

OFFICE OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

2014 Annual Report

**Planning Zoning Building Safety Code Enforcement Public
Health Economic Development Active Projects Geographic Information
Systems Stormwater Management**

Mission

To fairly and effectively plan for and manage community change in accordance with the Milford Master Plan and the goals of the Board of Selectmen as set forth in the Town's land use, building, and health regulations by providing professional advice, technical assistance, and enforcement in a fair and consistent manner to citizens, boards and commissions, departments, and regional agencies.

The Office of Community Development is composed of several departments charged with for the Town responsibilities of planning and land use/development regulation; administration and enforcement of the Milford Zoning Ordinance; building safety; permitting; code compliance and enforcement; public health; economic development initiatives and programs; project management of special capital improvement and environmental projects; the stormwater management program; and management of the Town's geographic information systems (GIS).

Of primary purpose to this Office is assistance to the public and developers in understanding and navigating the many local, state, and federal regulations that determine what a property owner is able to do with his or her property and building. Staff members also provide technical and administrative support to many boards (Planning Board and Zoning Board), the West Milford Tax Increment Financing Advisory Board (TIF Board), the Economic Development Advisory Council (EDAC), Traffic Safety Committee and various subcommittees and working groups. Responsibilities include research, writing, updating and preparation of such required documents and plans as the Milford Master Plan, the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), development regulations, and zoning amendments. In order to stay current with changes in law, codes, and regional and state issues staff members actively participate in their respective professional organizations and support groups. An excellent working relationship with the Nashua Regional Planning Commission allows the Office to cost-effectively take advantage of that organization's programs and resources to benefit Milford when tackling transportation, environmental, natural resource, housing, health, and economic development planning projects.

Based on applications and discussions during 2014, it appears that construction and development is growing after six years of seeing little activity, itself reflective of the economy in general. Construction is a major component of the local economy and provides employment and business. Although Milford (and New Hampshire, according to state economists) is very unlikely to see the population growth cycles of the 1970s through the 1990s, there will always be a need to provide affordable housing opportunities and places of employment for Milford residents while balancing growth and development with the community's desire to maintain its character, open spaces, farms and infrastructure. This is reflected throughout the Milford Master Plan.

Major projects managed by this Office and a status at the close of 2014 include the following:

- ***South Street Improvements:*** At the close of 2014 the final design for this long awaited project had been submitted to the NH Department of Transportation. The complexity of undergrounding the overhead utilities from Union Square south to the First Church of Christ Scientist and relocating the overhead utilities to the back side of the sidewalk from the Church to the north side of the railroad tracks generated the need for close to fifty easement documents to grant the Town, Public Service of New Hampshire, Fairpoint, and Comcast rights to work on private property for permanent utility relocation and pedestrian sidewalks. As of the date of this Town Report all easements will have been obtained for the project. Of note is that many of the property owners donated the easements resulting in a cost savings for the project. Other property owners asked for minimum compensation. The Federal Highway Administration requires that property owners be provided just compensation in addition to many other federal requirements governing engineering, right-of-way acquisition, construction, and inspection.

Construction, consisting of utility relocation, new concrete and asphalt sidewalks, period lighting, and paving is anticipated to begin in Spring 2015 and take approximately 8 weeks. The project is funded 80% through by federal Transportation Enhancement and Special Project money, and 20% from the Town which had been approved several years ago.

- ***Route 13/Emerson Road/Armory Road Intersection Improvements:*** The final design for this intersection improvement project was approved by the State this past summer and a contract for construction was awarded in December 2014. Project construction is set to begin in January of 2015. This project is 80% federally funded through the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality program with local 20% matching funds and is subject to federal and state requirements. Upon completion there will be designated left-turn signalization for eastbound and west bound traffic, additional turning lanes, and new signalization. The purpose of this project is to improve safety at an intersection experiencing more and more traffic.
- ***Osgood Pond Reclamation Project:*** Work began in the Fall of 2014 to undertake the dredging of approximately 2 acres of Osgood Pond as a preliminary phase to dredge the Pond and reclaim it as a useable surface water body for a canoeing, kayaking, fishing, and wildlife observation area adjacent to Adams Field. The Town received NH Wetlands Board approval to eventually dredge up to 11 ½ acres in April 2014, based on engineering conducted by Fieldstone Land Consultants of Milford. Additional funding sources are being sought through grant applications and Federal and State programs to expand the current project 2 acres to 5 acres to adequately support fishing and boating.
- ***Brox Gravel Removal Project:*** An earth materials excavation plan was developed in 2014 to implement recommendations in the updated Brox Community Lands Master Plan to excavate earth materials in accordance with the future planned development of the site

for multi-use community needs. This effort has been contemplated by the Town since the purchase of the property in 2000.

