

Community Planning Worksession

May 24, 2011

Auditorium, Town Hall 6:30 PM

Moderators:

Janet Langdell, Planning Board Chairperson

Sarah Marchant, Town Planner

Participants:

Planning Board

P. Amato

Chris Beer

Judy Plant (CIP)

Steve Duncanson (CIP)

Tom Sloan

BOS:

Nate Carmen, Chairman

Kathy Bauer (PB)

Tim Finan

Mike Putnam (W-S Commissioner, EDAC)

Water-Sewer Commission:

Bob Courage, Chairman

Dale White (EDAC)

Conservation Commission:

Audrey Fraizer, Chairperson

Chris Costantino (EDAC)

Andy Hughes

Tax Increment Financing (TIFD):

John McCormack, Chairman (EDAC)

Al Hicks

ZBA:

Fletcher Seagroves

CIP:

Gil Archambault (BAC)

Matt Lydon (BAC)

Rod Watkins

School Board:

Len Mannino

Bob Willette

Audience:

Kathy Cleveland, Cabinet Press

Fred Elkind, Conservation

Susan Robinson, Planning Board

Town Staff:

Guy Scaife, Town Administrator

Bill Parker, Director Community Development

Shirley Wilson, Recording Secretary

Eric Neilson, Feral McElreavy, Mike McInerney, Audio/Video

The Planning Board is charged with the development and approval of the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) and recently, has been charged with the creation and implementation of an Overlay District to facilitate development of the Brox properties.

Worksession Purpose: To bring together members of Milford's community planning, land use boards, and municipal and school policymaking boards to share information and facilitate productive discussion about Milford's future, and the near-term actions needed to ensure progress in reaching that vision for our community's future.

Worksession Goal: Each group represented at the table will have an opportunity to share their ideas and goals, and will obtain constructive input and information to use as they move forward.

The following groups have been invited: BOS, School Board, Water Sewer Commissioners, TIF District Advisory Board, ZBA, Conservation, PB and CIP, along with representatives from EDAC.

PART I – Community Priorities Driving Community Policy

1. Introductions

2. Board/Committee Priorities

3. Goals Discussion:

- Are we complimenting each other?
- What are Milford's 'Top Priorities'?

PART II – Brox Overlay District

1. Introduction – Planning Board Task

- Process
- Task
- Timeline
- How can you help?

2. Questions and Discussion

J. Langdell opened the worksession, welcomed the participants and explained the ground rules. Tonight's goal is to have an informal discussion about this community's future; to see where the different boards and committees are at, how we are working to shape Milford's future and perhaps identify the areas that we can work more closely together going forward.

Board/Committee Priorities

N. Carmen – BOS

- The ambulance facility is a high priority and we have a worksession on 6/2/11 with members of the Budget Advisory Committee and the Citizens Facility Advisory Committee to nail down what we will put forth as a proposal to educate the public. The ambulance is a much needed facility and it will be our main focus for discussions.
- Osgood Pond dredging has been a long-time goal. The USACE is still working on this, but the logistics are not known. G. Scaife said the project is still in the investigation mode and we may have to come back to the town voters to look at additional financing if we move forward.
- Better communication with the BAC and Commissions is an on-going goal. In reference to the new ambulance facility, we will need input from the BAC, which is a changing committee and the CFAC, which did a great job putting forth their previous recommendations, but currently has no goal. The challenge for the BOS is to reach out to all the boards and committees to keep the lines of communication open.
- West End Fire Station review is kept as a priority because as we look at the Brox Property and the development west of here we need to keep our eyes open and keep a placeholder although there will have to be discussion as to whether it belongs on the CIP.
- Transfer station options: Last night we voted down the contracts for the co-op for single stream recycling; however our focus has not changed because we're going to need to do something in the future.
- Paving plan: We have a worksession coming up where the Board will look at what we are doing with current paving practices and will focus on a three-year plan. Things like truck usage for the upcoming Fletcher site project will have to be taken into consideration for Elm St.
- Town Hall fit up: There are space needs in the town hall that will have to be considered. The CFAC included a nice plan for when the ambulance facility moves out of the town hall and this sort of works into everything else.

Bob Willette - School Board

- The Board is waiting for the state budget to be set to determine what kind of income we will have.
- We have started contract negotiations; we will be handling them ourselves and have hired a lawyer.
- We have a lot of CIP projects but again, will wait to see what we will have for income.
- Milford is really falling behind in technology and we will look into the new report that just came out after we see what the State does.

