



Townsend Planning Board Annual Report 2021

Chairman: Lance McNally

Vice Chair: Laura Shifrin

Clerk: Michael Virostko

General Member: Carol Hoffses

General Member: Julie Byars

Associate Member: Ian Ortiz Santiago

2021 was a very challenging year which caused disruption in almost all town business because of the COVID-19 pandemic, yet the Planning Board continues to show remarkable resilience by adapting several new procedures to accommodate Townsend's residents' requests for the many functions this board acts upon. These major responsibilities include the review and approval of Subdivisions and Site Plan projects requiring Special Permits; Approval Not Required (ANR) Plans for subdividing lots, and applications submitted under the Scenic Roads Act. The board was even able to hold several important public hearings for new zoning bylaw proposals and zoning bylaw amendments which were successfully passed at the Annual Town Meeting in May 2021. The Planning Board is also the Stormwater Authority to oversee the Stormwater Management Bylaw which did include monitoring of existing permits and a renewal this year and has always overseen the updating of the Townsend Master Plan.

The Members of the Planning Board have also shown great resilience in adapting to many major changes in administrative adjustments by adapting to a new IT system and getting educated in "live virtual meeting protocols" and "cloud drive" information sharing. The Board did have some changes in organization this year, yet Lance McNally remains in the steering seat as Chairman of the Planning Board. Laura Shifrin continues with her dedicated service as the Vice Chair along with Planning Board representative on the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, Chair of the Townsend Housing Authority, Vice Chair of the Town's Assessors office, and Chair of the Town Properties Committee.

New Planning board member, Michael Virostko serves as the Clerk and represents the Planning Board on the Capital Planning Committee, continuing member Carol Hoffses represents the Planning Board on the Open Space and Recreation Committee and is the Safe Routes to School liaison. The Board welcomed new board Member Julie Byars, Esq. who also serves on the Board of Assessors and Town Properties Committee and recently added our Associate member Veteran

Ian Ortiz Santiago. Charles Sexton-Diranian was elected to the Board of Selectmen in April 2021 and in his new role, continues to support the Planning Board as liaison. After many years of dedicated service on the Planning Board as both Member and Associate Member, Jerrilyn Bozicas bid farewell to enjoy some well-deserved time. The Board is grateful for the hard work, commitment and dedication of these outstanding individuals.

Elizabeth Faxon continues to provide support as the Planning Board Administrator by managing agenda business and serving as liaison to applicants, their attorneys and representatives, engineering firms, developers, contractors, Town Counsel, and the public. She was also appointed as the Planning Board Representative to the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) to fill a void that current members cannot fill. Beth's dedication and knowledge has again proven a great asset to the Town in providing the Planning Board with outstanding support. Because of the many changes in policy this year, Beth's attention to detail and ability to work with the public and other entities effectively provided the Planning Board with the confidence that all matters before the Board are handled professionally and efficiently. The role that Beth performs is far reaching and not having a Land Use Coordinator made things most difficult for her. But her flexibility, knowledge, and ability to shift gears between administering both the Zoning and Planning Boards was instrumental in allowing both to remain up-to-date in its board business and allowed for each to maintain normal operations throughout 2021.

Despite the extenuating and difficult circumstances presented to the Board with the pandemic and changes in town policy, the board was able continue conducting business in 23 full, televised board meetings. All Planning Board business is currently up-to-date and any in-process items for 2021 have been completed and decisions and Approval Not Required (ANR) plans have been written and signed by the full board when necessary.

There were several permitting applications brought before the Planning Board during the year. The board issued one Stormwater Management Permit for 59 West Meadow Road and monitored the ongoing conditions of Stormwater Permits for projects at 22 West Meadow Road solar installation, 3 Wheeler Road earth excavation, and North End Road Campbell Farm OSPD Definitive Subdivision. 3 Site Plan Review/Special Permits were approved and issued for a new addition to the Townsend Senior Center, a parking area for the Squannacook River Rail Trail and a Timberlane Farmstand. One Special permit was renewed for a cell tower. And finally, the board approved four Approval Not Required (ANR) Plans.

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission delivered two important reports this year: an Intersection Analysis report for Rt. 119/Canal St./ West. Elm. St. and a Walkability Report funded under the Planning Commissions Unified Planning Work Program. Both reports were accompanied by presentations for the Community by Planning Commission Staff. The Planning Board is continuing work to involve Spaulding Memorial and Hawthorne Brook schools in the Safe Routes to School program. The Program, administered by the State, sponsors events for walkability and bike ability education and awareness for the youth of Townsend. The Board moved three warrant articles at the Annual Town Meeting, all of which successfully passed. An Age-Restricted Development bylaw, Adoption of CH43D regulations and designation of priority sites, and a Scenic Roads bylaw.

Most importantly, the Planning Board has been very vested in making sure the Town's most important planning effort, the Master Plan Update, continues to move forward. The Planning Board attended Master Plan Committee Meetings, secured grant money for high quality Master Plan maps and review under the Planning Commissions District Local Technical Assistance Program, and reviewed many revisions of the Townsend Master Plan 2021 in multiple meetings.

The Planning Board continues to work closely with Town counsel, the Building Department, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health, Highway Department, Conservation Commission, Historic District Commission, Board of Assessors, Townsend Housing Authority, Town Clerk, and public safety officials to gather perspective and comment on applications under review and gather input to develop and amend bylaws. We are dedicated to a collaborative effort with all town efforts and strive for a better community through planning and implementation.

Respectfully submitted,
Planning Board Members