- ***Brox Property Commercial-Industrial Development:*** This Office continued throughout the year to meet with interested parties and development groups regarding the acquisition of the Brox Commercial-Industrial properties. Milford voters authorized the Selectmen to sell these properties in 2001.
- ***Former Police Station Property:*** In 2006 Town voters authorized the Board of Selectmen to sell the former police station property on west Elm Street. The site is a potentially valuable commercial property due to its location near the 101 Bypass, however, because it is adjacent to the OK Tool Superfund cleanup site it has certain restrictive utilities and test/monitoring wells that must be protected if it is developed. This Office worked with an environmental consulting firm during 2014 to address NH Department of Environmental Services and EPA requirements.
- ***Economic Development Advisory Council (EDAC):*** This Office provides all the staff support for the 15-member EDAC. Work projects during 2014 for EDAC included preliminary efforts to implement a business/economic development website; the Business Expansion and Retention program in partnership with the Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce, Town of Amherst Community Development Office, and the UNH Cooperative Extension Service; community outreach; and other various economic development-related activity to build the local economy.
- ***2015-2020 Capital Improvements Plan:*** Each year the Planning Board appoints a citizens' advisory committee to review and update the Town's 6-year capital improvements plan that serves as a planning and budgeting tool relative to all planned capital expenditures in excess of \$75,000. This Office supports the committee and prepares the final document for ultimate review and approval by the Planning Board.

This Office is open from 8 AM – 4:30 PM Monday through Friday. If at any time there are any questions or concerns, please call 603-249-0620 or email Bill Parker at bparker@milford.nh.gov.

The following reports represent the 2014 activities of the various divisions within the Office:

Planning/Geographic Information Systems- Jodie Levandowski, Town Planner/GIS Coordinator

The Planning/GIS Department provides services to residents, developers and local volunteer boards by reviewing and processing proposed projects within the town. The Department administers the Town's Development Regulations as well the Zoning Ordinance and reviews all applications for consistency with the Milford Master Plan. Additionally the Town's Geographic Information Systems are developed and maintained within the office.

Despite the sluggish economy, Milford continued to witness increased commercial and residential development over the past year. Redevelopment and reuse of existing buildings also took place on commercial and industrial properties in Town. The Planning Board conducted ten

Site Plan Review hearings and five Subdivision Review Hearings. The most notable of the site plan reviews involved the demolition and construction of a new 26,700 sq. ft. two-story St. Joseph's Hospital building. The new building will link with the existing medical office on the rear of the property and site changes include associated parking and drainage improvements and access changes including shifting the existing "Urgent Care" entrance eastward, closing the existing main entrance and creating an entirely new entrance for the new road on the east side of the property. The project also involved the widening of Nashua Street and a new sidewalk. Another notable project in 2014 was the construction of a new gas station/convenience store (Cumberland Farms) on the east end of Nashua Street in the Integrated Commercial - Industrial District. The Project included a 4,513 sq. ft. convenience store, 8 fueling dispensers, an overhead canopy and landscaping improvements.

The Department provided a wide variety of professional community planning services to the citizens of Milford and prospective applicants. Between on-going developments, administrative duties and a variety of special studies and projects, the department remained busy throughout 2014. Below is a summary of the major projects advanced in 2014 and each of these projects implements the overall goals of the Master Plan:

- In 2014 Planning Staff and the Milford Planning Board undertook the stated goal in the Town Master Plan to 'reevaluate the 2005 Brox Community Lands Master Plan to reflect projected changes in community facility needs' (Chapter 3, Community Facilities, 2007). The Planning Board appointed a seven-member ad-hoc committee to review the 2005 Study. After a review of all available materials, knowledge and discussion generated within the Committee, and input from the community use groups the Brox Community Land Master Plan Update Committee prepared a list of conclusions and recommendations for the future development of the Brox Community Lands. The updated plan was adopted by the Planning Board as a future planning document in August of 2014.
- In support of the Planning Board's efforts in 2013 on housing options and building livable neighborhoods, Planning Staff along with the Planning Board and Nashua Regional Planning Commission created the Milford Connectivity Plan. The plan incorporated goals of the Milford Master Plan that relate to community character, economic development, transportation, housing, land use, public health, and open space and conservation. The Connectivity Plan is to be utilized for long range and capital improvements planning. On May 14th 2014 a Connectivity Plan Workshop was held in the Auditorium of Milford Town Hall that welcomed any walkers, runners, cyclist, people without cars, people with mobility concerns, etc. The workshop sought input from Milford residents on needed improvements and priorities for safe travel alternatives around town. The plan will serve as a prioritization guide for the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen for new projects and the potential for new sidewalks and sidewalk improvements.
- Staff, together with Water Utilities and consultant, CDM Smith, INC, successfully completed the integration of the Town's existing sewer and water maps and as-builts into the Town's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) database. Through this integration Planning Staff and Water Utilities can maintain system changes and upgrades in-house and will allow staff to accurately map neighborhood utilities.

