

PLANNING BOARD

[2012 ANNUAL REPORT]

The Northbridge Planning Board meets the second and fourth Tuesday of the month in the Selectmen's Chamber of the Northbridge Memorial Town Hall (7 Main Street). The Planning Board consists of five (5) elected members and one (1) appointed associate member. The Planning Board has the responsibility to review proposed development projects and make decisions in accordance with state/local bylaws and regulations. The Planning Board is assisted by the Community Planning & Development Office (14 Hill Street –Aldrich School Town Hall Annex), which is staffed by a Town Planner, R. Gary Bechtholdt II and a Planning/Conservation Secretary, Barbara A. Kinney.

The Planning Board's official powers and responsibilities are defined in the Northbridge Subdivision Regulations, the Northbridge Zoning Bylaws, and as prescribed in Massachusetts General Laws. The subdivision rules and regulations have been enacted to protect the safety, convenience and welfare of the inhabitants of Northbridge by regulating the laying out of new lots and construction of ways providing access to lots therein. In addition to subdivision control, the Planning Board reviews site plan developments; the Board reviews proposals in accordance with Chapter 173 of the Zoning Bylaw. The Planning Board oversees development proposals from the planning stage through completion of a project. The Board is required to hold public hearings for zoning amendments articles prior to Town Meeting action.

During the calendar year of 2012, the Planning Board held 22 public meetings. Applications reviewed by the Planning Board included Approval Not Required (ANR) - division of land creating new lots on existing/approved roadways; Site Development - plans for commercial/industrial developments; and Common driveway special permits.

The Camelot subdivision, located off Hill Street (and Hillcrest Road) continues to progress with approximately 15 homes constructed (65 in total). The Linwood Mill Loft, a mixed-use redevelopment project consisting of residential, office and retail space completed construction of the 75 senior rental-units in 2012; all seventy-five units count towards the town's subsidized housing inventory. In conjunction with Town Meeting action (Spring 2012), the former Northbridge Nursing Home (located in Rockdale) was converted to 23 residential apartments to be known as Ashton Place. Osterman Propane LLC expanded its facilities in 2012 constructing a 12,500 square-foot fleet maintenance garage on Church Street Extension. After nearly 70-years Aubuchon Hardware (Church Street) closed its doors in November 2012.

At the Special Town Meeting, held February 21, 2012 the town amended its Zoning Bylaws: (1.) expanding the Heritage Zoning District to include the Oakhurst property (Hill Street); (2.) amended the Heritage Zoning District provisions to allow for multiple uses to encourage preservation of historic structures within the district; (3.) amend the Table of Uses to allow office administration within the Heritage Zoning District; (4.) expanded the Residential –Four Zoning District to include parcels of land including property formerly known as the Northbridge Nursing Home (Rockdale); and (5.) expanded the Industrial –One Zoning District to include properties on Main Street including land formerly known as the West End School site. At the Spring Annual Town Meeting, held May 01, 2012 the town amended its Zoning Bylaws allowing fencing within 50-feet of a residential district boundary (Planned Business Development). At the Fall Annual Town Meeting, held October 23, 2012 the town amended its Zoning Bylaws adopting a new comprehensive Zoning Overlay Districts Map for Northbridge and Sandtrap Court, located within the Shining Rock Golf Community was accepted as a public way.

A Phase II Environmental Site Assessment was completed for 2040 Providence Road (formerly Northbridge Auto) in 2012, a Federal Brownfield grant awarded to Northbridge aimed to help clean-up and redevelop brownfield sites; report includes soil and groundwater data and suggestive mitigation measures. As part of the town's ongoing expedited permitting initiatives parcel-based data was created for the town's GIS –geographic information systems; the town's Permitting Guidebook was updated as well as a new town webpage was created. In working with CMRPC –Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, Northbridge as part of the Blackstone Valley Prioritization Project identified local priorities for land preservation (Castle Hill Farm, Krolls farm, etc), growth & development (Main St/Lasell Road -Route 146, Church Street, etc.) and transportation & infrastructure investments (Plummers Corner, Church St/Quaker St, etc.).

Based upon current zoning (land use) and remaining undeveloped land Northbridge could see a significant residential build-out in the next 5 to 10 years; the Planning Board cautions as the town continues to grow demands on public infrastructure and town services will increase with a potential loss in community character. The Planning Board continues to work on updating the Master Plan and welcomes all residents to participate and offer input on this important guidance document.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Gaudette, Chair

Richard Griggs, Vice Chair

Brett Simas, Clerk

Janet Dolber

Edward Palmer

Cindy Key, Associate Member