

**NORTHFIELD PLANNING BOARD
WORKSHOP – JANUARY 26, 2005
MINUTES**

Members present: George Flanders, Doug Read, Dick Maher, Christopher Hunt, Bill Dawson, Glen Brown. Also present: Mike Izard, LRPC and Eliza Conde, Secretary.

The purpose of this workshop is to begin working on creating a new village district and looking at the current districts for possible changes. Christopher Hunt talked about the purpose of a village district which would:

- Allow multi family development creating a higher density for the village district
- Encourage the establishment of businesses as there would be more customers in the immediate area.
- Allow people to live within walking distance of businesses and services
- Encourage growth in the downtown area, taking the pressure off the outlying land, therefore allowing more land to remain undeveloped.

Dick Maher suggested that perhaps the current R2 zone between Cross Mill Road, Zion Hill and the River should be changed back to R1. He noted that at a recent LRPC meeting discussion revolved around preserving agricultural lands and perhaps the Planning Board should be working to preserve the Southwick property. Mike Izard responded to the issue of preserving prime agricultural lands as opposed to just any property that is currently being farmed. There are many issues involved as residents and tourists like the open land, but economically it is more enticing to develop the land than to keep farming. Zoning needs to allow and/or encourage agricultural uses. Some zoning ordinances actually discourage agriculture. Discussion followed about whether to and how to encourage maintaining open space for agriculture. The zoning ordinance can require using the poorer land for development while keeping the higher quality land available for agriculture.

Village District: Christopher Hunt made the comment that if you make the density high, a developer will go for the maximum allowable and that the economy drives the development. Currently there is no ability to create high density units in the down town area and this encourages developers to cut up larger pieces of land. Discussion followed about efficiency of buildings, safety issues, etc. and how to regulate and enforce the quality of construction.

Doug Read commented that the Board is trying to fix something that isn't broken. The village is already developed and there are no lots available for the high density development. The intent of allowing the higher density would be to allow a developer to purchase several lots, remove the current buildings and build more efficient housing and businesses. The current zoning would not allow that type of development. Bill Dawson asked if the Village District can be created now and the fine tuning be worked on over the years.

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Mike Izard asked if the board has carefully reviewed the zoning ordinance to see what is currently allowable and not allowed and how it would affect a new village district. This has not been done and should be. The Board should take a close look at what is actually there now, water, sewer, sidewalks, etc. and build upon what is already existing. Bill Dawson pointed out that creating a new Village District would require a whole new set of requirements.

Mike Izard will find examples of Village District zoning from other communities to review at the next meeting. Next workshop will be Feb. 23,2005.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Eliza Conde, Secretary