

PLANNING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2015

The Planning Board's 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 holds public hearings for zoning bylaw amendments and submits recommendations to Town Meeting relative to these proposals; serves as the Stormwater Authority to oversee the Stormwater Management Bylaw, and is in charge of updating the Town's Master Plan. Agendas are posted on the Bulletin Board outside Town Hall, and on the Town Web Site. Meetings are open to the public and typically held on the last Monday of the month, with additional meetings scheduled as needed. Volunteer Response Forms are always welcome and are available on the web site or at Memorial Hall.

Over the year, three members left the Board: 1) Jeff Peduzzi, longtime member and Chairman chose not to run for reelection and his term expired at the end of April; 2) Nik Thalheimer, who had returned to the Board after serving on the Board of Selectmen also chose not to run for reelection in April; and 3) Perry Tomasetti, elected a member in 2014 resigned in August due to moving to a neighboring town. Laura Shifrin was elected by write-in at the Annual Election in April and she also serves as the Planning Board representative to the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC). In August, a Volunteer Response Form was received from town resident Kathy Araujo resulting in a joint appointment by the Planning Board & Board of Selectmen to fill an open position on the Board until the April, 2016 Annual Election. Lance McNally took over as Chairman after Jeff's departure and Chris Nocella was elected Vice Chairman. Jerrilyn Bozicas was appointed to fill an annual Associate's position for fiscal year 2016. We thank all the departing Board members for their dedication and expertise and willingness to participate in the betterment of the Town.

Jeanne Hollows 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 general public. Jeanne performs research on land use issues, in response to phone calls and visitors' inquiries, often in conjunction with other Department Staff, while also functioning in her role as Co-Land Use Coordinator. She has been with the Planning Board since 2003. Jeanne's dedication and knowledge has proven a great asset to the Town in providing the Planning Board with outstanding support over the past 13 years. Her attention to detail and ability to work with the public and other entities effectively provides the Planning Board with the confidence that all matters before the Board are handled professionally and efficiently.

Site Plan Review/Special Permit Public Hearings were held to review applications and plans for three projects. The North Middlesex Regional School District was granted a Special Permit to build a new high school. A Special Permit was granted to Riverbank Development, LLC to construct a new Fire Department Headquarters. Planet Fitness was the recipient of the third Special Permit to convert a portion of the Harbor Village Mall to a Planet Fitness.

A Public Hearing was held to review an application for the acceptance of Trophy Avenue as a town way. A recommendation to accept the road was forwarded to the Selectmen for inclusion at the next Town Meeting. Public Hearings were also held to amend the Planning Board Rules and Regulations, primarily related to stormwater compliance, a draft Stormwater Regulations Guide to support the Town's Stormwater Management General Bylaw, a Stormwater Application Package, and a plethora of stormwater management-related forms were finalized and approved for inclusion in the Town's Codebook. Through the year, the Board reviewed six applications for Approval Not Required (ANR) Plans, resulting in six new lots, two new parcels and five lot line adjustments.

The Board continues to support Townsend's association with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), as one of 22 member cities and towns in the network. The Board applied for and received a District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Grant from MRPC to review the Town's Zoning Bylaws in relation to improving housing opportunities. As part of this, the Planning Board, in conjunction with MRPC staff held a Public Forum on November 5th inviting residents and members of the community to explore ways to improve housing opportunities in town. The Forum was well attended and much information was gathered regarding residents' thoughts and ideas about accessory apartments, two-family structures and multifamily units, as well as other housing issues. That grant ended and the Board applied for an additional round of DLTA and was awarded assistance from MRPC to continue the evaluation of the Zoning Bylaws for impediments to affordable housing, with the goal of making changes to the Bylaws that will be presented to Town Meeting for approval.

The Board is working on a draft Medical Marijuana Bylaw with the hopes of presenting it at the next Town Meeting.

Planning Board Members draw from their various capabilities as business leaders with backgrounds and experience in engineering, law, construction, sales and service, and customer relations, as they work with developers, engineers and the general public, to encourage sustainable, low impact development, protect the aquifer, include affordable housing within subdivisions, retain the New England Village character of the Town and support the goals of the Town's Master Plan in ways that will promote economic, environmental & community health and safety for the Town and its residents.

Respectfully Submitted,

THE PLANNING BOARD