

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD
PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES 09-25-03**

Meeting called to order by Chairman Christopher Hunt at 7:00 pm at the Northfield Town Hall. Members present: Doug Read, Dick Cullen, Dick Maher, Bill Dawson, Christopher Hunt, Glen Brown, Gloria Pickering and Fran LaBranche. Also present: Greg Tansley, LRPC and Eliza Conde, Secretary.

MASTER PLAN PUBLIC HEARING: Christopher Hunt reviewed the process used to develop the Master Plan beginning with community forums and a community survey. This first phase of the plan includes the chapters which are required by the State of NH. Phase II will be developed in the coming year. The Master Plan reflects the issues of importance for future growth as expressed by residents and property owners of Northfield. The high property taxes, need for clean water and protection of resources and wildlife were issues of great concern. Strong community identity, the public services and the library were identified as good qualities within the town. It was clear from the survey responses that residents wish to protect open space and natural resources as well as the present village area, while recognizing the need for a larger tax base to help with taxes. A reflection of these conflicting desires was the response to the question asking about making Exit 19 a full exchange. The response was split 50/50 to this question.

Chairman Hunt explained that the Master Plan is a guide for the Planning Board to develop future zoning changes and to consider while developing the Growth Management Ordinance. It is a guide, not an ordinance which must be adhered to. Mr. Hunt entered into the record an email correspondence from Gary Kerr questioning the use of the word "protection" and its meaning. Mr. Kerr also recommended encouraging rail transportation in the Master Plan.

Public hearing opened: Arnold Adams outlined concerns about Elm Street with lack of parking, lack of side walk and the speed of traffic along the stretch from Summer Street to the bridge. Mr. Adams suggested that the road could be widened using town land on the south side of the road to make it safer. Chairman Hunt explained that pedestrian safety is addressed in the Master Plan but not the issue of parking.

Michael Buczynski also expressed concern about the safety of Elm Street and noted the many accidents that have occurred there. He suggested the town have professional planners look at the road to see if it could be improved since Elm St. is one of the major streets in the center of town. Police Chief Scott Hilliard confirmed that Elm St. is a priority for the town and that accidents have increased due to increased speed and traffic. Lisa Szanto agreed that the parking problem is serious as well as the speed of traffic as it hits the corner of Summer, Elm and Granite Streets. Joe Carberry also confirmed that speed is a major problem on this section of road.

Ken Gorrell stated that the speed of traffic on Shaker Road is also a major safety problem and that it detracts from the very rural character that the Master Plan endeavors to protect. Mr. Gorrell was concerned that “equitable growth” with other area towns does not address “equitable tax base” and this needs to be addressed in the Master Plan by providing a dollar cost attached to the services to be provided in town. John Conde asked if the use of the word “preservation” meant no use at all and suggested using the word “conservation” of areas, encouraging good and wise use of the land. James Moran stated that the 250 foot buffer on Merrimack River would create an area of 28 acres that he would not be able to do anything with. Discussion followed on the reason for the 250 foot buffer and the state’s shoreline protection requirements.

Michael Buczynski expressed concern about the poor condition of the Sandogardy Pond Beach area. Glen Brown stated that the town has received a grant and matching town funding to make many improvements to the beach area and it will be completed within a year or so. Holly Gorrell asked if the Master Plan addresses the issue of developers leaving a lot unfinished and unsightly which also detracts from the rural character of town.

Public hearing closed.

Greg Tansley presented the concerns expressed at the hearing to the board for discussion. It was agreed that Elm St. is a major concern for the town. The Master Plan could include how to address traffic speed in the area and discussion followed about how to improve the traffic flow. It was decided that Elm Street is addressed in three places in the Master Plan already and there is no need to make additional reference. It was also agreed that the Master Plan already addresses the speed of traffic on all town roads. It was agreed to loosen the language on the River shore frontage requirements by removing the word “prohibit” and the footage and to encourage Best Management Practices for forestry. The board decided it is very tough to regulate unsightly excavation of developments.

Glen Brown moved, seconded by Bill Dawson, to adopt the Master Plan with 3 conditions: 1. to eliminate the specifics from the shore front areas and include Best Management Practices for forestry. 2. to correct the name of Union-Sanborn School where necessary and 3. to correct the statement of availability of sewer and water on Route 140. Motion passed 6 yes and 1 no.

Greg Tansley will make sure the changes are made before the Planning Board members sign the official copy of the Master Plan.

Zoning Changes workshop: Christopher Hunt asked the Board to consider creating a Village District in the down town area which would allow multi family housing and

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eliminate the R2 zones. Discussion followed about the wording, the procedures and what would be allowed in a village district. Greg Tansley stated that creating a “village district” is fairly complicated. The Board agreed that it might make sense to change the village area to R2 and change the uses allowed. It was agreed to meet Oct. 23, 2003 at 7:00 PM to discuss zoning changes only.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza Conde, Secretary