



# TOWN OF BELLINGHAM

10 MECHANIC STREET BELLINGHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02019

**Thursday, February 22, 2024**  
**MBTA (Section 3A) Subcommittee**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**5:30 pm**  
**Arcand Meeting Room**

**Subcommittee Members Present:**

Sahan Sahin, William F. O'Connell, Elizabeth Berthelette, and Robert Lussier

**Not Present:**

Jeffrey Scornavacca

**Also Present:**

Town Administrator, Denis Fraine

Tim Aicardi, Director of Planning, Zoning and Conservation

Amy Sutherland, Assistant Town Planner

The meeting for the MBTA (Section 3A) was opened at 5:30 pm.

**Awarding of Grant:**

The Subcommittee was made aware that the scope of services is still being developed. This should be in place for the next meeting. The firm who will be working with the town is Barrett Consulting. The town will need to apply for a second round of funding.

Representative Soter was present at the meeting. He provided the historical overview of the MBTA (3A) bill which was put through by Governor Baker. There were exemptions in the bill but those have been taken out. The Town of Bellingham did send letters to the Governor with the hope that we would receive a response. All are aware that the Town of Milton voted down the MBTA (3A) and are now being effected by the loss of a \$140,000 grant. The Town of Bellingham does receive millions of dollars in grant money and this is in jeopardy if the town votes down the MBTA (3A). The Governor has also doubled down on the bond bill. There may not be money if a town is not in compliance. The Town of Wrentham will be reaching out to the Town of Bellingham to form an alliance if the town votes down MBTA (3A). The Subcommittee has been tasked with coming up with creative ways of designating where these units can go. The goal is designation not production. There can also be a revamping of current development. Representative Soter would like the exemptions to be put back into the bill. There is a concern about if this fails, the town will not be able to apply for grants to improve road, fix culverts, apply for grants to help the Fire, Police and DPW. Representative Soter has offered assistance in setting up meetings with representatives to assist in working to get the MBTA (3A) passed so the community does not lose out on funding.

*These agenda items are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair which may be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.*



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The Town has already been working on the Hartford Ave. road widening project and there have already been funds allocated. The concern is that the town may not have enough money to bond if needed.

## **Department of Public Works Update:**

The Director of Public Works Jesse Riedl provided the Subcommittee with information relative to the summary of the water and sewer demands throughout town. In the opinion of the Director, the additional 750 units would cause the town to exceed the current allotments. This is a concern since there is a permit that the Town would exceed withdrawal limits. Relative to the sewer capacity, the town is currently at 95% allotted capacity. Currently, the sewer in the southern side of town flows to the Woonsocket wastewater facility. If the town does reach capacity, the town needs to seek other alternatives.

The water capacity information provided from 2017-2022 showed that the town has exceeded its allotment each year with the exception of 2021. The amount of water the town can draw is driven by the permit and not the weather. There was a question asked about what uses more water, a residential development or warehouse? The Director communicated that the impact of a warehouse regarding water is a drop in the bucket compared to the requirements for residential units. The town would be greatly impacted with the 750 units. There will need to be more research done on the south side of town with I & I studies to reconfirm the figures for refinement.

## **Police Department**

Police Chief Ken Fitzgerald and Sergeant Chris Padula explained their input regarding the demands the 750 units would have on their department. It was explained that the type of policing needed for high rise policing is a very different type of policing. The Department will need more staff and dispatchers. The policing is more urban with buildings being vertical highrise and not residential. Response time (911) will take longer if a call comes in on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor. The police response would include the need for a key code, taking the elevator or flights of stairs. Sergeant Padula noted that there has been an increase in calls from the Curtis apartment. If a developer decides to build in a designated area, it is the hope that mitigation can be discussed for sidewalks, lights, crosswalks, etc.

There was a question asked by the public about if the subcommittee could be put in place to language to avoid high rise buildings. The Subcommittee will need to get more clarity about zoning and dimensional requirements for the MBTA (3A) area. The letter from the Attorney General's Office noted that the "the zoning district cannot have limits on the size of the units or caps on the number of bedrooms". The Subcommittee would like to get clarification on this.

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## **Fire Department Miller:**

The Fire Chief communicated that there will be an increased need for services with the mandate if this is built. The response time will be slower. There has currently been an increase of 4.8% in call response and volume. The Department is now short-staffed and with increased units, there will be a need for more employees along with equipment. There was a suggestion that if there is a developer who wants to build this, mitigation be provided for the Fire, DPW and Police Department.

The Subcommittee was informed that there is currently a lot of development throughout town.

The following includes some of the development:

- Red Mill on the Charles (105 Units)
- Bellingham Shores ( 103 Units)
- Bungay Brook (108 Units townhouses)

There was discussion that as part of the public outreach it would be helpful to have liaisons from the school, senior center, library and other groups throughout town who can communicate the accurate information to the town residents about the impact of the MBTA.

## **Approval of Minutes:**

### **February 8, 2024:**

**On a motion made by Shanan Shahin, seconded by William O'Connell, the minutes from February 8, 2024, were accepted as amended.**

## **Next Meeting:**

- March 7, 2024

The meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Amy Sutherland  
Recording Secretary



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