Bob Courage – Water/Sewer Commission

- The Curtis well project; we currently have two wells on that property and based on qualified recommendations we are putting in a third well rated at 400 gal/min to give us the capability of alternating well usage and pumping. The first well produces 700 gallons/min but the second well, producing 400 gallons/min, is declining due to iron bacteria in the soil. We are cleaning the old well and the results are pretty good. In high demand periods we were maxing out the capabilities of those two wells and in 2010 we purchased about 25% of our water from Pennichuck Water.
- New water source exploration; Water Utilities has approximately \$200,000 to do this project in the capital reserve fund. We are actively pursuing additional water sources for the town in an effort to reduce the need to purchase water from Pennichuck Water who's rates are considerably higher than Milford's; \$3.21/100 CF as compared to \$1.97/100 CF. We have a contract with Pennichuck so we can buy water at half the public rate, but we do need to minimize our purchasing to reduce our costs. We have two sites that look promising and we are going through the regulatory process with the State and EPA, but it may be three years down the road before we get a groundwater removal permit.
- Prospect Hill tank; we will also need to consider the replacement of this 250,000 gallon water tank built in 1899.
- Water main replacement; we are actively working on replacing smaller 6' lines with larger 12' lines. Milford currently has approximately 55 miles of water main and 42 miles of sewer lines. 25:18
- West End of Milford: The existing utilities on the west side of town are adequate to accommodate any growth on the Brox property or in the southwest section of town. The biggest problem will be the water and we will need to find an additional water source or we will have to purchase water to accommodate industrial growth. The sewer system is adequate and could be extended from Old Wilton Rd. There is adequate storage for fire protection in that area with Dram Cup Hill tank at .5 M gallons and Holland tank 1.3M gallons.
- Septage receiving facility; we recently received our grant request for stimulus money for this project. We will borrow 1.2M and half will be ARRA funded.
- Sewer rehab work is ongoing; we are lining old pipes with a new technology and the results have been excellent.

Audrey Frasier – Conservation Commission

- Rail Trail; we're focusing on development of a trail to get to the center of town.
- Souhegan River trail system; we want to encourage people from the community to get out into the natural environment.
- Brox property; we are focusing on retention and improvement of existing trails and development of connections to Tucker Brook and the Milford trail system.

Janet Langdell – Planning Board

- Impact fees; the Board will be reviewing the police impact fees and library impact fees for residential development, and police impact fees for commercial development. In order to establish an impact fee, the project has to be on the CIP, so we will need to have further discussion on the West End Fire Station as was referenced earlier. More information about impact fees will be presented, possibly at a Planning Board meeting and on PEG access and maybe the website.
- Master plan;
The Board is finishing the Traffic and Transportation chapter which includes multimodal forms of transportation: cars, roads, sidewalks, walking trails, rights of way, bike paths. There will be additional input from various groups and commissions in town. As part of this process we have been working with town staff, the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC) and the State on the ten-year plan to advocate for an additional on ramp/off ramp to the 101 by-pass which will relate to the Brox development area.

The Board will be working on the Housing chapter to focus on questions about infill and mixed use as well as our senior housing ordinance.

Long term planning would be strengthened by adding a chapter focusing on the recreation needs of our community and in that process to revisit the Brox community lands, drafted back in 2005. The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission have stepped up along with representatives of MCAA, the School District, Conservation Commission and Planning Board to work on the future recreational needs of the town and that area.

- West Elm St Corridor Overlay District; the Board has been working with the land use sub-committee of the EDAC on developing the design guidelines, similar to the structure that the voters put in place a few years ago for the Nashua/Elm St Corridor that runs from Ponemah Hill Rd to Granite Town Plaza.
- Workforce Housing Factsheet; Sarah Marchant will be updating the information with the 2010 census data.
- Brox Development Overlay District; this project is a result of contracts between the Select Board and the Andover Consulting Group and will be undertaken by the Planning Board, the TIFD Board, and Planning staff. Input will be solicited from a variety of sources and perspectives.

John McCormack – TIFD

The objective for the TIFD Board has remained constant over the last four and a half years and carries the original objective of the MIDC to encourage tax positive development of the property to benefit the community and respect the environment. The challenges we face are a lack of infrastructure and the need to improve site access. It was a coup for us to get the Andover Group also known as Eecotech Capital Partners and it is important as we look to this agreement and the timetable that our time be focused on working with all the partners to encourage involvement and understanding. He referenced the recent warrant articles, the Eecotech process and read an exurb from the upcoming article in the Granite Town Quarterly. The message we need to resonate is to look at the benefit of what is out there and to support development through zoning, access and infrastructure. S. Marchant noted that the Granite Town Quarterly should be in everybody's mailbox this weekend.

