

**Town of Northwood
Planning Board
August 27, 2015**

Chairman Robert Strobel calls the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

PRESENT: Chairman Robert Strobel, Vice-Chair Lucy Edwards, Selectmen Representative Rick Wolf, Richard Bojko, Lee Baldwin, Betty Smith, Alternate Joseph McCaffrey, Planner Matthew Sullivan, and Board Administrator Linda Smith. *Ms. Parmele arrives at 6:50 p.m.*

ABSENT: Alternate Ken Rick.

VOTING DESIGNATION: Bob Strobel, Lucy Edwards, Rick Wolf, Richard Bojko, Lee Baldwin, Betty Smith, and Alternate Joseph McCaffrey.

MINUTES:

July 23, 2015

Mr. Bojko makes a motion, second by Ms. B. Smith, to approve the minutes of July 23, 2015, as amended, as follows:

Page 6: Change: ...cutting... to ...keeping...

Motion passes; 6/0/1. *Mr. Strobel abstains, as he was not at the meeting.*

CASES:

Application to Build on a Private Road

Wentzell, Fiore Rd. Map 116; Lot 36; Sublots 56 & 57.

Mr. Strobel notes that this application is also the same property in which the board recently approved a voluntary merger.

Mr. Wolf states that this is a very small lot and has a garage being built on it right now. He believes that the lot could have more than a garage as the lot has been leveled and cleared. He adds that the Master Plan states that there should not be any additional building in the Gulf area and yet there is still building permits being issued. He states that it is a tough situation; however, the town really needs to look into the Gulf Road area and be aware of what is going on.

Mr. Strobel notes that letters have been written to the selectmen when additional building permits take place. He continues to speak to the Gulf Road area and the concerns. He adds that this issue it is not the purview of the planning board as the selectmen address issues specific to the roads. He adds that the only regulation that the planning board has relative to developments in the Gulf Road area is scattered and premature development. He states that there has not been a solution and it could be a topic of discussion for the selectmen and the planning board.

Ms. L. Smith explains the procedure for this application to build. She states that a building permit is required for any structure on a Class VI or private road and the board must review the application request and provide comments.

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The application is then forwarded to the selectmen for their review and decision. This process must occur prior to the issuance of a building permit. The role of the planning board is the same as if this were any application submitted related to roads. She adds that it is helpful to the selectmen when the planning board provides comments or recommendations.

Ms. L. Smith states that she and the building inspector have recently created a new form for building on private roads that will provide additional information to make it easier for the applicant and the board.

Mr. McCaffrey asks if these lots were merged and Ms. L. Smith replies yes, the planning board recently approved the merger. Mr. McCaffrey asks if the lots were both buildable prior to being merged. Ms. L. Smith states that neither lot was a buildable lot. The owners went to the ZBA and were granted a variance to build a garage on the merged lot; it is still an undersized lot and there is no road frontage, as required in the zoning ordinances. Further discussion ensues relative to the status of the property. Ms. L. Smith explains that every parcel in Northwood is considered residential unless it has approval for something else; however, a lot is only a *buildable* lot by the issuance of a building permit. Therefore, any lot has the potential of being a building lot if it is a grandfathered undersized lot and relief from the zoning ordinance is granted by the ZBA. She adds that a lot is not a building lot simply because it is a pre-existing lot of record.

Mr. McCaffrey states that there are many small lots in the area. He states that there is a foundation for the garage and feels that there is more going on at the property. Ms. L. Smith states that if the property owners choose to build anything more than the approved garage the issue will come back up again before this board.

Discussion ensues as to the role of the board. Ms. L. Smith states that the board's role is to address the access to the lot not anything beyond that. This is for the sole purpose to review and provide comments for what the Wentzell's received approval for which is a garage. Further discussion ensues regarding accessory uses. Ms. L. Smith suggests that the board be specific and note that this is an uninhabited structure.

Ms. Parmele arrives at 6:50 p.m.

Ms. Edwards asks if the selectmen receive the form after the planning board and are the entity that makes the final decision. Ms. L. Smith replies that is correct. She suggests that any additional discussion be held at the selectmen's meeting. She suggests that the planning board provide comments noting additional construction in the Gulf Rd. area is always a concern to the

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planning board. Further discussion is held and the board agrees to comment as follows:

Any additional construction in the Gulf Rd. area is of concern to the planning board due to emergency egress. The board has reviewed this application to build on a private road for the purpose of a garage for the sole use for vehicles/storage and not to be a habitable structure. Mr. Strobel places the comments on the back of sheet and signs.

INTERNAL BUSINESS:

Appointment with Town Administrator Joe Gunter

Mr. Gunter gives an overview of his background. He speaks to a few goals that he has for the town. He explains that his main goals are the town's goals and proceeds to review a list of his goals for Northwood.

