



**PLANNING BOARD MINUTES
PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING
TOWN OF FOSTER**

South Foster Fire Station, 5 Mt. Hygeia Road Foster, RI
Wednesday: September 16, 2009 7:00 p.m.

A. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order by Julia Parmentier

B. Roll Call

Present from the planning board were Julia Parmentier, Chair; Pat Moreau, Vice Chair; members Tom Mercier, and Mike Carpenter. Members Marcia Bowden, Helen Hardy and John Neale were excused. Also present were Ann-Marie Ignasher, Town Planner; Michael Grenier, Bob Gravel, Henry and Pamela Chabot, Jerry and Barbara Candelmo, Ron Cervasio, Norma Garnsey, Jade Realty Inc., Fred Stolle, Paul Santopietro, Steve Santopietro, Richard Notardonato, Lynne Rider, William Dallesandro, Richard Blodgett and Gordon Rogers.

C. Approval of Minutes

D. Correspondence and Review

E. Board Members' Reports

F. Planner's Report

G. Zoning – Opinion Requested

H. Commercial Site Reviews

None

I. Administrative Subdivisions

None

J. Minor Subdivisions

None

K. Major Subdivisions/Land Development

None

L. New Business

Julia introduced what the board has been doing the past year and presented the slide presentation. Also stated that the board is requesting the public's feedback. The board will try to answer all questions at the end of the meeting.

Some general comments made by Julia during the presentation:

- 1) commented about the high water table along route 6 – makes it difficult to development some of the lots; and
- 2) the lots along Route 6 – due to the strip zoning – often have more than one zoning designation which requires the land owner to make a choice to either be residential or commercial; and
- 3) this makes it difficult to use creative thinking for the development of these properties; and
- 4) made reference to the comprehensive plans, the first one and all forward plans looking for key areas for development; and
- 5) upgrade the Route 6 zoning to reflect and maintain the rural character of the town, create space to group commercial development together to make things easier for the residents; and
- 6) scale that is appropriate to the town, and to what the residents of the town need; and
- 7) talked about “hamlets” mixed businesses and homes – residential with proper commercial entities; and
- 8) discussed development constraints along route 6 – wetlands, hydric soils, high water tables, steep slopes, rocky
- 9) board looked to particular areas to concentrate the commercial areas of Route 6; and
- 10) explained what the upgrade will mean to those that already have commercial sites on Route 6 vs. residences;
- 11) discussed concentrated localized commercial development;

Julia stated the board looked at vacant available land and land being used for commercial businesses now. Explanation of the process how to complete the Route 6 upgrade of zoning. Based on feedback from the public tonight, the board will make recommendations to the town council. It is the town council that will hold the public hearings regarding the zoning upgrade of Route 6.

Julia finished with some frequently asked questions slide of the presentation, to further explain the process.

Comments and concerns as stated by attendees of the meeting:

Ron Cervasio – Asked the acreage of the properties located within the individual nodes. Julia did not have that information with her and said she would look into that.

Ron Cervasio – Feels the plan does not fit the necessity of “the Foster” in the future. Feels the only thing that will ever be in Foster is going to be warehousing. That the community cannot dictate what will come into the town.

Lynn Rider – Sat in on many of the workshops, this is a plan, should a small business come into town it will be “gently” guided to one of these modes – however, this does mean that this particular plan cannot be changed in the future. This is a guide for the future; it is not in concrete, not written in stone, not a be all and end all.

Gordon Rodgers – Questioned the width of the commercial zone. Julia stated that the commercial zones do vary depending on whether it is zoned as highway commercial or neighborhood commercial. Gordon also questioned the reasoning for mentioning the wetlands, hydric soils and the high water tables. Julia explained the effect those three items have on the ability to develop the particular site, and the cost that can be incurred. There was some discussion regarding the DEM requirements for septic systems.

Ron Cervasio – Recognizes Julia geological background. “Too much of what people want, and presume what Foster should be are put into these plans.” He feels Foster is no longer a rural community, that it is a suburban community where people might have their home here, but they work elsewhere outside the community.

Mike Carpenter – Thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. There really is nobody here that has an argument with the plan, because the plan was brought forth back in 1991 to re-do the zoning along Route 6. General feeling that people do look at Foster as rural community; however, we must look at the right perspective here, and what our objective was to look at this strip going down route 6 – that serves nobody, that was just a designated location. (Ron Cervasio agrees with Mike on this point). What the planning board tried to do was to put proper designations on the real estate located along Route 6. Must look at what has real potential for development, what can we do to help reasonable development in Foster – everyone was aware we had to select good spots for commercial development – the board chose to focus on the “can do” possibilities - “there is not a whole lot of predictability” at this time due to the economy.

Ron Cervasio – Feels that near the state line 500 acres should be zoned commercial for warehousing. Said what the planning board did was a great first step – but probably does not give any more land for commercial development than what there is now. Feels there should be more land designated for commercial. We can no longer support owner operated businesses.

Fred Stolle – Wetlands and hydric soils – is that not more of a technical development issue versus a planning issue? Building techniques are quite varied – the builder themselves should be making the decision if they are willing to bear the burden of the expense.

Warren Ducharme – Hydric soils – a portion of those on (east) route 6 also affect the Scituate Reservoir Watershed. He remembers that the state water supply board wanted to prohibit all commercial development along that portion of Route 6. Warren at that time explained to the water supply board the only way that would work would be if the water supply board purchased all of the development rights to that area.

Julia – Continued the discussion regarding all of the environmental constraints along Route 6 and that planning had to take them into consideration when creating this plan. The planning board was looking to see where future development could be reasonably located. We chose areas with certain characteristics with buildable land. Environmental constraints are all along Route 6.

Lynne – From a planning standpoint we want business to come out here and to be successful. Looking to see what areas are more viable, less expensive for the business owner. We want to give people the chance to succeed.

Fred Stolle – It is not a zoning issue – it is a business development issue. Is it truly an accurate way to develop this plan? Once you designate a property under zoning, to change from agricultural / residential to commercial – you have to show that you have no viable use of that property. This is a very difficult level to reach – to show that there is no viable use of the land. Once you give a designation, it matters.

Gordon Rodgers – Discussed the issue of acreage around a single gas station located on Route 6, and how he thought the re-zoning would affect that particular parcel of real estate.

Warren Ducharme – States that the zoning nodes idea goes back to the comprehensive plans prior to the 1990’s, and he commended the planning board for attacking this problem as it should have been done ten (10) or fifteen (15) years ago. Though he does feel that some of the nodes should be larger; for example the corner where Northwest Community Health was going to locate. Hard enough to develop with well head protection – there is no public water, or public sewer along Route 6.

Julia closes out the meeting by answering one or two last questions and asks the public to feel free to look at the maps, and to talk to the planning board members. She thanks the public for attending.

M. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned by Julia

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann-Marie L. Ignasher, Town Planner