



# TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING BOARD

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Approved 3/3/2015

## **Planning Board Meeting Minutes February 3, 2015**

**Members in attendance:** Theresa Capobianco, Chair; Michelle Gillespie; Leslie Harrison; George Pember; Amy Poretsky

**Others in attendance:** Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Nick Antanavica, Building Inspector; Elaine Rowe, Board Secretary

**Chair Theresa Capobianco called the meeting to order at 7:03PM.**

**Proposed zoning amendments** – Ms. Joubert distributed a draft of the proposed zoning articles as discussed at the last meeting. She explained that she had asked Building Inspector Nick Antanavica to attend this evening to discuss the proposed change relative to parking areas/access driveways. She also noted that Town Engineer Fred Litchfield had provided a letter explaining his reasons for wanting the definition added to the bylaw.

Nick Antanavica explained that the issue arose as he reviewed projects coming through his department. He noted that new projects typically go through the Planning Board process, so this issue is usually addressed at that time. However, if a project does not require approval from either this board or the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), then those projects are not necessarily held to the same requirements. Mr. Antanavica indicated that the bylaw does not specifically stipulate that cars must be parked on paved surfaces, so this proposed amendment will enable town staff to better enforce some of the bylaws, most importantly in the groundwater protection areas.

Chair Capobianco asked if this amendment will be applied only to commercial and industrial areas. She voiced concern about the possibility that it could be applied to residential areas, and indicated that she would not want that to be the case. Mr. Antanavica expressed his belief that there is already an exception in the bylaw for residential homes, but agreed to confirm his assumption to be true. He reiterated that, for the benefit of the groundwater and aquifer, vehicles should always be parked and/or stored on a paved surface. Chair Capobianco asked if by simply adding the definition, would developers now be mandated to include impervious cover for projects in the commercial and industrial areas. Mr. Antanavica confirmed that they will. He explained that some sections of the bylaw reference parking areas/access drives and adding the definition will help to close the loop.

Ms. Joubert noted that there are site design standards that include references to parking areas and access drives and, while it seems redundant to add this definition, there is no place in the bylaw where a definition is found. She also explained that, in Northborough, a driveway permit or curb cut permit is not required to pave a driveway on a residential property. She reiterated that, while paving is preferred, it is not mandated for residential properties and this change will not impose a requirement to do so. Chair Capobianco voiced her desire not to restrict homeowners who may prefer to leave their driveways unpaved.

Mr. Pember voiced his opinion that this idea makes sense. Ms. Gillespie asked about some of the smaller businesses along Route 20 that might not currently have paved driveways. Mr. Antanavica stated that they would be considered pre-existing nonconforming, but any renovations or new use would require them to pave the parking lot/access drive.

Chair Capobianco expressed her desire to get confirmation that there is an exception for residential properties. Mr. Antanavica agreed to do so.

Ms. Joubert noted that the issue with parking areas/access drives was the only outstanding question from the previous Planning Board meeting, so the proposed bylaw amendments should now be ready to present to the public. She indicated that she will move forward with scheduling a public hearing for March 3rd.

**39 West Main Street** – Ms. Joubert explained that the Ad Hoc Committee met last week and took two votes, one of which did not pass. She noted that the vote that did pass is for the Ad Hoc Committee to make a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen for the project to receive a “stay of execution” to allow the process to follow the course through the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for 2016 Town Meeting. She explained that applications for CPC funding will most likely be due in August.

Ms. Joubert explained that the Ad Hoc Committee’s vote has not yet been presented to the Board of Selectmen or the CPC. Ms. Harrison asked if the members of the Ad Hoc Committee will get notification about meetings relative to 39 West Main Street. Ms. Joubert noted that the natural process would be for people interested in pursuing the parcel for open space to take that request to the Open Space Committee. She also voiced her understanding that there has been some interest in using the parcel for affordable housing. She stated that all interested groups will apply and present their proposals to the CPC, who will then vote on which application they wish to support. Ms. Gillespie commented that the Planning Board had expressed a desire to have an appraisal on the adjacent parcel and questioned whether CPC Administrative funds could be used. Ms. Joubert stated that an appraisal done now would not be valid for the 2016 Town Meeting.

Ms. Joubert explained that an organized group with a detailed proposal will need to approach the CPC. Ms. Gillespie commented that the CPC needs sufficient lead time because of the amount of work that needs to be done, and reiterated that an appraisal of the parcel is critical. Ms. Joubert voiced her opinion that there will be competing interests, so a determination needs to be made as to how the appraisal gets done. Ms. Poretsky asked about the CPC process. Ms. Joubert explained that applications are typically due in August and are not reviewed until

after the submission deadline, after which a public hearing is held where all applicants present their proposals. Ms. Gillespie stated that applicants must first present their proposals to the town board/committee whose purview the project would fall within to obtain their support for the project. Ms. Joubert indicated that she had explained this to the three interested parties who attended the last Ad Hoc Committee meeting. Ms. Poretsky noted that there is a group interested in using the parcel for open space, and they have a letter of support with over 500 signatures. She emphasized the importance of all boards seeing that petition.

