



NORTHBRIDGE PLANNING BOARD MINUTES

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

Recognizing the presence of a quorum Vice Chairman Mark Key called the meeting to order at 6:00PM with Pamela Ferrara and George Murray in attendance. R. Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner was also present. Chairman Brian Massey and Cindy Key, Associate member were absent. (One vacancy of the Planning Board)

The following members of the public were in attendance: Frank Niro; Bill Renaud & Jeanne Hebert (Executive Director Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce)

ZONING PUBLIC WORKSHOP

[See attached workshop notes & copy of handouts]

I. CITIZENS FORUM

None

II. 18-24 EAST STREET –REVIEW/DECISION

Form A (81-P) plan

Planning Board reviewed with Attorney Frank Niro of the Law Office of W. Robert Knapik, P.C. ANR plan for 18-24 East Street. Mr. Bechtholdt provided the Board with a general overview of the intent of the application explaining the lot includes three (3) existing dwellings that predate the adoption of subdivision regulations for Northbridge.

Mr. Bechtholdt offered some insight and clarification concerning Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41A Section 81L, exemption under the ANR endorsement process. Mr. Bechtholdt also noted receipt of letter dated November 09, 2015 from the Inspector of Buildings regarding his determination of pre-existing non-conforming lot, as well as letter dated October 29, 2015 from the Law Office of W. Robert Knapik, P.C. After some general discussion regarding the locus area and site features (driveway access, etc.) the Planning Board concluded its review.

Upon motion duly made (Murray) and seconded (Ferrara) the Planning Board voted (3-0) to grant ANR endorsement for the ANR plan dated November 09, 2015 for 18-24 East Street, pursuant to MGL CH 41A SEC 81L [Exemption]; the division of a tract of land on which two or more buildings were standing when the subdivision control law went into effect in the city or town in which the land lies into separate lots on each of which one of such buildings remains standing, shall not constitute a subdivision.

The Planning Board endorsed the ANR plan (Mylar & prints) at the conclusion of its meeting.

III. MAIN STREET Assessors Map 2 Parcel(s) 36, 37 & 45 -CONT. PUBLIC HEARING

Special Permit [§173-47 B.2 -Planned Business Development]

Site Plan [§173-49.1 –Site plan review by Planning Board]

Upon motion duly made (Murray) and seconded (Ferrara) the Planning Board voted (3-0) to continue without discussion the Site Plan/Special Permit reviews as requested of the Applicant/Engineer to Tuesday,

November 24, 2015 (7:35PM –Northbridge Memorial Town Hall). Reference is made to Heritage Design Group letter dated November 05, 2015 requesting continuance.

IV. SUBDIVISION RULES & REGULATIONS -CONT. PUBLIC HEARING

MGL CH 41 81Q (Amendments)

Upon motion duly made (Murray) and seconded (Ferrara) the Planning Board voted (3-0) to continue without discussion the public hearing to Tuesday, November 24, 2015 at 8:05PM.

V. WHITINSVILLE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL –CONT. PUBLIC MEETING

Site Plan [§173-49.1 –Site plan review by Planning Board]

Upon motion duly made (Murray) and seconded (Ferrara) the Planning Board voted (3-0) to continue without discussion the Site Plan review as requested of the Applicant/Engineer to Tuesday, November 24, 2015 at 7:55PM. Reference is made to Andrews Survey & Engineering letter dated November 09, 2015 requesting continuance.

OLD / NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Meeting Minutes – 06/09; 06/23; 08/25; 09/08; 09/22; 10/13; & 10/20/2015

Upon separate motion(s) duly made (Murray) and seconded (Ferrara) the Planning Board voted (3-0) to approve as amended the following meeting minutes: June 23, 2015; August 25, 2015; September 08, 2015; and October 13, 2015. The Planning Board tabled action on June 06, 2015, September 22, 2015 and October 20, 2015.

