, commented that he was looking at the site application and was curious why they chose that location. This is located on a rise on the narrow road with no sidewalks. It is right after the dead man's curve. There are accidents at that location. They should be coming in off Haverhill Road. There is one point of entry for this development and 95 units is a lot. If they are going to have that many people in a congested area, then they need another point of entry for emergency response.

Nick Cracknell questioned if they looked at other building and site design options for this property other than what they are proposing. This is a different product than they are used to seeing. Nick Cracknell questioned why this design, why here, and why is there only one means of access.

Andrew Mackin commented that they have been developing this product for a year and a half and were looking for a site to build it. They like the community in Amesbury. They came across the site and are excited about the opportunity. They appreciate the challenges on the site. Most traffic will take a right out of the site, so they will not have as big of a risk. They will work with their traffic engineer. They have done 25-30 different iterations of layouts and are continuing to refine it to find the right mix of cottages.

Melissa Trimmer of 8 Kimball Road commented that the buildings look nice but \$3,000 is not affordable housing. The town just declined an override in taxes. Police and fire are thinking of cutting people. They like the land because it's flat but if there is a fire catastrophe, then that whole place will go down. The abutters will go down with them. Ms. Trimmers daughter cannot safely cross the street without supervision. They cannot safely walk down the street without risk of getting hit. People will be going out and taking a right where the speedway starts. Ms. Trimmer commented that she knew it was about money and adding housing, but safety is a major concern. Her dog has been hit on the street because he got loose. This is one big major catastrophe waiting to happen. The city is talking about getting rid of school teachers.

Nick Cracknell commented that in terms of the affordability piece a lot of things don't make sense. The city can't ultimately change that. It's a state requirement and methodology. The rents they are projecting are fully compliant with the affordability requirements with the State of Massachusetts. The fact is that Amesbury is in the Boston range, and we all feel that is unreasonable. The affordable rents in Amesbury are the same as in Brookline. Merrimac is in the Lowell/Lawrence bracket. They are stuck with that, and it's been that way since 1969. The rents are what they are. That doesn't mean it's an issue but it won't be solved through the city. The traffic related impacts are real; at



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least perceived to be real. The applicants have engaged a traffic engineer. If this is filed with the ZBA, then they will hire a third-party traffic engineer to review their product. The peer review will assess if it works and if it doesn't how to mitigate the traffic impacts. The override concerns are legitimate, but it will not prevent any project from moving forward.

Andy Bartholomew of 25 Kimball Road commented that he had concerns about the safety and traffic impacts of the proposal. He was also concerned about his loss of privacy and sense of security because he is a direct abutter. The side yard and back yard of the complex is right on top of their house. There is also a flooding and water risk. There is a hollow in the back with an underground stream. Mr. Bartholomew was concerned this development would reroute that water to his house and cause damage. This proposal would decline his property value. There is also a concern about the destruction of wildlife habitat. This will displace wild animals.

Nick Cracknell suggested that the applicants should reach out to Mr. Bartholomew to discuss the water and what the implications are. Andrew Mackin confirmed they would reach out.

Tom Conners of 18 Claire Road commented that they would be looking through the woods at this project from their property. The city just paved Kimball Road and the city has a moratorium on new pavement. It can't be touched for 5 years. Mr. Conners did not understand how they could get started on this. In addition, the sewerage only goes to 15 Kimball Road. They will need to dig that up and bring it to 27 Kimball Road. This is a country feeling town and this project is trending to an urban feel. This is a nice country area with woods and a wildlife passageway from Middle Road to the Town Forest. Mr. Conners and his family moved out of the urban feel. They do not want to have their neighborhood turn into 95 units one on top of the other. There are wetlands on that property. Mr. Conners had parameters because of the wetlands. They were confined on what they could do. This proposal would be asking for 45-50 different waivers. A different homeowner wanted to put a farmer's porch on their house off Kimball Road, but they couldn't because they are too close to the road. Now they are proposing to put in 95 units off Kimball Road. There was talk about a second entrance. There's been an offer to tree farm property to access off Haverhill Road. That would take away from the integrity of the neighborhood.

