

Minutes of Planning Board June 28, 2017 Meeting

Present: Deb Johnson, Chair, Dave LaBar, Ray Blake, Sherry Nelson, Alternate

Audience: Boyd Smith, Director of NLRA, Steve Whitman, Principle of Resilience Planning & Design, Dan Sundquist, Principal of GreenFire GIS, Parker Griffin, Trustee of NLRA, Janet Thompson, Alexandria Conservation Commission.

Meeting convened at 7 pm

Sherry Nelson, PB Alternate designated by Chair and unanimously approved by Board to sit and fully participate.

Ray Blake moved to waive reading of Minutes. March 29 & April 26 Minutes approved unanimously.

Presentation by Newfound Lake Region Association began with its Director, Boyd, reviewing past connections of Groton with NLRA. He is concerned with aligning Town Vision and Land Use Regulations. Our new Master Plan shares the vision held by NLRA: clean water, healthy forests, small town feeling. Boyd added that a local economy depends on its environment and stressed that being proactive means that Groton residents don't allow someone else (an applicant for a sub-development or business concern) to plan for our town. He introduced us to the Good Neighbor Bill of Rights, which we should share with our residents, indicating planning/zoning is an agreement among Groton residents – choosing community image, protections ETC. over unwanted or misaligned growth and development.

Next, Dan spoke of successes of talking to towns with Steve, a Community Planner and himself, a conservation planner. Dan's plan, with multiple stakeholders, is to protect natural resource features that maintain and enhance water and wildlife habitat quality in the Newfound and Baker watersheds. He said that "our" Cockermonth River is considered of high value, provides 34.5% of the lake's stream-flow, directly impacting water quality. Dan has mapped projected development possibilities. Groton has added 59 new single family homes since 2000. Our town's growth is on par with state and region – an upward trend! 2010 census showed 60% of our residents to be year round, however no town employee is charged with the duty of monitoring transition from seasonal to year-round residency. Groton has about 5,000 acres of developable land.

Deb pointed out that both Planning Board and Conservation Commission should focus not just on the Newfound Watershed but on the Baker River Watershed as well. Groton is in both watersheds.

Both Dan and Steve reviewed (at the PB request) our new Master Plan. We were assured that it establishes the basis to protect the town's:

- Quiet, small town rural character
- Environment
- Forested expanses of undeveloped space
- Water resources
- Diversity of plant and wildlife

Rather than telling people what they CAN'T do with their property, Steve suggests we try Performance Zoning, conversing with a subdivision applicant, using a checklist while viewing a visual resource protection overlay, helping to provide flexibility in designing a siteplan. Steve urged us to pay attention to Rural Zone density and to work on a Steep Slope Ordinance ready to be voted on at March 2019 Town Meeting. He suggested we zone a rural district suitable for forestry and large lots (50+ acres). We should also create Forestry Protection Overlay Districts and Water Resource Overlay Districts.

The travelling trio from NLRA also encouraged us to consider Conservation Subdivisions by first figuring where development CANNOT occur, then going with "flexible lot sizing" or "lot size averaging". Lot sizes would be averaged after fitting lots to natural resources. This also would result in diversity of costs.

Deb described the formation of a "Citizens Planning Committee" which is charged to provide guidance, reflecting what residents want, to the board. Deb asked what NLRA could help us with financially and Boyd said he would have to bring that question before his board, but thought it was promising. Many meetings will be needed for dissemination of information to Groton's citizens. Money would be needed for mailings and postage.

After the NLRA consultants left we discussed having a table and maps at Groton Old Home Day on Aug. 5th. We also discussed our anticipated expenditures for 2017: Guidance ((advisory, drafting and legal) for Planning Board and Citizen Committee; Drafting of Zoning Ordinance and Creation of Zoning Map; Purchase of fire retardant file cabinet (applications and accepted plans must be kept forever); Legal Opinions.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon Nelson acting Secretary