2016 Planning Board Meeting Schedule –Review/Approval

Upon motion duly made (Murray) and seconded (Ferrara) the Planning Board voted (3-0) to establish the following meeting schedule for the 2016 calendar year:

Tuesday, January 12, 2016	Tuesday, May 10, 2016	Tuesday, September 13, 2016
Tuesday, January 26, 2016	Tuesday, May 24, 2016	Tuesday, September 27, 2016
Tuesday, February 09, 2016	Tuesday, June 14, 2016	Tuesday, October 11, 2016
Tuesday, February 23, 2016	Tuesday, June 28, 2016	Tuesday, October 18, 2016
Tuesday, March 08, 2016	Tuesday, July 12, 2016	Tuesday, November 01, 2016
Tuesday, March 22, 2016	Tuesday, July 26, 2016	Tuesday, November 15, 2016
Tuesday, April 12, 2016	Tuesday, August 09, 2016	Tuesday, December 06, 2016
Tuesday, April 26, 2016	Tuesday, August 23, 2016	Tuesday, December 20, 2016

Open Space & Recreation Plan –Schedule Workshop

Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that arrangements have been made for the Board of Selectmen to consider acceptance of the one-time monetary donation (gift) from Aris Group, LLC for the Pine Knoll Special Permit modification at its meeting of Monday, November 23, 2015, after which the Planning Board may look to schedule a meeting with the Consultant (Beals + Thomas) to meeting with the Ad-Hoc Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Committee.

Housing Production Plan –Schedule Public Workshop

Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Planning Board that arrangements have been made for the Board of Selectmen to consider acceptance of the one-time monetary donation (gift) from Aris Group, LLC for the Pine Knoll Special Permit modification at its meeting of Monday, November 23, 2015, after which the Planning Board may look to schedule a meeting with the Consultant (Karen Sunnarborg) to review the scope of work for the preparation of the town's Housing Production Plan.

Subdivision/Site Developments –Status/Update(s)

Mr. Bechtholdt explained that he has not heard from J&F Marinella Dev since the Sewer Superintendent informed him of the sewer pump failure within the Camelot subdivision; Mr. Bechtholdt will look to get an update. Mr. Bechtholdt informed the Board that the remaining portion of Fairway Drive had been paved (final top-coat); the developer has coordinated paving with DPW and JH Engineering Group, the Board's consultant. Mr. Bechtholdt advised the Board that he held a construction brief on October 28, 2015 for the Leonardo Estates subdivision to coordinate with DPW, Building Department and JH Engineering necessary and required inspections (including certifications) specific to the retaining wall and wetland crossing (culvert). Mr. Bechtholdt invited Planning Board members to view the wetland crossing (very large/substantial) for the Carpenter Estates subdivision, noting similar discussions have been had coordinating inspections with DPW, Building Department and the Board's consulting engineer. Mr. Bechtholdt explained to the Planning Board that arrangements have been made for the Board to consider the final lot release and certificate of completion for Deane Way (Hillside Garden Estates) to be considered at its meeting of November 24, 2015.

Green Meadow Court –Status/Update

Tabled –no discussion

Mixed Use Bylaw –Outline/Review

Tabled –no discussion

Mail –Review

In addition to the mail listed (attached) the Planning Board noted receipt of the following communications: November 10, 2015 Agenda; draft agendas for November 24, 2015 and December 8, 2015; Notice of Public Workshop -Zoning; Form A -Application for Endorsement of Plan Believed Not to Require Approval for 18-24 East Street; Letter dated October 27, 2015 to Planning Board from Law Office of W. Robert Knapik, PC concerning 18-24 East Street; Checklist for Approval Not Required for 18-24 East Street; Letter dated October 29, 2015 to Building Inspector from Law Office of W. Robert Knapik, PC concerning 18-24 East Street; MA GIS Parcel/ Ortho Data Layer for 19-8-24 East Street; Assessor's Field Record Card for 18-24 East Street; Email dated November 4, 2015 to Law Office of W. Robert Knapik, PC from Town Planner concerning 18-24 East Street; 81L Exemption document pages 70-72; Letter dated April 20, 2015 to Board of Selectmen, Town Manager's Office, Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board and Building Commissioner from Petrini & Associates, PC regarding Quarterly Update on Relevant Land Use and Zoning Decisions; Memo dated October 29, 2015 to Heritage Design Group from Town Planner concerning Main Street Commercial Special Permit (Planned Business Development) and Site Plan Review; Letter dated October 30, 2015 to Town Planner from Heritage Design Group regarding Site Plan Review & Special Permit for Main Street Commercial; Letter dated October 13, 2015 to Town Planner from Heritage Design Group concerning Site Plan Review Comments for Main Street Commercial, Letter dated October 13, 2015 to Town Planner from Heritage Design Group regarding Site Plan Review Comments for Main Street Commercial; Memo dated October 30, 2015 to Planning Board & Andrews Engineering from Town Planner regarding Whitinsville Christian School; Memo dated November 4, 2015 to Planning Board from DPW Sewer Superintendent concerning Whitinsville Christian School; Memo dated October 28, 2015 to Planning Board