Mr. Gunter states he has heard that one issue in town is that the tax rate is too high. He states that to drive the tax rate down there needs to be businesses along Rte. 4. He explains that a small tax incentive for new business has been started, based on the creation of an economic revitalization zone. He states that Heritage Market should be the first business in town to be part of the state program.

Mr. Gunter states that he has started to work with the economic development committee (EDC). He explains that he and the EDC have started a three part program to address business development. One item is to begin filling the vacant spaces that exist today. He also feels the condition of the roads and buildings in disrepair are a priority. Mr. Gunter states that there are small parcels of vacant land that need to be addressed as there are many with brush growing into the roads. He adds that his future development plan does not include Johnson's pasture.

Mr. Gunter continues and states that another issue that needs to be addressed is to bring in businesses to town, and to expand and strengthen the existing businesses. He states that there are many entities, universities, committees/commissions available for support, as well as people that are able to provide skills. They will need to outreach to available resources such as Strafford Regional Planning Commission and the Regional Economic Development Center that assist the town to find skilled labor, advertising, and to reach out to partners.

Mr. Gunter states that we need to make Northwood a destination. He suggests that Northwood host special events such as "Tough Mudder" events. He suggests creating village areas, and working to build a stronger small town community.

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Ms. Parmele asks what drew Mr. Gunter to Northwood. Mr. Gunter replies that he was especially drawn to the lakes, spacious lots, and the feel of small town America.

Mr. Gunter states that the regulations in Northwood are very onerous; it is much too difficult to set up shop. He suggests creating a more efficient system for businesses in the town. He hopes to work with the board to revamp the regulations, keep people working in the community, drive down the tax rate, and make Northwood thrive.

Ms. Parmele asks for clarification to the onerous regulations and if the process itself is part of problem. Mr. Gunter states that he feels that the one month delay for the application process costs businesses money as it is a delay. He specifically references the site plan regulations and town ordinances.

Mr. McCaffrey states that the concept is worthwhile. He adds that there are two issues. He states that one is the aging population with fixed incomes. He adds that the older people are leaving the state and this keeps reducing the tax base. He continues to review items that the town needs and addresses the costs and town's overall budget. He states that there was more commerce 100 years ago; however, there is merit to creating a new dynamic for Northwood.

Ms. Edwards offers a number of options/suggestions to reducing the taxes including centralizing purchases with other towns. She states that it appears that the school population is declining. She notes the lack of overnight accommodations in the area. She asks how we get the public to stop here and visit the local businesses. She adds that there is a need to protect the natural resources. Restaurants and laundromats are both businesses that are in need. Mr. Strobel agrees that there is a need for lodging for family members who are visiting the town residents.

Mr. Bojko states that he decided to run for the planning board *to experience it himself* and notes that there are rules and regulations in place. He states that there is a process to change the regulations and he is in favor of moving forward. Mr. Gunter agrees that there is a process; however, we need to begin somewhere and he offers to assist with the process. Mr. Bojko notes his concerns about the state of businesses throughout town. Mr. Gunter states that he is not complaining, he is seeking support from the board to begin the process and get the process moving.

Ms. Parmele states that there has been effort to change the process and offer more options; however, it may have made it more difficult for the applicant.

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Mr. Strobel refers to the Master Plan update and states that there are some items within the plan that are difficult but also realizing that there is the process to update the Master Plan, which is the basis for the regulations. Ms. Edwards states that there is much detail within the regulations and agrees that they are difficult. She expresses concern over the lack of progress on the master plan work *before Mr. Sullivan joined the staff*; and whether we can change the regulations prior to the MPU being done. She states that this process does need to be addressed and she is happy to continue; however, she does not see the progress moving forward without the help from planning professionals and other resources.

Mr. Sullivan states that there is a plan and he explains that his priority will be to develop a draft of the site plan regulations for November 1.

Mr. McCaffrey states that the delays and the reason things have dragged out are the fault of the planning board. He states that the planning board needs to encourage business and must continue to offer options. He mentions specific proposals that were presented and the time frames. Ms. Parmele states that the delay with the Family Dollar application was because of the appearance review process, and the developer took his time providing information to the board. She notes that the issue with the dance studio was the parking and access. These items can be addressed in the site plan regulations. Discussion ensues and Mr. McCaffrey states that the board's meetings need to be efficient. He adds that the board has dragged out some applications because the board was in the position to do so. Other board members disagree and Ms. Edwards notes that there are board members that continue to talk at *length at* meetings.

Large Scale Businesses

Mr. Wolf refers to a prior project and mentions that there are size restrictions for buildings. He states that an applicant came in and was told that they were not going to be able to proceed with the building proposed due to the square footage. Ms. L. Smith explains that she spoke to the developer and it was a business decision to not proceed. She adds that there are setbacks and lot size requirements for large scale business.

