

**NORTHFIELD PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING JUNE 16, 2004
MINUTES**

Members present: Bill Dawson, Christopher Hunt, Glen Brown, Fran LaBranche, Dick Maher, Doug Read, George Flanders. Also present: Greg Tansley, LRPC, Eliza Conde, Secretary, Steve Carrier, Fire Chief and Karen Feltham.

Open Space: Christopher Hunt opened the public hearing for the adoption of the Open Space Residential Development regulations to be included in the Northfield Subdivision Regulations in order to implement the new Open Space Residential Development Ordinance adopted in March.

Dick Maher asked about the road designs and whether the road agent or the town's engineer would be inspecting any new roads. Glen Brown stated that it would be the town's engineer. Glen Brown moved, seconded by Dick Maher to adopt the Open Space Residential Development regulations to be included in the Northfield Subdivision Regulations. Motion passed.

Fire Suppression: Christopher Hunt explained that the board has been following the policy recommended by the Fire Department that any subdivision of 4 or more lots would be required to either sprinkler the homes, construct a cistern or install fire hydrants. There has been concern that this causes inequities as a lot which is part of a small subdivision does not require fire suppression while there may be a subdivision across the road with such requirements. Steve Carrier stated that the ideal would be to require all new residential structures to be sprinkled. He stated that the expense for installation of sprinklers is comparable to the costs of wall-to-wall carpeting. Chief Carrier commented that while there are inequities in various lots, it can be argued that a larger subdivision has more impact on services. It is known that sprinklers help save lives and structures particularly in outlying areas where it takes longer for the fire department to arrive.

Greg Tansley noted that some communities adopt a building code which requires sprinklers in all new residences. Adoption of a building code requires a vote at Town Meeting. It is currently a policy of the Planning Board to require sprinklers or a cistern on any subdivision over 4 lots, but it is not a requirement in the Subdivision Regulations. Mr. Tansley commented that there may be merit to have it become part of the regulations in order to be consistent, rather than remaining as a policy only. This would help address inequities.

If the Planning Board adopts a fire suppression policy as a subdivision regulation, it would only apply to a new subdivision. Adopting a building code, however, would apply to all new construction. Glen Brown is concerned with the wording of the proposed addition to the subdivision regulations as it gives final say to the Fire Department. He feels the Planning Board should have the final decision.

Christopher Hunt asked Chief Carrier which is better from a safety standpoint, cisterns or sprinklers. Sprinklers are definitely better. A cistern helps with suppression when the Fire Department gets there, but a sprinkler is “like having a fire fighter in the home”. Dick Maher asked about potential problems with frozen pipes. They could freeze if the home was not heated, just as the normal pipes would freeze. Glen Brown asked if a house is on town water, would the holding tank be required. No. Lengthy discussion followed on sprinkler systems, design, installation, pressure required and design criteria. Dick Maher suggested that requiring all new homes to be sprinkled could save Fire Department costs as fires would be contained before they arrive.

Chief Carrier commented that it is a huge step to require all new homes to be sprinkled and this should be discussed at length before adoption. He would be able to supply information, education, etc. for residents before any vote. Fran LaBranche noted that technology changes and the prices for installation are going down. It is currently about \$1.50/sq. ft. Doug Read asked if the Fire Department inspects commercial sprinkler systems. They do as many as possible, but not every one, every year.

Fran LaBranche addressed the issue of whether the Planning Board or the Fire Department should have final say in whether fire suppression should be required. Steve Carrier noted that it wasn't his intention to send a policy that the board must follow. Greg Tansley stated that he had made the suggested policy which would require sprinklers for subdivisions of 4 or more lots. Steve Carrier commented that probably the Fire Department should address issues of safety.

Dick Maher asked about a bond on a cistern to protect the town from a faulty system. Steve Carrier confirmed that this would be a good idea as there had been a failed tank on Wethersfield Drive and the town had to pick up the cost of repair. Fran LaBranche asked why the Fire Department did not require sprinklers on the Cross Mill Village development. Chief Carrier replied that it is not currently required in the code.

Dick Maher moved, seconded by Fran LaBranche to propose the requirement of all new buildings to be sprinkled at the next town meeting. Steve Carrier suggested that it might be simpler to adopt the NH RSA 155A building code which would give the Building Inspector enforcement authority. Fran LaBranche asked if it would be possible to have more than one option for the voters so that we wouldn't end up with nothing if the article doesn't pass. Dick Maher and Fran LaBranche withdrew their motion.

Fran LaBranche pointed out that it is important to be fair and equitable and requiring sprinkler systems in all new buildings would be fair while helping the Fire Department costs over the years. Steve Carrier pointed out it would not reduce costs, but costs may not increase as much over the years with sprinkled buildings. Christopher Hunt asked the board if they would like to adopt the suggested wording of requiring sprinklers in homes in any new subdivision of 4 or more lots.

George Flanders moved, seconded by Fran LaBranche, to hold a public hearing to adopt the requirement that all homes must be sprinkled in any new subdivision of 4 or more lots. This would remove the option of cisterns and fire hydrants. Bill Dawson suggested that it does not mean that the town couldn't adopt a code requiring sprinklers in all new construction. Discussion followed on whether to include all new subdivisions, even those with an existing home and how to re-word the motion to include all new subdivisions. Christopher Hunt asked about condominium units. Greg Tansley stated that Condominium plans still have to be subdivided, and therefore this motion would apply to them. Fran LaBranche commented that it would be equitable to include all new subdivisions of any size and made the motion, seconded by Dick Maher, to delete the words "that creates 4 or more lots" from the proposed wording. Amendment failed 4-3.

Original motion, passed unanimously.

Christopher Hunt told the board he would like to see all wetlands delineated on all subdivision plans or a statement by a soil scientist that there are no wetlands. Greg Tansley commented that this would avoid the Planning Board taking the word of the developer that there are no wetlands involved by requiring a soil scientist to delineate the wetlands and stamp the plan with his/her license number. Karen Feltham suggested it would be simple to change the current wording in the subdivision regulations by adding the requirement that a soil scientist stamp every plan.

Fran LaBranche moved, seconded by Dick Maher that the current regulations be modified to require a soil scientist's stamp on all subdivision plans. Motion passed. This change will be presented at a public hearing before being adopted.

Dick Maher asked how to go about bonding cisterns. It was suggested that it could be tied in with the issuing of building permits.

A public hearing will be held July 21, 2004 at 7:30 PM for the adoption of the Fire Suppression regulations and the wetlands delineations.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza Conde Secretary