from Conservation Commission regarding Whitinsville Christian School; Memo dated October 19, 2015 to Town Planner from Building Inspector regarding Whitinsville Christian School; Email dated October 30, 2015 to Town Planner, Whitinsville Water Company, Planning Administrative Assistant, Fire Chief, Building Inspector, DPE Director, DPW Highway Superintendent, Board of Health, & DPW Sewer Superintendent with a cc: to Andrews Engineering and Planning Board Chair from Whitinsville Water Company concerning Whitinsville Christian School; Technical Review Meeting Noted dated October 28, 2015 from Town Planner regarding Whitinsville Christian School; Letter dated October 24, 2015 to Town Planner with a cc: to Conservation Commission from JH Engineering concerning Whitinsville Christian School Site Plan “Peer Review;” Site Plan Review Checklist dated October 27, 2015 for Whitinsville Christian School; DRAFT Certificate of Approval to Town Clerk from Planning Board for Site Plan Review- Whitinsville Christian School Fine Arts & Athletics Center; DRAFT Minutes of October 13, 2015; DRAFT Minutes of October 20, 2015; Email dated October 22, 2015 to Planning Board, Planning Administrative Assistant, & Town Planner with a cc: to JH Engineering from Town Planner regarding the Camelot – Sewer Pump Failure; Email dated October 23, 2015 to Mass Planners List from Mass Planner regarding Notice of Funding for Technical Assistance MA Downtown Initiative Program; 2015 Planning Board Meeting Schedule; DRAFT 2016 Planning Board Meeting Schedule; Letter dated October 23, 2015 to Planning Board from Hillside Garden Estates, LLC concerning Hillside Garden Estates requesting release of Performance Guaranty; Chapter 222 – Subdivision Rules and Regulations pages 37-40; Email dated October 28, 2015 Sutton Planning from Town Planner regarding Walmart Sewer; Project Scope and Memorandum of Understanding dated November 4, 2015 to Town Planner from CMRPC regarding Scope of Work – Trail and Canoe Launch Grant Application LPA Project; 2015 Planning Board Meeting Schedule.

Other

Mr. Bechtholdt informed the Planning Board that the Walmart facility located at Valley Parkway (Northbridge) has submitted sewer plans to tie-in to Sutton’s municipal sanitary sewer. Mr. Bechtholdt explained that it is his understanding that the sewer extension and sewer pump installation will be designed and constructed to not only satisfy the immediate needs of Walmart but will allow for future connections along Main Street and Lasell Road. Mr. Bechtholdt noted receipt of letter/packet dated November 06, 2015 from Bergmann Associates, on behalf of Walmart. Planning Board acknowledged receipt of CMRPC’s project scope of work for 2040 Providence Road Trail Grant.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no additional business the Planning Board adjourned its meeting of Tuesday, November 10, 2015 at or about 7:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by the Planning Board –

R. Gary Bechtholdt II
Town Planner

Cc: Town Clerk

Prepared By: R.Gary Bechtholdt II, Town Planner

11.20.2015



ZONING WORKSHOP

The Northbridge Planning Board, in cooperation with the Board of Selectmen, hosted a public workshop Tuesday, November 10, 2015 from 6PM to approximately 7PM (Northridge Memorial Town Hall) discussing zoning and economic development strategies & opportunities for the town.

The workshop began with a general overview & summary brief on ongoing economic development initiatives followed by an assessment of the town's existing Zoning Bylaw (Chapter 173) including Table of Use Regulations, Land Use Terms & Definitions, and Zoning Districts.