Nick Cracknell commented that this would be a 40B project. It is a 1969 state statute that throws out the local zoning setbacks, lot area, and coverage. Any local wetland regulations do not apply. It would only be state designated wetland regulations. This property has two wetlands on site. The first is an isolated wetland that is regulated by



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local regulations. The second is not an isolated wetland and that is subject to state DEP regulations. The only one that matters is the state wetland in a 40B. An isolated wetland is allowed to be filled under the 40B statute. Mr. Cracknell agreed it was not a great outcome but that's what they are dealing with. 40B's typically urbanize a property. British Colonial was a 40B project. Amesbury was the last town to adopt local zoning in 1971. Before that they got hammered with multifamily developments like British Colonial, Glen Devin, and Birchwood Point. It would be nice if this was not being proposed in a rural complex, but they don't have control over that. They need to make sure they mitigate impacts.

Lisa DeMeo commented that the road has recently been paved, and it is in a moratorium. The water goes to 27 Kimball Road, but the sewer does not. They would need to have conversations around that if they file locally.

Paul Richard of 8 Ashley Drive commented that he had concerns about how a 40B project would impact the water resources. The resources they have here are unique and a tremendous value to Amesbury. They need to make sure this project won't impact that. The Lake Attitash Association were involved with expressing concern about the solar panel project. They need to make sure that resource is protected.

Nick Cracknell confirmed they share that concern.

Armand Bisson of 14 Kimball Road commented that he has been there for 53 years. Unless you live there, you won't understand how it is. Data can be skewed easily and can be manipulated to what you need it to be. Mr. Bisson invited anyone to come park in his driveway on 14 Kimball and go for a walk then try to back out of his driveway. Mr. Bisson commented that he thought the police would side with him on the safety aspect of the road. Kimball Road is not a safe road. The new pavement has turned it into a racetrack with the smooth pavement. This road is not meant for pedestrians along with cars and bikes. Anyone who lives on Kimball Road knows what a beautiful setting it is. Putting something in the middle of the forest will interrupt the ecological balance. They need to account for conserving the water. Some neighbors get runoff now but once they play with the topography the water will go places they haven't even thought of. Mr. Bisson's last concern was infrastructure. This will impact fire, police, schools, and utilities. Who will pay for this stuff? Taxes are already over the top. The abutters will be getting something unsafe and disruptive in their neighborhood, and they are all going to pay more money for it. There should be a lot of thoughtful consideration before going forward with this project.



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Nick Cracknell commented that abutters should stay involved. This process only works with people staying involved. Mr. Cracknell has been doing this job for nearly 30 years and has never seen this many people in a room to talk about a project.

Laurie Irwin of 6 Swetts Hill commented that the traffic study will show there is too much traffic on the road currently. Will there be a sidewalk for residents? It will be difficult to take a left into that property. Will a school bus go into the development or stop at the blind corner? The affordable units are not affordable. Will there be a percentage of section 8 units? What is the turn radius for fire and school buses? Will they make Kimball Road safer for everyone? There is no second entrance and no access from Haverhill Road. What is the plan for replanting vegetation and capping wetlands? Compromising the safety and integrity of the neighborhood is a shame.

Nick Cracknell commented that 25% of the units would be affordable. They will have to meet the minimum requirement at least. Fire will review the turning template and make sure it works. The bus conversation will happen as well. Mr. Cracknell shared the same concerns with some of the other comments. The limit of work with this project is aggressive. They are not preserving a lot of the existing vegetation. The city has conveyed those comments. The site feels like it's overparked. They don't require 2 spaces per unit in local zoning. All will be looked at. They will need to review the traffic study and see what the numbers say. They will have the data evaluated by a third party. The applicant will have to mitigate any adverse impacts for the units they are putting on the property.

Karen Gorman commented that she grew up at 28 Kimball Road and sold in 2021. It is directly across from the entrance to the project. There has always been water there. This year they have been in extreme drought and they have not had much rain since then. In the winter on a normal year there would be water running down that driveway and icing over. They need to take into consideration that there is water in the area. That entrance is extremely dangerous because of the two curves on that road. Was there a perk test? Would they need to do that?

Nick Cracknell commented that they would need to do test pits throughout the site to support what they're trying to do. They may not have done it yet.

Andrew Mackin thanked everyone for their feedback and commented that they understand it's the start of the conversation. They will continue with the engineering study and look forward to further developing the project.



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Jim Wilson motioned to adjourn at 10:48 am. Seconded by Lauren Blatchford. The motion passed unanimously.