

PLANNING BOARD

[2013 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 2013, the Planning Board held 20 public meetings and 2 site walks. Applications reviewed by the Planning Board include Approval Not Required (ANR plans) - division of land creating new lots on existing/approved roadways; Site plans for commercial developments; Planned Business Development; and Residential subdivision.

In 2013, Northbridge had six (6) residential subdivision developments under construction (each varying in degree of completion): approximately 19 of 65 single-family homes within the Camelot subdivision have been completed; 18 house lots within Carpenter Estates have yet to commence construction; 15 of 31 single-family homes within Hemlock Estates have been built, with all 21 townhouse-units constructed (Pine Knoll); 7 of 9 single-family house lots within Hillside Garden Estates have been completed; 66 of 105 single-family house lots have been constructed within Presidential Farms; & 46 of 56 single-family homes have been built, with 104 of 112 townhouse-units completed within Shining Rock Golf Community. The Planning Board remains concerned with continued residential growth where demands on public infrastructure and public services will also increase.

Site development approvals include parking lot expansion to St. Camillus Health Center; construction of a 12,500 SF maintenance facility for Osterman Propane; self-storage units at Harbro Auto Sales & Service; gasoline service station with convenience store at 4 North Main Street; and a Planned Business Development off Church Street Extension to be known as Osterman Commerce Park is to include a ±24,000 SF medical office building and ±12,000 SF office building (Phase 1) and approximately ±130,000 SF of additional industrial/business space within subsequent phases.

At the 2013 Spring Annual Town Meeting Gilmore Drive and Ash Street (extension of) were accepted as public ways; the town also adopted a local zoning moratorium for medical marijuana facilities; and voters at the 2013 Fall Annual Town Meeting adopted zoning provisions for Large-scale solar photovoltaic installations.

In June 2013, the Linwood Mill Lofts was awarded the Massachusetts Historic Commission's 2013 Historic Preservation Award for the renovation project (adaptive reuse) which converted the historic mill building into 75 affordable rental units for seniors and ±20,000 square-feet of mixed retail/commercial space; in 2009 the Whitin Mill (Alternatives Unlimited) received similar designation from the Massachusetts Historic Commission for its adaptive reuse project.

The Planning Board continues to assist the (ad-hoc) Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Committee on updating the town's Open Space plan. The update will help facilitate future preservation and protection of the town's natural/historical landscapes; improve and expand recreational opportunities, as well as identify priority land for habitat and water resource protection.

In May 2013, Richard Griggs decided not to seek re-election and in July 2013 Edward Palmer, after nearly ten years resigned from the Board; the Planning Board would like to thank Mr. Griggs and Mr. Palmer for their dedication and

commitment in assisting the town; the Planning Board welcomed George Murray (elected) and Mark Key (appointed) to the Planning Board in 2013.

Respectfully submitted,

Brett Simas, Chairman

Janet Dolber, Vice Chair

George Murray, Clerk

Barbara Gaudette, Member

Mark Key, Member

Cindy Key, Associate Member