Attendees were asked to offer opinions and commentary on potential zoning amendments and land use development patterns within certain locus areas of town. The Planning Board will look to hold subsequent workshops and/or public meetings based upon feedback received.

Provided below are the meeting notes from the Zoning Workshop.

Tuesday, November 10, 2015 (6:00 PM –Northbridge Memorial Town Hall)

Attendees: R. Gary Bechtholdt II (Town Planner); Mark Key (Planning Board Vice Chairman); Pamela Ferrara (Planning Board Clerk); George Murray (Planning Board Member); Jeannie Hebert (Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce President & CEO); & Bill Renaud (Property Owner)

The Planning Board opened the public workshop; Board members and attendees introduced themselves. Mr. Renaud noted he recently purchased the old Dehaan Motors building (Linwood Ave) renovating the building over the past year and a half.

Mr. Bechtholdt presented the town's Zoning Map, provided a handout (attached) and distributed excerpts/sections of the Zoning Bylaw including Terms Defined [§173-2]; Districts Enumerated (Zoning Districts) [§173-3]; Table of Use Regulations [§173-12]; Table of Area Regulations [§173-19]; and Table of Height & Bulk Regulations [§173-20].

Mr. Bechtholdt, noting the low turnout, asked those in attendance to help spread the word and start the dialogue on economic development initiatives for Northbridge specific to zoning. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated he had hoped a group of residents, business owners and others he and the Town Manager had met with attended the workshop. Mr. Bechtholdt explained that the public workshop notice was distributed to each Zoning Board member, the Board of Selectmen, the Town Manager, the Building Inspector, as well as included on the town's webpage and posted on the local access cable channel. Planning Board members hoped town officials would participate in the discussion.

Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that he spoke with the Building Inspector earlier and would review his thoughts and concerns. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested that Mr. Renaud could share his recent experiences in permitting a

project and describe the hurdles he had to overcome to re-occupy an existing building (Dehaan Motors) located within one of the Business Districts in town.

Mr. Bechtholdt noted another instance where the change in use of an existing building (w/in Shaw's Plaza) required the issuance of a Special Permit (Zoning Board) for a food establishment within the Business Zone. This resulted in delaying the project/opening for a number of months.

Mr. Bechtholdt suggested the town wants to be considered "business friendly" however certain local requirements and procedures make permitting difficult and cumbersome. Mr. Bechtholdt felt the town can be "business friendly" and still have the necessary oversight; to do this amendments to our Zoning Bylaw should be considered.

Mr. Bechtholdt suggested, with a larger turnout he would have asked attendees to briefly note their expectations and what concerns they may have with current zoning and local permitting. One of the intentions of the workshop is to work together in addressing a common goal of economic development, job creation and offsetting the residential ratio.

Mr. Bechtholdt reminded attendees that every piece of property is zoned for some sort of development; residential, commercial/retail or industrial. There is no zoning district in town that specifies open space; there is no zoning that prohibits development. Mr. Bechtholdt explained the intensity of use (density, size of building, setback, lot size, parking, type of use, etc.) is dependent on the zoning district. Understanding these property rights Mr. Bechtholdt highlighted and briefly reviewed the various sections of the Zoning Bylaw (sections noted above).

Attendees then reviewed the Zoning Map noting the locations of the Business Zones (B1, B2 & B3); the Industrial Zones (I1 & I2) and the Residential Zones (R1-R6). Business One Zoning District Church Street (Whitinsville), Providence Road (Rockdale & Linwood) and portion of Plummers Corner.

Mr. Bechtholdt recalled talking with Henry Lane and Barbara Gaudette years ago concerning the establishment of the Zoning Districts in town, suggesting in most cases properties were zoned based upon their existing uses at that time. Attendees reviewed the Zoning Map noting locations of the Business Two Zoning Districts; Business Three and the two (2) Industrial Districts (Whitin, Linwood, Riverdale, and Rockdale mills).

