

**TOWN OF NORTHUMBERLAND**  
**PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**  
**Weds., April 5, 2023**  
**Groveton PD/Ambulance Bldg. - Meeting Room**  
10 Station Square  
Groveton, NH  
**6:00 P.M.**

Board Members present: Al Rossetto, Sean Durkin, Ryan Shannon, Jim Weagle, Nicole Canavan

Others Present: Liz Ball, Samantha Young, Rebecca St Cyr – Minute Taker

Al Rossetto opened the meeting at 6:00 pm

**1. MINUTES of the March 1, 2023 Meeting**

Motion to approve the minutes of the March 1, 2023 Meeting by: R. Shannon

2<sup>nd</sup> by: S. Durkin, 4 in Favor, 1 Abstained

**2. Lot Merger – MSRW Holdings LLC – Craggy Rd**

Briefly discussed the lot merger on Craggy Rd for the racetrack. They want to get the bill as one instead of 2 separate bills.

Motion to approve by: N. Canavan, 2<sup>nd</sup> by: S. Durkin, All in Favor 5-0

**3. Master Plan Discussion -**

Al said at this time we've received 97 survey responses. He would like to give it another month because he spoke with the Principal at the High School today, she will take it to the School Board next week to see if the students in the Civics class could fill one out. If it's sent home to the parents, we need to get a permit. The Board further discussed asking the students to fill in; Jim said it's just opening it up to a different group. The Planning Board reviews all the survey's and decides what goes into the Master Plan.

Al thanked Nicole for going out of her way and putting in all her time to prepare the survey form. Without her, we probably wouldn't have gotten it done. Great job!

Jim said he can take the surveys and break them down by each question and the response prior to the next meeting; Al said we can make the decision next month once we see what we have. Jim will post a notice in Groveton Neighborhood to let people know that there is still time to submit a survey.

#### **4. Any Other Business To Come Before the Board**

Ryan asked for discussion on getting businesses to come to Town. In the past it's been said that it's not about this Board. Who initiates or reaches out to businesses to come here?

Nicole said she can, but the problem is how does she sell Groveton when they can go to Lancaster. The Towns that are succeeding are those that invest in themselves. Groveton time and time again refuses to do it, which makes it a hard sell. Unless there is someone looking for a mill yard there isn't a lot we can push and the businesses we do have seem to be closing.

Jim said the mill yard will halt until the co-gen plant gets up and is successful. The electricity is the biggest expense. Sean said they have been saying that since he moved here and another thing to take into consideration is the cost of the lots. Jim said we have nothing else.

Ryan asked how we can make it appetizing for people to come in. Nicole – we could do the tax break, which people won't vote for; it's like giving free rent. Jim said we already have a tax break. Al said if you buy a lot and put a building on it; the delta change from the lot to the final assessment – for example on \$100,000 – for 3 years you get 50% discount. Ryan said we should revisit this; Al said the Board of Selectmen would have taken care of this.

Jim said we tried to work with the State a few years ago to get them to take over Church St. and the Town would take State St. The State has certain requirements that need to be met, width is an issue. There is a house on Church St. that's part of the width problem. The Board further discussed. We tried, but they wouldn't take it over.

Jim said then we would have been eligible for the Main St. programs / grants. Sean would be interested in knowing what the measurements need to be on Church St. Nicole asked if we could try to get an exemption for the Main St. programs. Jim said we need to own the street. Nicole commented that if we could make the businesses on the street spiff things up maybe that would help. Jim reviewed the businesses on State St.

Ryan asked if we don't have access to State St. how can we enforce parking. Jim said because we do the parking, it is our responsibility. The State does the plowing, maintenance, etc. He discussed other issues with projects involving the State.

Ryan said this Town has to offer something for businesses to come here. Jim discussed an issue with VT Yankee that we lost out to Bombardier over.

Al said when the Public Safety Building was turned down that showed people coming into town, it set the tone for the Town.

Nicole asked what makes up the taxes – Jim said the taxes are based on the assessed value, Town Tax, County Tax, School Tax. Nicole wondered if there could be a trade off with businesses if they come in and create 25 jobs you get x number of years tax free. When bringing in jobs they add value to the Town. Jim reminded if we offer tax free – that would come back to us.

Al gave a scenario – If we bring in 22 new households and they have 2 kids each, we are now losing money. Jim talked about families coming in with special needs students must have one on one aids. We must pay for them in the schools.

Al commented who's going to want to move here when we don't have anything to offer. The Police Department is working out of an old bar and we have EMS in the same building. We are looking at massive tax increases coming after the Town Meeting. We have the highest tax rate in the State.