**Upcoming Meetings** – Ms. Joubert provided members with a site plan for 300 Bartlett Street (parcel which contains the Federal Express building) that will be before the board on March 17th.

Ms. Joubert also informed the board members that the owner of the White Cliffs has applied for a demolition permit for the building. She noted that, while many people believe it is a foregone conclusion that the building will come down, at this point the owners are simply getting the process started. She explained that the Historical Commission will hold a public hearing at the Middle School on February 12, 2015 at 7:15PM to discuss the situation. Ms. Gillespie noted that the Historical Commission had requested \$1500 from the CPC to hire a consultant to assist with rewriting the application seeking a Historical Preservation Restriction from the state. Ms. Joubert explained that some exterior renovations were cited as the reason for denial, but new information has recently come to light that leads the Historical Commission to believe that that decision can be reversed. Ms. Poretsky asked if the clock has starting ticking for the demolition. Ms. Joubert confirmed that the delay period began when the applicant filed for the demolition permit.

**ZBA Meeting, February 24, 2015** – Ms. Joubert explained that the January meeting of the ZBA was cancelled due to weather, so those applications will be considered at the February meeting along with the two hearings originally scheduled for that meeting.

**Sterling Court** – Ms. Joubert provided definitive subdivision plans for the Sterling Court development, which requires signatures prior to being filed at the Registry of Deeds.

**Next Meeting** – In the absence of any applications or critical issues to be addressed, Chair Capobianco suggested cancelling the February 17, 2015 Planning Board meeting. She recommended that the public hearing for the zoning amendments be held during the March 3, 2015 meeting.

**Other business** - Given the situation with the White Cliffs, Ms. Poretsky discussed her desire to be proactive in an effort to protect some of the older buildings in town (Library, etc.). Ms. Gillespie noted that the Historical Commission is a very active group and has an inventory of historical buildings in town. Ms. Joubert explained that a historical preservation restriction imposes limits on what can and cannot be done, and is typically owner-driven.

## **Consideration of Minutes**

**October 7, 2014** – Leslie Harrison made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of October 7, 2014 as amended. Michelle Gillespie seconded; vote unanimous with Theresa Capobianco abstaining.

**October 21, 2014** – Leslie Harrison made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of October 21, 2014 as amended. Michelle Gillespie seconded; vote unanimous.

**January 20, 2015** – Michelle Gillespie made a motion to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of January 20, 2015 as amended. Amy Poretsky seconded; vote unanimous.

**Comprehensive Plan** - Ms. Poretsky asked if the board was going forward with the request for a new master plan. Ms. Joubert noted she has submitted a capital budget for the past six years and this year it appears the project will be funded with an appropriation of \$130,000. The capital budget request has been discussed by the Planning Board each year. Ms. Poretsky voiced her opinion that nobody reads or follows the master plan and that she is opposed to a new master plan. Ms. Harrison asked if there is a requirement as to the frequency for updating the master plan. Ms. Joubert explained that, while state law suggests that you have a master plan, there is no requirement to do so. Ms. Gillespie asked about whether the state would consider a master plan done 15 years ago to be too old. Ms. Joubert commented the Master Plan was done in 1988 and updated last in 1997. With an 18 month time frame for completing the master plan, the existing plan will be closer to 20 years old. Ms. Poretsky noted that the town has grown by only a small percentage since the last master plan was developed (1997 population was 13,374 vs. 2014 population 14,753).

Ms. Joubert stated that there are at least 10 components that should be contained in a master plan. She also noted that the open space plan must be kept up to date in order for the town to qualify for funding.

Ms. Joubert explained that the master plan serves as a blueprint for the community, and many of those serving on boards and committees were not involved in the 1988 or 1997 process. Ms. Poretsky voiced her opinion that all boards should meet annually to discuss the vision for the town. She commented that every applicant before the ZBA insists that their project is in harmony with the master plan, and reiterated her opinion that nobody actually reads it. Chair Capobianco suggested that reviewing and updating portions of the master plan would enable the town to involve residents and get their input. Ms. Poretsky recommended that the town send out the same survey as was used for the previous plan to see if the community has changed their minds and if a new master plan would be necessary. Chair Capobianco voiced skepticism about using questions from a 20 year old survey.

Ms. Joubert explained that, once money is appropriated for the development of a master plan, the Board of Selectmen appoints a master plan subcommittee to work with staff and the consultants. Surveys are usually part of the process. Ms. Gillespie asked if the entire Planning Board would be permitted to sit on a Master Plan Committee. Ms. Joubert stated most likely the make-up of the committee will be one-two representatives from several town boards and

committees and residents at-large. She recalled that the last time this was done, the town had a 25 member committee but not everyone who initially agrees to serve on the committee stays on the committee as the time commitment is extensive. The meetings are open to the public.

**Adjourned at 7:57PM.**

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine Rowe  
Board Secretary