

1 **PLANNING BOARD**

2 Minutes of February 19, 2014

3 **ATTENDEES:** Arnold Rosenblatt – Chairman, Sally Wilkins – Vice Chairman, Gordon Leedy, Michael Dell
4 Orfano, Cliff Harris, Eric Hahn – Alternate, Sarah Marchant – Planning Director
5 Absent: Richard Hart – Conservation Commission, John D’Angelo - Ex-Officio, Marilyn Peterman –
6 Alternate

7
8 **OLD BUSINESS:**

9 **Case #4401 – Peg Bennett – NSRP Amendment – 14 Cross Road, PIN #002-145-000:** Temporary
10 lighting of Bean Field - continued from December 4, 2013.

11 Sarah stated she had received an email from the applicant requesting to dismiss the application
12 without prejudice.

13 **Gordon made the motion to dismiss Case #4401 without prejudice.**

14 **Mike seconded the motion; all were in favor with none opposed.**

15 Marty Nevrla, 8 Cross Road, noted a petition had been submitted to the school board and to the Board
16 of Selectmen regarding this application and he would like to submit it to the Planning Board. His wife,
17 who had the petition, was running late but would be present shortly. They wanted to have the petition
18 on file and in the record in case this issue arises again.

19 Arnie noted there was no pending application at this time and didn’t see the point in any discussion
20 regarding the petition.

21 Gordon agreed and said it made sense to accept the petition for the record but not have any
22 discussion.

23 Mike asked if there was any issue with accepting the petition without an application.

24 Sarah replied there were no issues.

25 Sally arrived at this point and Arnie brought her up to speed.

26 Sarah noted the existence of the petition would be brought forth in the staff memo she submits to the
27 board for every application; she looks at the full history of the property from the files and includes that
28 in the staff memo.

29 Donna Riley, 8 Cross Road and John Bowkett, 1 Windsor Drive arrived with the petition at this time.

30 Donna asked if she could read the petition into the record.

31 Arnie informed her she could but there would be no discussion as there is no current application and
32 the petition would be put into the record.

33 Donna read the following into the record and noted signers of the petition were abutters and Amherst
34 residents: *“We, the undersigned residents of Amherst, NH, are concerned about the recent efforts by
35 the Amherst Recreation Department, with the consent of the Amherst School Board, to put temporary
36 lighting on Bean Field for extended soccer/lacrosse practices. The Recreation Department has
37 acknowledged that more extensive, and perhaps even permanent, lighting to attract other sports teams
38 and to light for longer periods is a possible plan for the future. We feel strongly that no lights should be
39 allowed to be placed on these fields for the following reasons:*

- 40 • *A temporary lighting “test” clearly proved that the lights would directly impact surrounding*
41 *houses and neighborhoods no matter how placed.*
- 42 • *The glare from the lighting on abutting property appears to constitute a light trespass that*
43 *raises potential liability issues for the Recreation Department and Amherst School Board.*
- 44 • *The Recreation Department and the Amherst School Board have not conducted any professional*
45 *lighting study of the impact of lights on the neighborhood, particularly abutters, or on the*

46 *natural environment as requested by the Amherst Planning Board after reviewing the lighting*
47 *application.*

- 48 • *Putting lights on Bean Field without a professional assessment of their impact violates the*
49 *stated “Good Neighbor Policy” of the Amherst School Board, Recreation Department and the*
50 *Board of Selectmen.*

51 *We seek your support in making a clear statement to the Amherst School Board, Amherst Planning*
52 *Board and the Board of Selectmen, that allowing lights on Bean Field without a thorough and*
53 *professional evaluation of the neighborhood exhibits a serious disregard of the property and the*
54 *individual rights of ALL Amherst residents. We thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this*
55 *matter.” (The petition in its entirety is attached to the file)*

56 John stated the Recreation Department had submitted a budget of \$7500 for lighting for this project in
57 town budget, which would indicate they were thinking of pursuing the issue.

58 Gordon noted this had nothing to do with the issue at hand and they weren’t discussing anything
59 tonight.

60 **REGIONAL IMPACT:**

61 Sarah stated there was an application for a sign master plan for 89 Route 101A. It is the multi-use
62 office building in front of Walmart.

