

Draft Minutes
Webster Planning Board
Master Plan Meeting
December 12, 2018

The Master Plan meeting started at 6:30 p.m. Participants included Kathy Bacon, Marty Bender, Dee Blake, Isabel Brintnall, Linda Clark, Michele Derby, Sally Embley, Sandy Estep, Craig Fournier, Bruce Johnson, Therese Larson, Mary Jo MacGowan, Leslie Palmer, Nancy Picthall-French, Susan Rauth, Chris Schadler, Nanci Schofield and MJ Turcotte. Also present were Mike Tardiff, Executive Director and Matt Monahan, Senior Planner, Central NH Regional Planning Commission.

Following the introductions, the meeting minutes from June, July, September and November were approved. Susan Rauth next provided an overview of the existing land use patterns in Webster. Residential land represents 7.2% of the land uses and residential land that could be developed represents 19.2%. The total residential land uses occupy nearly 26.4% of the community's land area. Undeveloped lands, which are lands that are neither currently developed nor protected from development, comprise 41.3% of the Town's entire land area. The next largest land use category is conservation land, comprising 17.1% of the total.

As far as land development, a total of 49 new lots were created through subdivision since the last Master Plan in 2004. Of those, 41 lots (84%) were created in the period prior to the recession of 2008. There have been only 8 new lots created in the past ten years.

During the period of 2004-2017, Webster issued 97 building permits for new residential construction. This number does not include the tear-down and rebuilding of existing residential structures. The largest majority of building permits (75%) were issued prior to 2009, following the 2008 recession. In terms of commercial activity, 17 site plan reviews were conducted in the past 14 years. Site plan reviews are required for the change or expansion of a site to a non-residential use.

To summarize, there has been very little growth and commercial activity in Webster over the past 14 years. Some residents are concerned about the need to increase the tax base to sustain the Town's needs for the future. However, the survey results show Webster's rural character, natural resources and open space were valued above all. The majority of survey respondents prefer single family housing and the 5-acre lot sizes. The majority discourages commercial and industrial development. Agricultural related businesses were preferred over other types.

The purpose of the Future Land Use plan is to balance the desire to maintain a rural character with open space with the need to provide incentives for growth and increased tax base. The remainder of the meeting focused on a discussion about changes to the zoning ordinance and other regulations can foster desired residential and commercial growth.

Mike Tardiff led the discussion, first noting there is a current trend for young people moving back into New Hampshire, primarily urban areas. There has been some recent growth in Boscawen, Franklin and Pembroke. Zoning by commercial exception can lead to development

where you don't want it. Since Webster is zoned Residential/Agricultural, commercial development is allowed everywhere. The idea is to locate commercial development in preferred areas and keep it away from areas where you would want less commercial. The participants discussed the need to define "light commercial" and consider identifying zones for permitted uses. A list of permitted uses and zones provides an easier process with greater controls as compared with zoning by exception.

This can also be accomplished by creating a Village District for mixed-use development, with a greater density. The intensity of the development can be specified, along with architectural standards, landscaping, signage and lighting standards. Discussion focused on the Route 127 corridor from Salisbury to Roby Road, where there are already a number of businesses and commercial sites (White Mountain Imaging, Coffin Cellars winery, Robert's Greenhouse, Cozy Pond Campground, Cloverdale Feed Store). Participants were reluctant to specify an area on the map but agreed it would be something to consider.

In terms of housing development, the participants support the concept of open space/cluster housing. This would be accomplished by adopting an ordinance to allow cluster housing with a higher density and financial incentives for developers. A conditional use permit would also be enacted as part of the administration process. This type of housing will be appropriate for the needs of seniors, younger people and those wanting a smaller lot and house size. The concept of different lots sizes in specified areas of town was also discussed.

Discussion also touched on regulations for agricultural uses to control the scale and intensity of farming. All existing farms would be grandfathered. The concept is to control a large-scale farming operation such as the chicken farm in Boscawen.

Regulations to protect the wetlands, shoreland buffers, drinking water and aquifers, farmland, wildlife habitat and open space are also a high priority in Webster. Conservation regulations will be enacted and strengthened as part of the process of incorporating innovative land use controls into managing future land use in Webster.

Chair Rauth indicated the Future Land Use chapter would be updated to reflect the ideas and concepts discussed at the meeting. It would mark the beginning of a process to communicate with the residents and gain consensus for the regulation changes over the next 2-3 years.

All chapters of the Master Plan will be posted in draft form on the Town website before the end of the year. The public hearing to approve the Master Plan will be scheduled for the January 17th Planning Board meeting. Ms. Rauth thanked the participants for their diligence in participating in the Master Plan project over the past eight months. The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Rauth, Chair