Attendees noted the Zoning Districts along Rt. 146 and Main Street. Mr. Bechtholdt informed the Board that Walmart is currently under a consent order to replace its onsite septic system or tie into a municipal system; and explained Walmart is looking to connect to the sanitary sewer system in Sutton. Mr. Bechtholdt explained if Walmart does in fact connect to Sutton sewer this will open up the development potential of under-developed properties along Main Street and Lasell Road in Northbridge. Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that he has spoken with the Sewer Superintendent and Town Manager who understands the Planning Board's desire to have the sewer line installed not only for the benefit of Walmart but for the future development of others properties along Main Street as well. Attendees acknowledged the potential economic benefits in providing sewer to this area directly off RT 146.

Attendees reviewed location of Industrial zoned land and briefly noted permitted uses in the Industrial One (I1) and Industrial Two (I2) Zoning Districts. Some general discussion was had specific to the Industrial land located off Upton Road, Providence Road, etc.

After the overview of the existing Zoning Districts attendees discussed potential re-use of the former Milford Regional Medical Center, a large vacant building within the Residential –Three (R3) Zoning District located at the corner of Church Street and Granite Street. Ms. Hebert explained that Quinsigamond Community College is exploring opportunities to locate a satellite campus within the Blackstone Valley and has identified this property as a potential location. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested that an “Educational Use” may be considered an exempt use, however would need to review with the Building Inspector. Ms. Hebert will also look to discuss potential other uses (tenants) with the Building Inspector, in addition to the satellite campus such as a retail or business component.

Mr. Key indicated that he supports Quinsigamond Community College’s initiative and recognizes that there is a process as to what needs to be done for potential re-use; asking how can we make it simple and still uphold our fiduciary duties.

Mr. Bechtholdt, understanding the education use may be considered exempt under zoning (allowed by-right) suggested the first step, once potential other tenant uses are defined would be to review any restrictions on uses with the Building Inspector to determine what may or may not be allowed as an accessory use. Based upon those discussions a zoning change may or may not be necessary. If a zone change is needed perhaps the abutting Business zone could be extended. Ms. Hebert indicated initially other tenants (in addition to Quinsigamond Community College) would likely not be included in the initial phase. Mr. Bechtholdt offered to talk with the Building Inspector and Ms. Hebert regarding re-use and potential tenant uses.

Board members supported the idea of Quinsigamond Community College locating in Northbridge and felt its presence may help generate and encourage private investment downtown and other economic development opportunities for the town.

Mr. Key felt based upon his observation reviewing the town’s Zoning Map and permitted uses; the zones are very cut-up. Mr. Bechtholdt agreed noting there is not a lot of area of transition between industrial and residential zones. Mr. Murray explained that this is typical of most New England towns with mills and small villages. Mr. Renaud concurred, suggesting properties when designated for zoning were zoned for what was there at the time and not necessarily planned (mills were zoned industrial next to homes zoned residential).

Mr. Renaud suggested part of the problem with this type of zoning origination (establishment of the Zoning Districts in Northbridge) are instances where a business was permitted at one time and then closes; and a new use under that certain zone may or may not be allowed today; end up restricting new uses. Mr. Renaud explained that he needed to secure a special permit with the Zoning Board for an office use within the Business –Two, suggesting he could have used the property for a more intense uses by-right but a less intense use like a commercial office required months of waiting for the permitting through the ZBA.

Mr. Bechtholdt indicated that the Business-Two Zoning District is typically reserved for automobile uses and services such as a car dealership, auto repair, etc. Mr. Renaud joked that he could have put in vending

machines or an arcade by-right but a general office service required a special permit. Mr. Renaud suggested if his tenant moves out he may need to obtain a new permit from the Zoning Board.

Mr. Bechtholdt, in reference to the town's Table of Use Regulations (Section 173-12 of the Zoning Bylaw), noted his discussions with the Inspector of Buildings included specifically the limited uses allowed by-right in the Business –Two Zoning District. Planning Board may look to amend the zoning to expand the uses allowed within the B2 zone.

Mr. Bechtholdt reminded the Planning Board of a situation where a (new) tenant in Shaw's Plaza had to secure a special permit for a yogurt store in the Business-Three (B3) Zoning District; food establishment allowed by-right in the B1 and by special permit in the B3. Three to four month later the yogurt store received its Special Permit from the Zoning Board. Planning Board may look to amend zoning to modify B3 uses as well.