Mr. Sullivan states that there is no square foot limit for buildings; however, there are limits with setbacks as the building size increases. He states that there are criteria within the development ordinances, not within the site plan regulations. He adds that there are very few lots over 100 acres. Ms. L. Smith notes that there are architectural guides but there are no regulations. She reads the definition of large scale businesses and discussion ensues.

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Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

Mr. Strobel explains the history of the CIP. He states that there have been discussions and a plan has been made to clarify the role of the people involved in the process including the selectmen and budget committee, after the planning board has created the program.

Proposed 2016 Budget

Ms. L. Smith states that a draft budget has been provided for the board's review. General discussion is held regarding the planning board's overall current and proposed 2016 budget. Additional discussion is held relative to the various accounts.

Line 320: Level fund at \$1
Line 331: Level fund at \$600
Line 332: Level fund at \$4,816
Line 333: Level fund at \$400
Line 550: Level fund \$1,000
Line 620: Level fund \$450
Line 625: Level fund \$500
Line 690: Level fund \$450
Line 820: Increase from \$1,000 to \$1,200 for training
Line 830: Level fund \$200

A lengthy discussion is held regarding contracted planning services, Line 330, proposed for \$31,200. Ms. L. Smith provides an overview of the planner position, which was a part-time position. She provides a multi-year spreadsheet noting the salaries of the planner position from 2006 through the 2016 request. She states that in 2014 the town agreed to contract with Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC).

Ms. L. Smith states that the contract for 2015 included a billing rate structure based on the position of a regional planner. Ms. L. Smith states that the current planner has since been promoted to senior planner increasing the billing rate. She adds that planner positions within a regional planning commission are based on qualifications and expertise. In addition, Ms. L. Smith explains that there was a rate increase through SRPC so even without the promotion the rate for the position increased. She explains that the 2015 hours were specifically allocated to be 10 hours per week in the planner position and 40 hours for the year to address the Master Plan update. She states that both she and Mr. Sullivan have met with the town administrator and what they would like to recommend for 2016 is a contract that would make his position more diverse. She explains that Mr. Sullivan attends the EDC meetings, which are covered by the dues paid to SRPC. She states that the current contract is for review of applications and checklist and make

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recommendations to the board. By making the position more diverse he will be able to work on the master plan, planning board applications, economic development, and other land use items.

Ms. L. Smith states that the activity in the department has been less this year and the hours have been on average eight per week. The recommendation is to make the scope of work in the contract broader, with an average of 10 hours per week proposed. She states that the town administrator will support this proposal if the planning board agrees to the changes and then it will be presented to the selectmen.

Mr. Sullivan states that this will allow him more latitude in the position. Discussion ensues regarding the hours and billing rate structure. Ms. L. Smith states that SRPC covers Mr. Sullivan's benefits; the town has one flat rate to pay. She adds that when the RFP was done last year, three replies were received. Two of the replies were at the same rate as SRPC and one was double SRPC's per hour rate. She feels that the quote is within the range. She adds that Mr. Sullivan has been extremely efficient, conscientious, and is an asset to the board.

Ms. Parmele states that she has seen Mr. Sullivan work at the regional planning level and in the Town of Durham. She states that he is an excellent planner.

Mr. Wolf states that he feels that Mr. Sullivan has done a great job and is an asset to the town.

Mr. McCaffrey asks about the salary lines noted for the planner position. Mr. Strobel explains that these lines are for a town planner that would be an employee and we are contracting that service out at this time. Ms. L. Smith states that she will request that these lines be removed.

Ms. B. Smith makes a motion, second by Ms. Edwards, to recommend the changes discussed for the planning board's proposed 2016 budget, in the amount of \$40,817. Ms. Edwards states that having heard the plans and ideas of the new town administrator, she feels that the board doing this is very important to the process as we do need expertise. She feels that this is a good base and she is very pleased with the mutual agreement of the planning board.
Motion passes unanimously; 7/0.

Master Plan Update

Mr. Sullivan states that he has reviewed Mr. Strobel's housing section and will provide comments.

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Mr. Sullivan states that the EDC will be meeting in September to review findings and have a discussion regarding the content that they have developed.

Mr. Sullivan states that he has spoken to Mr. McCaffrey regarding the Land Use section.

Mr. Strobel states that he will get together with the historical society regarding the historical resources section.

Ms. Parmele states that she needs to meet with Mr. Sullivan regarding the transportation section and she would like to review the EDC section.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. B. Smith makes a motion, second by Mr. Bojko, to adjourn. Motion passes unanimously at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Fellows-Weaver
Board Secretary