Questions and discussion:

G. Archambault inquired about the timeframe for the completion of the well on the Curtis property. B. Courage replied water will be coming out this summer. The additional water supply on a different site may take up to three years to meet all the requirements of NH DES and the EPA safe drinking water act.

S. Marchant closed this portion of the worksession with the message that we are all more aware of other boards' priorities and that we are all on the same page to educate the public about our goals and large projects. The more information we can get out there to the public and to the people you talk to individually, the better off all our projects will be for the community as a whole.

There was a brief recess.

Brox Overlay District-presented by S. Marchant

The P&S was signed by the Selectmen in March and there are some very specific steps and parameters outlined that lead to the development of the Brox properties over several years; the development of the underlying ordinances and regulations that will allow it to develop into a high priority area that business will want to locate in.

In 2011, the BOS signed the agreement with Eecotech Capital Partners, LLC and Eecotech also refers to their process.

- The Planning Board, TIFD Advisory Board, and Eecotech will work together to create a new overlay district for the 2012 ballot which will be aggressive. The new overlay district will include expansion of uses allowed on the property and an expedited land use permitting review process. The idea is that we want to attract development and to do so, we have to promote the “Milford Advantage” and incorporate the Eecotech process of building; long term development in mind with the ability to reuse and adapt form and structure to the changing economy and market so that thirty years from now the development will still be economically viable because of good planning in the forefront.

In 2012, there are specific tasks to be completed.

- The three warrant articles that didn't pass last year will again go to town vote.
- The sale of the proceeds from the sale of the former police station will go into a special fund to kick start the infrastructure.
- Eecotech, working with the Planning Board, will take the lead in developing a master plan of the whole area; more of a site-level plan of their expectations. They will have approximately a year and a half to get through the Planning Board process and if there is no agreement on a master plan the contract will end. It will be a two-step process; the first step will be very fast paced to create the overlay district and second step will take much longer getting to the actual details in planning out the whole development. It was noted that the west end corridor overlay district was completely separate from the Brox overlay district.

The Planning Board has been specifically tasked and will have to go to public hearing by the end of December to meet the RSA deadlines. We will work with the TIFD Advisory Board and Eecotech through a public visioning and education process to establish an overlay district which will encompass Brox properties, TIF District properties and adjacent parcels as we think about how the Brox property will develop. The large adjacent parcels will come up during this process, so the idea is for the Planning Board to create a master plan for the whole area to have one cohesive development that works together to create a phenomenal advantage for Milford and for businesses to come in. It is likely that this overlay district will include other vacant lands and it will be important to include an additional access for Heron Pond School, which has been a long standing priority for the Planning Board. We are thinking on a high level for this large overlay district. Currently the majority of the district is zoned ICI but doesn't include any residential and that is likely to be the key piece of development as it builds out in the larger scale. We need to be honest in our discussions going forward to look at good development of this large area. Residential needs to be on the table and it is part of the P & S agreement. We also see adding hotels, medical biotech, energy, agricultural and recreational uses. This company is very big with innovative agriculture which will fit in nicely in Milford. There are other communities in New Hampshire and in New England that have found some innovative solutions to expedite their review process and it will be very valuable to see how it has worked for those communities and how it will work for us. Two ideas are: to set up an internal administrative process for fast-level approval at staff level so there would be a much more simplified list for those applications going before the Planning Board and to set up a conditional use permit for relief within parameters that would eliminate the hardship standards of the ZBA process.

The biggest part of our process will be to layout the “shalls” and “shoulds” or the framework of the district; public space and open space requirements, types of streets, mandatory areas for road connections. Laying out what the community sees as high priorities such as; site layouts, signs, and build-to lines instead of setbacks that accommodate the conditions of the site. For an expedited permitting process to work, we need to get a very clear vision from the community of what you want to see out there. People are generally excited and we've gotten a lot of positive feedback regarding development of the Brox property, but when we ask what people would like to see out there their attitudes reflect fear of change. So the big task of the Planning Board will be to find a way to get people to articulate what their vision is for development. We have a tremendous opportunity to increase our tax base and bring jobs to our community. The town has the ability to capitalize on this, but to do it effectively in a short amount of time we will need to translate the community's vision into the overlay district. The Planning Department doesn't have any funding for consultants, but we do have the resources from the developer that we will tap into to get some renderings drawn and to get information out to the community. Another component is that the additional interchange off the 101 bypass will be critical to the development of these properties.