Mr. Key suggested the challenge is how we change the process; change the definition, change the zoning or something else. Mr. Murray felt a lot of the zoning defined at the time was determined on what Whitin Machine Works wanted; they had some much control over the land and how the zoning came to be in Northbridge.

Mr. Key, noting that the zoning can be changed over time, asked what is the shape of Northbridge moving forward; what are the opportunities; what are the types businesses that may look to locate in this area. Mr. Bechtholdt agreed noting one also needs to look at available infrastructure (water/sewer), location (proximity to commercial nodes, etc.) and accessibility (roadway networks) when looking at rezoning an area from one zone to another.

Mr. Bechtholdt reminded Board members of a potential petition to rezone land near Plummers' Corner (Church Street) from residential to a business zone (near Varky's Cleaners). The Board would welcome a discussion with the petitioner to present a proposal for consideration. Mr. Key indicated based upon reviewing the zoning map and other factors (proximity) amending the zoning for this purpose may make sense. Mr. Key appreciated the opportunity to look at the bigger picture vs. site specific or individual plots of land.

Ms. Hebert indicated at one time there was some general discussion about the long-term viability of the Plummer Park playground and the idea to rezone the property to business and layout a roadway network connecting Church Street Extension to Edgemere and/or Plummer Ave (thereby elevating traffic congestion at Plummers Corner).

Mr. Bechtholdt suggested the town can do its best to plan ahead but there are many factors and it is not uncommon or unusual to have someone suggest a rezone or extend an existing zone. When considering a rezone ask yourself does it make sense based on available infrastructure, traffic (transportation corridors), and the relationship with other abutting uses and zoning districts. Mr. Bechtholdt noted in some instances a request to change a zone may be for a specific use or tenant where they (business) have done vetting concerning available infrastructure, existing traffic counts, etc.

Mr. Key questioned if there was opportunity along RT 146 for additional economic development; Mr. Murray explained there is a series of utility and gas lines that extend along RT 146 in Northbridge with limited access

for development besides Main Street. Mr. Bechtholdt concurred, noting Northbridge does not have direct access (frontage) along RT 146 like Sutton. The access to/from Purgatory Road is zoned Business where the West End Creamery is. Mr. Bechtholdt suggested the properties along Main Street near Valley Parkway, designated as Priority Development Sites, should benefit from sewer (Walmart) expanding the build-out potential and attracting businesses, where on-site septic may have limited interest to develop those properties.

Mr. Key asked from an economic development standpoint (bigger picture) what is coming in this direction and what is the vision? Ms. Hebert explained that they are working on attracting advance manufacturing, including medical products where it may be easier for them to retro-fit an existing or vacant building for what their needs are.

Ms. Hebert described Northbridge as a border area competing with Rhode Island, where they (RI) are calling our existing businesses to entice them to locate in Rhode Island; when Woonsocket Glass Manufacturing come into town from Rhode Island we were pleasantly surprised. Ms. Hebert noted RI has PAD-ready sites (Pre-Approved Development sites) and offer aggressive tax incentives. Ms. Hebert suggested the town needs to make its zoning and permitting as easy as possible because there is always someone trying to compete and attract business to locate somewhere else. Mr. Bechtholdt offered that the town's tax rate is relatively low and a positive for companies looking to locate in the Valley and agreed with Ms. Hebert.

Mr. Bechtholdt suggested the town is fortunate to have a facility the size of the Shop (Whitin Machine Works) where there is approximately a million square-feet of tenant space; however dealing with an old building may be perfect for business start-ups and incubator space but may not necessarily be ideal for growing businesses or certain types of other uses (compartmentalized).

Ms. Hebert noted that she is working with someone (in advance manufacturing) who is looking to expand her business and has looked to the Sutton Commerce Park however the remaining development sites there are too small. Mr. Bechtholdt asked if the Osterman Commerce Park in Northridge was an option; Ms. Hebert indicated that she would discuss with her.

