

**TOWN OF NEW DURHAM  
PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
June 6, 2023, 7:00PM  
New Durham Town Hall, New Durham, NH 03855**

**PRESENT**

Jeff Allard, Planning Board Chair  
Bob Craycraft, Planning Board Vice Chair  
Marc DeCoff, Board of Selectmen Representative  
Scott Drummey, Planning Board Member  
Anne Ross-Raymond, Planning Board Member

**ALSO PRESENT**

Susan Stillwell, Land Use Assistant  
Mike Gelinias, resident  
Peter Varney, Fire Chief  
David Swenson, resident  
David Bickford, resident  
Mark Sullivan, resident – via Zoom  
Jack Fillion, resident – via Zoom  
Sue (iPhone), resident – via Zoom

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Allard called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM.

Introductions were made of the Board members present.

**AGENDA REVIEW**

No changes were made.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

None.

**NEW/OLD/OTHER BUSINESS**

**Presentation by Peter Varney regarding CIP**

Fire Chief Varney stated he is concerned about infrastructure issues in Town that were addressed in the Master Plan. He explained the Board of Selectmen hired an architect to go through all town buildings a few years ago; buildings were prioritized but that is where the work ended and there were no plans to move forward. He stated he and Police Chief Bernier worked together with another architect and tried to push forward Public Safety Complex last year, but the Board of Selectmen didn't vote to approve the project being placed on the March ballot. Chief Varney stated he is back again to try to get this project moving forward.

Chief Varney suggested the Planning Board needs to take a more active role in business development in town; he stated there is currently more land in conservation status in Town than is being developed; the amount of land in conservation drops the value which needs to be made up elsewhere. He stated the Master Plan asks for facilities research but doesn't ask for actual development. Chief Varney stated they have done the research, now the Town needs to implement the research and move forward.

Ms. Ross-Raymond stated there is no data in the Master Plan regarding commercial growth, noting there is residential data available.

Chair Allard stated the Town has incredible and unique natural resources and suggested recreation-based development is possible. He stated there is also a push across the state to develop low-income and affordable housing. The Board discussed the criteria.

Chief Varney suggested the Planning Board should also take an active role in business development to reduce taxes. He stated the Town's residential growth is growing, but little research on business growth is available. Town water and sewer would allow for more density but at high taxpayer cost.

Chair Allard stated he disagrees with Chief Varney's letters which suggest the failure of the municipal building was due to the failure of the Planning Board to get on board and push it forward. He stated he doesn't agree with the interpretation of the RSA; he stated Chief Varney took on the project but never came before the Board. Several Board members expressed a measure of disagreement with this argument.

Chair Allard stated he would like to move forward and work toward solving the obvious problems of a new Public Safety Complex, renovated Town Hall, and business development. Chief Varney stated his greatest concern is the lack of facilities for his firefighters to be able to decontaminate from carcinogens after a shift. He stated there is also a state law that recently went into effect that requires municipalities to address the contamination problems.

It was noted there was a public hearing in January 2022 which focused on unknown questions regarding how-where-what would be built on the existing Fire Station lot. Chair Allard stated there seemed to be a consensus of support but a lot of unanswered questions. Chief Varney said an architect has already gone through the concerns brought up at the January public meeting and addressed the issues that were discussed.

Chair Allard stated Courtney Grugnale will be convening a public meeting on July 8, 2023, from 9:00-11:00 AM to start planning business development. UNH could provide support in development of a recreation based economy, and PlanNH could organize a charrette to work on recreation-based business development. Chair Allard stated there will also need to be a discussion about whether the Planning Board or Board of Selectmen will take responsibility for the direction of development.

The Board discussed the local state-owned dams and the effects there would be if the dams aren't maintained. Chair Allard stated there are over 800 acres of a wildlife haven in Merrymeeting Marsh; he asked if they can talk to the State about taking over a dam in the event the State wants to tear them down. Chief Varney explained some dams are being converted to hydroelectric, however, once that happens, fish ladders are necessary.

The Board discussed utilizing census data to help guide development and decision-making.

### **Watershed Buffers with Mike Gelinas**

Mr. Gelinas stated he reviewed existing setbacks and existing lots. He stated there is a large water quality project going on to get all septic systems in Town into a database; he stated many are over 50 years old. He suggested increasing setbacks on old nonconforming lots will cause more problems than it solves and that the water quality priority should be focused on shorefront lots.

Mr. Drummey stated Stafford County Regional Planning put a 100-foot buffer on all waterfront properties however he is not sure what the science is behind that. He stated he believes there should be soil-based setbacks. Chair Allard stated he is supportive of soil-based setbacks, which is the system followed by the State for wells.

Mr. DeCoff questioned why the buffers would be increased if waivers and variances are going to be allowed.

After discussion, it was the consensus of the Planning Board could spend time adjusting Table 8 Buffer and Setbacks, but a limited benefit would result. The Board concluded that time would be better spent on other topics in 2023.

### **Review of Properties Around Lake (from March 21 Meeting)**

Chair Allard stated he wants to discuss two specific properties with the Board of Selectmen and Scott Lacroix, that encompass his concerns in a procedural administrative manner without focusing on the property owners. He stated he would like to go back through the files for these example properties to see if variances were granted; he clarified his concerns are with the Town's procedures.

Vice Chair Craycraft stated he brought up a specific issue that he observed and notified the Code Enforcement Officer.; the issue has been resolved.

### **Wetland Permit Application for Map 110, Lot 28, 373 Merrymeeting Road**

The Board reviewed the Wetland Permit application. Vice Chair Craycraft noted the lot is a steep slope area; he stated the perched beach with a retaining wall will help protect the area. This will help the water quality aspect of the lot. It was confirmed this application has been reviewed by the Conservation Commission.

The Board reviewed and discussed a legal notice regarding an issue with an abutter dispute relative to a wetland permit. Vice Chair Craycraft stated a Conditional Use Permit may have been needed but it wasn't submitted to the Planning Board. It was agreed by the Board to have the Code Enforcement Officer also review the wetland permit application.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Meeting of May 16, 2023 – Edits were made.

**MOTION: To approve as amended. Motion by Mr. DeCoff. Second by Ms. Ross-Raymond. Motion passed, 5-0-0.**

Ms. Stillwell stated the minutes of the February 21, 2023 meeting are missing and need to be done.

### **FUTURE MEETINGS**

- Workshop – June 20, 2023: focus on Community Planning Meeting
- Business Meeting – July 5, 2023: *Will be cancelled if no applications come in.*

**MOTION: To adjourn the meeting. Motion by Mr. Drummey. Second by Mr. DeCoff. Motion passed, 5-0-0.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Jennifer Riel*

Jennifer Riel, Recording Secretary