

Groton Planning Board/Master Plan Revision Meeting
October 30, 2013

Present: Chairman Steve (Slim) Spafford, Jenny Burnett, Russ Carruth, Dave LaBar, Celine Richer, Deb Johnson, Alternates Sherry Nelson and Ray Blake, and Select Board Liaison Miles Sinclair.

Also present: Master Plan Revision committee member Paula Stata and ZBA Member Chuck Stata.

Meeting came to order at 6:03 PM.

The Director of the Newfound Lake Region Association Boyd Smith and Steve Whitman were here to continue their support of our Master Plan Revision. Boyd started out by stating that the work we have done so far has developed a lot of information that helps our Planning Board make good decisions that works toward what our constituents have said they want for Groton. He and Steve want to help us communicate easy steps that we can take to provide protections for our Town that won't upset townspeople, along the lines of protections for riparian zones, steep slopes and undeveloped areas, and the use of aesthetic building tools like night sky ordinances.

Steve Whitman then distributed several handouts for our use. He said he had also emailed several samples of applicable Master Plan language to Deb (who had not yet arrived at the meeting). Dan Sundquist could not be here tonight, but Steve passed around copies of a report Dan had prepared showing the results of our exercise weighing the importance of various resources to Groton that included new maps. Steve then presented to us a suggested Natural Resource Chapter for our Master Plan, encouraging us to edit it heavily as it was only a basic outline. He thought it would give us a start on getting language into the Master Plan that shows, based on natural resource criterion, why different parts of the Town could be considered in a different light. Finally Steve passed out a draft of an outline he suggests for our Master Plan, stating that in his opinion the parts he listed are a minimum needed to base any zoning on.

Russ asked if Steve could pick apart our current Master Plan and provide that feedback. Steve agreed to do this and send it on but had a few general comments. First off, he said he felt that our Vision Statement could stand to be a lot more visionary, painting a clearer picture of what is valued and desired by Groton residents. Sherry noted we could draw on survey results for this statement, and Steve agreed that this would be a logical step. Steve also believed we needed a few clear actions to be described in a "Future Land Use" section that would back up actions we could take to provide protections for the qualities of Groton our townspeople have said they want to stay as they are. It is important not to try to write zoning or any regulatory or ordinance language in the Master Plan, but to generally outline actions we want to take, leaving specifics for other documents. He reminded us that the Master Plan is not an enforcement document; rather it is the legal foundation for zoning, site plan, and subdivision regulations.

In general, Steve conveyed that our Master Plan in its current form does not provide our Town enough guidance. If he were hired to write zoning for Groton with based on our current Master Plan he wouldn't feel he had enough to stand on.

Jenny noted that the results of our re-mapping exercise could be attached as a resource or reference to our Master Plan as previously discussed. Boyd agreed and said that the information was a good tool for education- for example, although a vast "purple blob" on the maps may seem to advise development, small protected or richly resourced areas will exist within these areas but do not show up due to scale.

At this point it was 6:40 and Deb arrived. After a brief discussion of watershed as a concept, and the importance of Groton in both Newfound and Baker River Valley we wrapped up with Steve and Boyd and they departed.

Our regular Planning Board meeting began at 6:55. The minutes of September 25 were read and after the correction of a minor typo Deb moved, Celine seconded that we accept the minutes as corrected. All were in favor except Russ who abstained.

We discussed the recent potential error brought to our attention at the last meeting regarding whether an approved septic system is or can be required before subdivision, whether or not an existing structure on the property has a water system. Town Attorney Laura Spector-Morgan advised us that there is no DES requirement around septic systems for a dwelling without a pressurized water system. The town can still require a septic system before it will allow a property to be subdivided, but the definition of a legal septic system does include properly sited and installed outhouses. We have to decide if we want to alter the language in our Subdivision Regulations; it seems that this may not be necessary and in any case is not a current priority so we will table the issue for now.

Regarding improving the Town's representation by the North Country Council, Slim will call to see if they can host more meetings and workshops further south to help defray the cost of (and thereby facilitate) attendance.

Deb will send the examples of Master Plan language sent to her by Steve Whitman to Pam to send to the rest of the committee.

December 20th is the deadline to submit our Annual Report. Sherry and Slim will write it up and send it to Celine to be formatted and submitted.

Our next Master Plan Revision committee meeting will be November 13th at 7:00 PM. Our next two regular Planning Board meetings will be November 20th and December 11th at 7:00 PM.

Deb moved and Celine seconded to adjourn; all were in favor and meeting adjourned at 7:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Jenny Burnett