Mr. Bechtholdt asked Ms. Hebert if she found that business owners prefer to own vs. a lease option; suggesting some economic development opportunities may be lost or delayed in Northbridge where property owners would rather lease than sell out right; Ms. Hebert agreed. Ms. Hebert indicated that growing business prefer to own; once they outgrow there space they typically want to own; they want a new space and want to own (do not want a landlord).

Mr. Bechtholdt, in reference to the Zoning Map, pointed out the large tracts of land zoned Industrial along RT 122 (Providence Road), noted there may be some encumbrances on the land (ledge, topography) however there is potential for development. Ms. Hebert indicated that Access Design (recently) was considered for the property located off Providence Road however the amount of site prep and infrastructure needed made it price prohibited.

Mr. Murray asked Ms. Hebert if she was aware of any grants available through the state for economic development; to get land PAD-ready or at least cleared. Ms. Hebert was not aware of any programs other than MassWorks which the town has applied for in the past. Mr. Murray felt we can have all the zoning in

place we want but if the town does not get some help in putting it together (getting the land ready) the town is not able to spend the millions of dollars necessary for infrastructure, etc. Ms. Hebert suggested the town look to talk with its legislators to see if they can include a line item; get the legislators in and appeal to them that people are interested in locating in Northbridge but its cost prohibited and as a result may lose businesses to neighboring Rhode Island.

Mr. Renaud asked what the tax potential could be for developing the land on Providence Road (RT 122) and inquired about tax incentives, noting Worcester recently waived/reduced taxes for a hotel to attract businesses. Mr. Murray added Grafton had been proactive as well. Ms. Hebert suggested the difficulty in Grafton, which is not shared with Northbridge, is the pad-ready sites are not easy to get to.

Attendees agreed that the undeveloped properties along Providence Road (RT 122) had encumbrances associated with the land and lacked infrastructure (water/sewer) which may make it harder (economic/costs) to develop; Northbridge is not at a point where developers will prepare PAD-ready sites based on speculation. The Board would like to explore possibilities and talk with the property owners on their thoughts and concerns with developing the industrial land.

Mr. Key mentioned the articles that he reads, which is more involved with workforce development than anything else, is that Massachusetts is heavily in need of education; Ms. Hebert and Mr. Bechtholdt agreed. Ms. Hebert note that she is involved in trying to partner Quinsigamond with manufacturers to develop specific curriculum to attract advance manufacturing and develop a workforce and create incubator space which is very attractive to the college (vocational training) and is preparing for that partnership.

Mr. Key was supportive of Quinsigamond's initiatives and felt it would be a really good fit for Northbridge. Ms. Hebert agreed; would be a shot in the arm for the Valley and a good boost for the downtown.

Mr. Bechtholdt concluded the discussion reminding attendees that there are other elements of zoning in addition to the Zoning Map and Districts; including the Table of Area Regulations, Table of Use and the Table of Height & Bulk Regulations which the town recently amended to increase the height permitted in the Industrial zones. All components of our zoning regulations need to be looked at because when a business considers Northbridge they must review the zoning and satisfy all the requirements, if they can't or it's too onerous (time consuming or requires a Special Permit vs. by-right somewhere else) or too expensive (site development) they may move on to another town.

The Planning Board thanked attendees for participating and agreed despite the low turnout felt the discussion was very useful and beneficial. The Planning Board will look to host a follow-up workshop in the coming months with the idea of focusing its discussion on the Plummers Corner area & Providence Road (RT 122) and the Table of Use Regulations.

PLANNING BOARD WORKSHOP -ZONING

Economic Development – Strategies & Opportunities

Tuesday, November 10, 2015 (6 to 7PM –Town Hall)

(Local) **Town of Northbridge Chapter 173 –ZONING**

- ✓ [§173-2] Terms defined
- ✓ [§173-3] Districts Enumerated (*Zoning Districts*)
- ✓ [§173-12] Table of Use Regulations
- ✓ [§173-19] Table of Area Regulations
- ✓ [§173-20] Table of Height and Bulk Regulations

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(State) **Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40A –ZONING**

- Section 5 –Adoption or change of zoning ordinance or by-laws; procedure
- Section 9 –Special permits
- Section 10 –Variances