

Melissa Tryon

From: Ethan Croce
Sent: Wednesday, November 05, 2014 6:00 PM
To: Melissa Tryon; Nathan Poore
Cc: Amanda Stearns; Lisa Sangillo
Subject: MRA Public hearing - November 4, 2014 Planning Board meeting - Establish a Hat Trick Drive Special District

At its November 4, 2014 meeting, the Planning Board, acting as the Town's designated Municipal Reviewing Authority, held a public hearing on proposed amendments to the Zoning and Site Plan Review Ordinance relative to establishing a Hat Trick Drive Special District.

Summary of public comment received:

There was no public comment received at the public hearing.

Summary of Planning Board deliberations:

Board member Chris Hickey said that the recently-adopted Garden Center Special District (Walmart) and the Village Park Special District (Casco Bay ice rink) were framed as atypical and very unique exceptions to the zoning ordinance. Mr. Hickey pointed out that, in the case of the Village Park Special District approved for Casco Bay Hockey, the stated reason for skipping the Planning Board review process was because the ice rink needed to be operational by this winter, but now the rink will not be open until next year anyway. Mr. Hickey does not find it compelling that it is necessary to circumvent the Planning Board review process for the sake of expediency. Mr. Hickey said that although the general design of Hat Trick Drive had been reviewed by a previous Planning Board, that design was reviewed under the auspices of a larger development project (Walmart expansion) that is no longer moving forward. He questions whether the current design is still the right design today. He does not understand how putting the Hat Trick Drive project through Site Plan Review would derail the project.

All Board members generally expressed concern about the recent pattern of creating a hodgepodge of special zoning districts that circumvent the Planning Board review process whenever there is a perceived need to expedite a project.

Board members Benzing, Chace, McKeon, and Pender generally appreciated that the establishment of this new special district was the product of long negotiations over the years with multiple parties. Notwithstanding their concerns about the creation of yet another special zoning district that is exempt from Planning Board review, they appreciate that the proposal has some merits and will result in public improvements that might not otherwise be executed without the special zoning.

The Planning Board voted 4-1 (Chris Hickey opposed) to recommend that the Town Council approve the amendment as written with the request that the concerns raised by the Board be conveyed to the Town Council.