63 **Gordon made the motion there is no regional impact with this application.**

64 **Mike seconded the motion; all were in favor with none opposed.**

65

66 **OLD BUSINESS:**

67 There was no old business.

68

69 **MINUTES:**

70 January 7, 2014

71 Sally made the following correction:

72 Line 71: change “privy” to “party”

73 Gordon made the motion to accept the minutes as amended.

74 Mike seconded the motion; all were in favor with none opposed.

75

76 January 8, 2014

77 Gordon made the motion to accept the minutes as presented.

78 Mike seconded the motion; all were in favor with none opposed.

79

80 January 15, 2014

81 Gordon made the motion to accept the minutes as presented.

82 Mike seconded the motion; all were in favor with none opposed.

83

84 February 5, 2014

85 Sally made the following corrections:

86 The wrong date was listed in the header and should be corrected to reflect the date of February 5,
87 2014.

88 Line 8: Time of email should be listed as 9:30 am.

89 Line 23-24: lines not applicable.

90 Mike noted his name was misspelled.

91 Mike made the motion to accept the minutes as amended.

92 Gordon seconded the motion; all were in favor with none opposed.

93

94 **WORKSESSION:**

95 **ITRAC (Integrating Transportation and Community Planning) Project Kick-Off Meeting**

96 Camille Patteson of NRPC, stated she had been approached by Sarah, who indicated the Planning Board was
97 interested in developing design guidelines and take a more altruistic approach to the Route 101A corridor. They
98 will look at all the elements in a project, including environmental impacts as well. They are providing \$10,000 in
99 staff time to this project and it is a service they provide to towns in their area, as part of the dues they pay. The
100 scope of the work is not binding and the idea is to have everyone on the same page. Her goal today is to walk
101 through the scope of the plan and list goals of the board. She passed out a folder that included work ITRAC had
102 done for Milford. The goals are to improve access, provide intermodal transportation, enhance the character to
103 be consistent with the character of Amherst, protect the aquifer and come up with appropriate design
104 guidelines, among other things. She will look at the Master Plan and other documents to get an idea of what
105 they are looking for. With regard to appropriate access management, they need to see what works for the
106 board. Multimodal is included because reality and vision aren't always the same. Appropriate design elements
107 would involve looking at Milford's plan to get some ideas, to see what design features they use and what to
108 include here. They will do some public outreach which can include postcards which provide information to the
109 residents to help get changes adopted, through community support.

110 Cliff arrived during that introduction.

111 Sally noted the majority of the town isn't interested in improving Route 101A.

112 Camille noted they had a breakfast meeting with Milford business owner at Hitchiner to include them in the
113 process; they proved to be eager participants. ITRAC comes up with the pieces and Sarah and the board put
114 them together in a plan they agree on. She submitted a draft plan to DOT but she didn't foresee any changes. No
115 signatures are required at any point. She asked if there were any questions or comments.

116 Gordon noted if they were going to adopt new regulations, they were caught in the middle of being too specific
117 and being not specific enough.

118 Camille noted, with Milford, she brought the actual regulations and with Milford, they started here and then
119 added specifics.

120 Sarah stated she gave Camille the board's priority list from last year and felt updating the regulations and design
121 guidelines at the same time would be beneficial and they could be updated as needed in the future.

122 Gordon felt the process would be helpful in establishing an interest group to tackle other issues, i.e. signage.

123 Cliff suggested trails and paths would fit here also.

124 Sally noted the challenge was that the minority of business owners along 101A are Amherst residents. They
125 would need a buy-in by people renting space as well.

126 Sarah noted they are pursuing this, through the Chamber of Commerce. There is a charitable foundation grant
127 to reach out to business owners and they hope to establish an Economic Development Advisory Committee
128 (EDAC); the kick-off meeting for that group is next week. They are waiting on the grant.

129 Mike noted he, Sarah and Bill Parker are identifying "park and ride" locations for the corridor rail study from
130 Nashua to Milford; they are also looking to see what it would take to install a spur to Wilton. This is something
131 to talk to business owners about.

132 Cliff noted other cities have had rail use for years and it is not the mindset of New Hampshire to use public
133 transportation. It could be years before we're close to that.

134 Sarah agreed they can discuss it with the business owners.

135 Sally thought they should be thinking about access points as well.

136 Gordon indicated a study had been done and it would cost approximately \$23 million to connect to Wilton.

137 Camille thought that discussion would be better with the Chamber of Commerce group Sarah had spoken of.
138 She continued with the included Milford design guidelines and noted Amherst was a different type of
139 community but the document was a good template. She would be returning every other month and this would
140 allow the board to think about the changes they would like to make. The final document would be something
141 they could give to developers so they would have a better sense of what the planning board is looking for.

142 Arnie asked if the guidelines would be part of the regulations and what the time line would be for the project.
143 Sarah replied they would be part of the site plan regulations.
144 Camille replied she hoped to have a complete document by September.
145 Sarah noted the design guidelines would focus on Route 101A only; there would be no overlay district, just
146 updated site plan regulations and design standards.
147 Arnie asked what the next step would be.
148 Sarah replied she will be working with Camille to envision changes and reach out to residents and whittle down
149 the scope in a way that can be translated into regulations and all will be done by September.
150 Mike thought it would be helpful to identify buildings they like or dislike as examples.
151 Sarah warned him that identifying bad examples, as that won't go over well with the business owners.
152 Camille stated they needed to include viewsheds, streetscaping, underground utilities and figure out where they
153 want to start from. She also showed them some examples of public outreach, which included a map and a
154 placemat flyer, one of which explained that town's Master Plan. General outreach is necessary for this plan and
155 they need to make sure they get what the planning board wants for the community. She suggested they email
156 photos to her for future discussions.
157 Arnie thanked her for the presentation.
158