Planning Staff also assisted the Planning Board in completing an annual review of the Zoning Ordinance with amendments. Amendments are typically proposed by citizens, board members or staff when it is discovered that the existing requirements of the Ordinance no longer adequately serve their intended purpose. Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance are appropriate

when it is determined a change to the requirements for the town as a whole is a better approach than allowing an exception for one property. Several changes were proposed for inclusion on the 2015 Town Warrant including changes to the Sign Ordinance relative to wall, and temporary long-term and short-term signs.

Staff continually works to keep the town's mapping information up-to-date and accurate. New subdivisions and site plan information is regularly updated into the system along with numerous corrections to the parcel boundary lines and road layers to address inaccuracies. Tax map updates are also completed by staff throughout the year and a continuing program is in place to identify and correct errors on an annual basis. Tax Maps show approximate lot locations only and information shown is not to be used for deed description.

In late 2013 and throughout 2014 Planning Staff in conjunction with the Information Technology Department began the process of hosting the Town's GIS server to include ArcGIS Server installation to allow departmental access to GIS mapping information. This will provide viewers with the ability to turn layers and map sets on and off, access to Assessing database, map printing, and links to Google and Bing maps. This integration will allow for all GIS Viewer updates to be completed on a monthly basis and will assure the Town's GIS files are accurate and up-to-date within a 30-day window.

While performing these duties, an emphasis is continually placed on customer service and community involvement. Department staff strives to recognize public needs by posting on the Town website all Planning Board meeting agendas and staff memos, public hearing notices, meeting minutes, application forms, rules of procedure/bylaws, and regulations, as well as having them available in the Department. 2015 looks to be a productive year as a number of special planning projects are on the horizon.

Building Safety - Dana MacAllister, Building Official

2014 was another busy year for commercial projects in Milford; 45 commercial building permits were issued including the new St. Joseph's Medical Center and Cumberland Farms. Large scale commercial remodels included Ocean State Job Lot (site of the former Stop & Shop) and a restaurant expansion for Mi Jalisco. For residential projects, 14 new home building permits were issued, and 157 remodeling permits were issued. Overall 604 permits were issued, with the majority of permits being for electrical work (228) and renovations/additions (157).

Our department is continually looking for ways to improve customer service. We are in the process of simplifying our fee schedules and permit forms to increase department efficiency and reduce time spent by applicants completing forms. Implementation of these new forms is anticipated by the second quarter of 2015 and will be available on our website. Further anticipated improvements for 2015 include email delivery of inspection reports, which is scheduled to be in place by the end of the year. In addition to plan review and project inspection, we are also available to discuss home improvement projects with Milford residents and help them determine which codes apply to their project. If you have any questions about the building codes or are planning a home improvement project feel free to send an email or call our office at 249-0620.

Health - Dana MacAllister, Health Officer

In 2014 the Health Department began work with the Greater Nashua Health Region planning the next POD (point of dispensing) exercise. The last POD held in Milford was in 2009 and focused on vaccination for the swine flu virus. Milford and its partners in the region are actively preparing for the next event and are researching the addition of a drive-up version to speed distribution in the future.

Seasonal flu, West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and Lyme Disease continue to be major concerns for public health and precautions such as covering coughs and sneezes, hand washing and vaccination is the best way to limit the spread of influenza while proper clothing with long sleeves and pants and insect repellants are your best protection for West Nile Virus (WNV), Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and Lyme disease. Information regarding state health regulations and other health related information is available at the Community Development Offices in Town Hall or on our website www.milford.nh.gov.

Code Enforcement - Dana MacAllister, Code Enforcement

The Office of Community Development investigates potential violations of the State of New Hampshire Building Code, Milford Zoning Ordinance and State Health regulations. In 2014, 69 complaints were logged with building complaints (unsafe structures, construction without permits) being the most often reported (12). Out of the complaints investigated in 2014, 89% were resolved with the remaining complaints still under investigation or in the process of being resolved.

2014 complaints logged:

New Hampshire State Building Code - 14

Milford Zoning Ordinance - 24

Health - 31

In closing, I want to express my appreciation to the dedicated staff of this Office. Customer service is part of our philosophy and we strive to take the extra step to help people through the often complex and overwhelming processes required by local, state, and federal codes and regulations, all while keeping in mind the expressed desires of the community as a whole. I also want to thank the chairs of the Planning Board, Janet Langdell, Chris Beer and Zach Tripp of the Zoning Board as well as the many citizen volunteers, who provide insight, assistance, and patience working with this team.

For further information, visit the Office website at www.milford.nh.gov.

Respectfully submitted,

Bill Parker,

Community Development Director