J. Langdell explained the community outreach process. We may have a “coffee” on the Oval on a Saturday morning to get input. There will be information posted on the website and many, many presentations even at events. It will be a rapid set of activities and we need the community's help.

Discussion and questions:

J. McCormack said Eecotech's approach is a little different than some of the conventional developers; planning ahead for future use and flexibility adds to long term value. One of the keys to educating and promoting this type of development is mixed use and old fashioned neighborhoods where people live where they work and effective use of green space.

S. Marchant referenced a recent article that in 2010, office space in walkable neighborhoods had half of the vacancy rate of office parks located in urban areas. Also, in the 1970's $\frac{3}{4}$'s of all the people in the housing market had children and today $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$'s are single or two person households that are looking for amenities within close distance that they can walk to. We have a lot of great neighborhoods in Milford but we also have a lot of housing in the woods, so more walkable neighborhoods will compliment these types of job opportunities and businesses. As we go forward, adding to the tax base and bringing in more jobs will be on everybody's minds. J. Langdell said the positive point for Milford is that we have a variety of housing stock now and a variety of living options for people in our community; we will not be ignoring any aspect of that stock, but will build on that strong foundation.

N. Carmen said this is very complex for citizens to understand and as we move forward, a lot more information can now be disclosed. He asked if it would be possible to see a spreadsheet that will show what the financial impact is. Money is important and we should illustrate as simply as we can what we purchased the property for, what we got from the sale of the land and what the financial impact will be to the individual tax bill. We purchased the property and we're keeping the portions that we needed.

A Hughes inquired how much of this development is based on the assumption that a ramp will be built from the 101 bypass. S. Marchant replied a large amount. The developer is working around bringing in this interchange and that will be a critical piece going forward. It will not be funded by the town and it certainly will not be funded by the state, so for the developer to fund that interchange, they need to bring in the right first development. There are a number of ways they could go about developing that land to pay for an interchange, right off the bat. It could be a major retailer or it could be a housing development, but it will only be one piece of this greater master plan pie and we will have to keep in mind that the first thing we see out there is not necessarily indicative of the whole vision. The whole vision will be laid out in the beginning but it may take five to twenty years to develop. We also have to be realistic as to what will pay for that interchange and the developers are working on that diligently. A. Hughes asked how much land would be taken to construct the interchange. S. Marchant said that a large amount of land will have to be utilized and we don't know where or how that will play out. The developer is working with the State to find the best location for that interchange. J. McCormack reiterated that the interchange is a very large part of this project and that development of the Brox property on its own will not satisfy the cost. It is conceivable that we may have to change course depending on what they find and we may have to expand the total scope.

B. Willette inquired about the community portion of the Brox property. S. Marchant replied that the P & S agreement does not include the lower portion of the property that has been identified as the Brox community lands. There has been long term planning for recreation fields which are definitely needed out there and which also ties into the Osgood Pond dredging for materials for the base for the fields. That land will be included in the overlay district and so will the amazing wetlands complex but will not be on the table for the developer. B. Willette said if this passes, what will it do to the present zoning in that area. S. Marchant said it will in most likelihood expand the allowed uses and change some of the parameters for compliance. It will overlay on top of the existing zoning and with the expedited permitting process, make it more favorable for development based on the community's vision. B. Willette referenced the school's two recently subdivided properties off Brookview Dr. S. Marchant said nothing would change for those existing residential lots and they would still have to comply with the State RSA requiring the improvements be done within a specific timeframe.

B. Courage said he was a Selectmen when the Brox property was purchased and the Board's thinking at that time was that this property would take care of the future needs of the town; a school, a cemetery, maybe a fire station someday and the industrial land would be developed, which is what Milford needs. I just hope we are looking beyond what we're going to get out of the land because there will be considerable expense to develop this difficult piece of property. You have to make it practical for development; it can't be just a win-win situation for the town. S. Marchant said that will be part of the expedited permitting review and that is where Eecotech will come in and try to help us find that balance. Their focus is commercial and industrial development. That is what their projects have been in the past and that is what they will be looking for here.

J. Langdell said the vision out there is that we want to make this the premier area within the Souhegan Valley, the southern part of NH, and northern edge of MA that is going to drive commerce and business as well as be a very desirable place for multigenerational residential purposes. We have a lot of work to do very quickly and Sarah will be the point person for this project. Thank you all for attending.

The worksession was adjourned at 8:05PM