

## PLANNING BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2008

The focus of the planning board changed in 2008 as the rapid rate of development waned and we were able to start some of the long- deferred planning projects. Residential development slowed noticeably, though there were still subdivisions under construction and a couple were reviewed. There was also some non-residential building the planning board reviewed.

### Community Plan

The Community Plan Steering Committee completed the revision of the Belchertown Community Plan in 2008. The steering committee incorporated comments received from Belchertown's residents through a survey and a public forum. The steering committee then provided a draft of the revised plan for public review and discussed it with various town boards. The planning board has a January 2009 public hearing and will vote on adopting the plan.

The steering committee is:

Bernie Schliemann

Judy Gillan

Linda LeDuc

Woody Sherman

Chris Laurenzo

Jon Clements

Ron Aponte

The committee benefited greatly from the use of UMass interns, Mario Teran and Evan Aird. The town planner, Doug Albertson, was staff to the steering committee.

The selectmen and the planning board encourage all of you to be involved in guiding the town's growth. There is much going on and everyone is affected.

### Development Activity

Subdivision Approval Not Required (ANR): Any time someone is to change a property line, even if the same person owns the two adjoining lots, the plan must be endorsed by the planning board and recorded at the Hampshire Registry of Deeds. If the change does not create a new building lot, or if it does create a building lot but each new lot has the required frontage on an existing public street, subdivision approval is not required. The planning board must simply endorse the plan indicating that it does not create a subdivision.

Thirty-two new building lots were created along existing town roads through ANR plans. There were numerous other ANR plans submitted that simply moved property lines without creating new building lots. The new building lots were created as listed:

Summit Street	9
State Street	8
Depot Street	5
Springfield Road	2

Stebbins Street	2
Allen Road	1
Boardman Street	1
Chauncey Walker Road	1
Mill Valley Road	1
South Washington Street	1
Ware Road	1
Total Lots	32

Preliminary Subdivision Plans: no preliminary subdivision plan was submitted in 2008.

Definitive Subdivision Plans: One definitive subdivision plan was reviewed during 2008. This was Hickory Hill, off George Hannum Road. This was approved in April. It has 65 lots. Construction has not started.

The Planning Board monitored nineteen subdivisions under construction during 2008, including the ones noted above.

#### Completed Subdivisions:

Two subdivisions were completed in 2008: Pheasant Run off Chauncey Walker Road and Emily Lane off Stebbins Street. These were accepted as public ways at the May town meeting.

#### Other Development Reviews:

The Planning Board reviewed several site plans and special permit applications.

#### Site plan approvals:

An office and storage building on State Street

An office and storage building on North Liberty Street

Two special permit applications were reviewed; one was approved for motor vehicle sales on Federal Street, the other was denied approval for a wireless communication tower off Franklin Street.

No common driveway applications were submitted in 2007. One common driveway certificate of completion was issued for a driveway off Old Enfield Road.

#### Planning Projects and Recommendations

The planning board makes recommendations to town meeting on proposed revisions to the zoning bylaw. Sometimes the planning board proposes a change, in other cases, other parties request a change to the zoning bylaw or map. Any change in zoning requires an application to the Board of Selectmen, and for the planning board to hold a public hearing and make a recommendation to town meeting. The planning board does not sponsor nor support every proposed change to the zoning bylaw or map.

#### Zoning Bylaw Changes:

The planning board sponsored two changes to the zoning bylaw: one for clarifying the definition of östoryö, the other a revision of the Open Space Community Development section. The agricultural

commission proposed changes to the zoning bylaw's schedule of uses. These were all passed by town meeting. A private property owner applied for a zone change on North Main Street which has yet to go to town meeting.

The planning board through a grant with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has been researching and preparing a thorough revision of the sign section of the zoning bylaw. This has been done with other boards and offices and is to be ready for the 2009 May town meeting.

#### Compliance With the Belchertown Community Plan

The Planning Board continued implementing the recommendations of the 2002 Community Plan. Some of the actions include:

Supported and advised with the Board of Selectmen the scheduled evaluation and revision of the Community Plan. The planning board funded this project and provided staff.

Worked with developers to provide accessible open space and preserved land in their projects.

Worked with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on a smart growth grant from the state to revise the town's sign bylaw; completed work on three other smart growth grant projects ó one to improve our open space community development bylaw, an other to develop a permitting flow chart for all departments, and the third to publish a guide book on *low impact development*.

Provided support for the development of a housing needs assessment.

#### Other Work of the Planning Department

The town planner applied to the state for the former Belchertown State School to be designated a priority development site and to receive the \$100,000 grant that goes with the designation. This was awarded in May. The grant has been allocated partly to improve the town's geographic information system (GIS), and mostly to work with MassDevelopment for a site redevelopment feasibility assessment.

The planning board's web site linked via the town hall site is maintained by the Planning Department. This site has the subdivision regulations, forms, other documents, and some useful planning-related links.

Continuous activities of the planning office and planning board include reviewing and processing plans, monitoring projects, voting on development and land division applications, and making recommendations to the zoning board of appeals and other boards. The planning board reviews requests for changes to zones and the zoning by-law and makes zoning recommendations to town meeting. The planning board reviews common drive developments, subdivisions, "Approval Not Required" plans, non-residential site plans, earth removal plans, and wireless communication facility plans. The planning board also made recommendations to the selectmen on the town's right of first refusal to purchase land held under Chapter 61 restrictions. The board also advises and assists other town offices, developers, property owners, and the public.

The town planner manages the planning office and assists the planning board in development review, procedural interpretation, and research. The town planner also coordinates planning and reviews with other town offices, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, developers, residents, and businesses. The town planner maintains contacts with the UMass Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning department, state agencies, our legislators, professional planning organizations, and planning colleagues.

### Board Membership

The planning board membership as of December 31 was as follows:

James Natle, Chair, and Single Signature for "Subdivision Approval Not Required" plans (term expires: 2009);  
George Synan, Clerk (term expires: 2010)  
Daniel Beaudette, Commissioner to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (term expires: 2011);  
Christopher Lorenzo, (term expires: 2012);  
Louis Faassen, Vice Chair (term expires: 2013);  
Mark Andrews, Alternate Voting Member for Special Permits, (appointed annually.).

Past members during the year:

Ron Akins, Alternate Voting Member for Special Permits.

### Staff

Susan Gay is the Planning Board Secretary.

Douglas Albertson is the town planner and alternate commissioner to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the planning board,

Douglas Albertson  
Town Planner