159 **Strategic Planning Initiatives Review**

160 Sarah stated the process was started with the BOS last year. The BOS went to each department head to
161 create measurable goals and initiatives while heeding the budget. The Selectmen have plans from each
162 department and will deal with them in order of importance. The town must invest in infrastructure,
163 then quality of life and then economic resources. She needed to see if the planning board wanted to
164 come under the umbrella of Community Development or be on its own, like the Heritage Commission.
165 She had submitted her plan to the BOS and felt it would be simplest to update it to apply to the
166 planning board views.

167 Mike clarified they were looking at Sarah's work product and not the BOS.

168 Sarah noted she started with the Master Plan, which has no measurable goals but altruistic ones. She
169 looked at population trends along with assessed value trends. She did an environmental scan which
170 looked at the demographic, the percent of land use and the population growth which will peak in 2030
171 and will then decline. She also looked at residential property values and commercial values as
172 compared with the rest of the residential area. Commuting patterns were included and it was noted
173 that 66% of the residents work within the community while 20% commute to the Boston area. She
174 listed the goals and the board discussed each one.

175 **Goal 1: Amherst will encourage development which maintains open space and rural landscapes.**

176 Mike suggested changing "maintain" to "preserve".

177 Sally thought it would be good to add "rural aesthetic" as it has been used in early zoning and proved
178 to be a defensible criterion.

179 Arnie noted the reality to preserve open space is to buy open space and the only real way to preserve
180 it is to have the town pay for it.

181 Sarah noted there was a warrant article on this year's ballot to change the land use tax fund to the
182 Conservation Commission from 50% to 100%.

183 Sally noted scenic road design needs to be included before all the scenic roads become lovely suburban
184 streets. In addition, she commented that the Amherst Land Trust (ALT) is not a town board.

185 Sarah noted the idea here is for public and private cooperation.

186 **Goal 2: Amherst will continue to allow for a variety of housing options and be a leader in the state 187 (and region) in maintaining and managing its Historic District and resources.**

188 Sarah noted the town needed to maintain its base of affordable housing and variety. They currently
189 have 10% of the housing stock valued at less than \$200,000; the threshold for affordability is defined
190 as \$230,000.

191 Mike noted the state median was just over \$200,000 and 25% of housing in NH is available to those
192 who qualify.

193 Sarah noted the goal here is to maintain distribution within Amherst.

194 Arnie stated the question is do they want to preserve historic resources outside of the Historic District.

195 **Goal 3: Amherst will be known as a business-friendly community with clearly established regulations**
196 **and processes for land development.**

197 Arnie felt a language change would work here; he didn't want Amherst being known as "business
198 friendly". He would like the town to be friendly to real businesses and not to people trying to exploit
199 the land.

200 Cliff agreed and thought they should add "fair and clear" instead of "clearly" and eliminate "business
201 friendly".

202 Sarah noted this measurable outcome is projected so far out because a sewer extension project is
203 included here, along with many other long-term things.

204 Mike thought discussion this with Ben Frost would be good, as he is working on a tax revenue
205 distribution across town lines and this could be included in a discussion as a tax sharing agreement
206 between communities and create more collaboration between municipalities.

207 Gordon felt schools and the fire department should be involved in this as well, to look at being more
208 regional with resource sharing.

209 Sarah noted they are working on partnering with the Chamber of Commerce and with Milford.

210 **Goal 4: Amherst will maintain safe drinking water standards and protect water resources.**

211 Sarah noted this was a hard and measurable goal and took it from Pennichuck regulations and they do
212 the testing.

213 Gordon noted resources are different from surface and ground water.

214 Sarah stated this pulls in storm water regulations that they now have to enforce.

215 **Goal 5: Amherst will have a reputation for ensuring quality construction, and fair and equal**
216 **enforcement of the regulations.**

217 Sarah stated they have already improved the building code.

218 Arnie thought a wording change to: Amherst will ensure quality construction and will have fair and
219 equal enforcement of clear regulations.

220 Sarah replied they are trying to get across the fact that everyone will be treated the same.
221 She stated she would come back with the updated document, if everyone was comfortable staying
222 under the wing of Community Development.

223 Sally noted no one wants to rewrite this.

224 Sarah replied the Heritage Commission wrote their own and she needs to see if the Conservation
225 Commission and the Historic Commission are on the same page.

226 Arnie stated he thought the sense of the planning board is they are not prepared to write their own
227 document.

228 Gordon felt being part of Community Development makes this a more effective plan.

229 The board thanked Sarah for her impressive and hard work.

230

231 Arnie asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

232 Sally made the motion with Eric seconding; all were in favor.

233 Meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.