Ryan said if we don't change what we are doing it's going to keep getting worse. In business 101 – to make money you need to spend money. If we need to sacrifice a little, then that's what we need to do. Al asked, so what do we do, go to the taxpayers and say we need another \$1.00 per thousand in taxes? He wouldn't vote for it.

Samantha commented, what if going off the idea that Nicole had, of the tax-free idea. If someone comes in with 25 jobs, have like a tier. 25 Jobs – 50% tax break for 5 years. If there are 100 jobs they could get 75 – 100% for 5 years. We have no idea what might come in; whether they will be residents, the type of kids they have etc.

Al commented looking back at the ATVs as an example. They are always saying they are bringing business to the Town – NCFR, Batch's, NC Shop & Save. Some of the businesses gain additional revenue for them but it doesn't do anything for the Town.

Nicole said if you have a big company that comes in with 100 employees, they are spending their money at the local businesses. Then there could be secondary businesses to come. The more people employed in one place the more the area will regenerate. J. Weagle said the biggest problem we have is the biggest land is the mill yard. If the co-gen comes in, it could be an incentive for businesses to come in.

Nicole talked about land and people building. Then we turned down a subdivision. A Rossetto talked about a lot next to him and buying it so there wouldn't be anyone building on it.

Sean said we have commercial and residential zoned areas. Jim said we can make exceptions to the zoning. Jim commented that we had people doing subdivisions in Lost Nation. They needed to have power and phone ran to all the lots. Al said we should be looking at impact fees, but it makes it less attractive.

Nicole said Salem did subdivisions and look at them now, Sean commented there is no comparison. Nicole said if there are 100 jobs people will need 100 houses. They might build, when there is a demand for buildings then the lot prices go up.

Jim mentioned that when we were talking with businesses, they wanted easy access to the interstate. They wanted to go no more than 10 miles to get to the interstate.

Al asked Liz how much land is available for residential buildings. Nicole said the last Master Plan shows that about ¼ of our housing stock we have is vacant. Some might not be occupiable. Al said if we can get an idea of what commercial and residential space is available. We need to think about it and come up with some new ideas. R. Shannon said anything is possible; there's always a loophole. He asked if we could go to Chapman to see what we can do. Al said we've already invested \$400,000 in the property. Ryan gave his opinion of that. Jim discussed what Chapman has invested in the property. The demolition company took everything down and they had an environmental mess when he came in. There have been other issues as well. He leases the property.

Samantha asked what the property is assessed at; Jim said a lot less than what's invested. Can we ask him what we can give you? He needs to cut his losses eventually. Jim said Chapman had a chance to sell the property; he has been good about not sticking the Town with the property.

Ryan asked how do we make it appealing for him to bring businesses in and what can the Town promise him (under contract). Nicole said industrial and warehouse and distribution has been hot, but we're not on the interstate. Sean said products are shipped south so it adds cost to haul materials here and then send a product back out. Nicole said the cost of living is more here than down south; the wages up here are compressed compared to southern NH. The workforce could be paid less – there is some value to that.

Jim said we are close enough to Canada, so we are in their comfort zone. Nicole asked who's recruiting them? Al said Beno Lamontagne – Sean suggested trying to spark some interest. Al said Jim could probably list the companies that have looked. There was a Bit Coin company that looked, but the power was an issue. Sean asked what's going on with the plant. Jim and Al further discussed the hydrogen plant.

Nicole asked what the Board would like to see on the mill property. Al – big million-dollar companies with 50 – 100 employees, Jim – scientific or biological type companies that would stay. Long term companies. The fish farm sounded like a good idea, but they didn't come. Nicole said she will be at a conference in Boston at a CCM convention. with lots of realtors, national businesses, etc. She could push co-gen but with no start date it's hard. Samantha commented, ideally, we would have 4-5 big employers, but some might start smaller and grow over time. Sean – start with mfg., then more people move in and businesses will diversify.

Jim said the Town can do a lot; Chapman has Ritchie Assoc. that does the marketing for him. There has been some interest in a lot of companies, but there's always a hurdle.

Ryan said we as a Town can make it appealing by working with him (Chapman). Sean said until a deal comes in, we don't know what needs to be done to get them here. Jim said he has signed a number of non-disclosure forms to get more info. Al said we have been proactive. Ryan said if a group of us can nit pic at it, we would have more a feel for it. He likes what Nicole is saying. Jim said one company was awarded a bunch of contracts and facilities and they put them where they wanted.

Ryan asked Liz to follow up with Courtney for a timeline update on the power plant.

Nicole asked for a map of the property; the tax map is what we have. Jim reviewed the property and said he can reach out to Alex for an update on the mill property.

No other business was discussed.

Motion to adjourn by: J. Weagle, 2<sup>nd</sup> by: S. Durkin, All in Favor 5-0

The meeting adjourned at 6:48 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca St Cyr, Planning Board Minute Taker

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