

**Town of Guilford  
Planning Commission Meeting Notes—draft**

**6:30 pm Monday June 17, 2019 at the Guilford Town Office**

**Call to order:** 6:30pm

**Recognition of Public:** no public

**Planning Commission Members Present:** Jethro, Nathanael, Lynn, Chuck, Harry, Jackie, Thayer, Tanya; Sheila present on behalf of the Select Board

**Business**

- 1. Select Board Update:** Sheila gave an overview from Chris Company, the Director of the Windham Regional Commission, on potential growth trends for Guilford. He will attend a joint SelectBoard/Planning Commission meeting August 26<sup>th</sup> to discuss growth and development as laid on in the paper (note, the paper is included at the end of the meeting notes)
  - a. Sheila highlighted that although Guilford does not have zoning, there are ways to protect land from large scale development through language in the Town Plan. This includes using directive language such as “will” and “shall” rather than “suggest” or “consider”.
  - b. The PC members had a short discussion on development trends in town. Harry noted that there are a lot of houses for sale in town so although there is worry about a large influx of development, there is a lot of land up for sale.
  
- 2. Review and Discuss Town Plan, Housing Section pages 21 – 22:** The PC then went through the housing portion of the Town Plan. Thayer made suggested updates in track changes in the existing Town Plan word document. Specific discussion topics included:
  - a. Aging in place: How to incentivize opportunities to and provide strategies for aging in place in homes? PC members discussed strategies used by some older residents such as building an apartment on their home and moving in caretakers to allow those residents to stay in their home.
  - b. PC members discussed affordable clustered housing and what it would mean to make that housing economically sustainable and work within the best interests of the town.
  - c. It was noted that for those who move elsewhere in older age, they often leave Guilford for better transportation options, a smaller home and closer community. However, the overriding opinion was that most seniors would rather stay in Guilford in their homes as they age.
  - d. Although creating a senior housing task force was in the prior Town Plan, this was not implemented. How could this be implemented more affordably?

- e. PC members noted a preference for using existing structures rather than building new buildings in terms of housing.

**Communications:** None

**Important Upcoming Meetings:**

- Conservation Commission meeting on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> at 5:30pm at Town Office
- Handbook meeting on Tuesday, 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm at Town Office
- Next PC meeting Monday, July 15<sup>th</sup> and come prepared to discuss infrastructure, and economy and business.

**Close of Meeting:** 8:08pm

## PLANNING FOR GUILFORD GROWTH 2020- 2028

*Paper prepared by Sheila Morse on 6/17/2019 after discussion with Chris Campany, Director of Windham Regional Commission, for Planning Commission deliberations as they consider creation of the 2020-2028 Guilford Town Plan.*

1. Trends point to potential for substantial growth over next 10 – 15 years
  - a. Rail transport from Greenfield to NYC, beginning in August 2019, allows for day trips to NYC
  - b. Big question is how much will commuting into MA increase – to Northampton, Amherst, etc.
  - c. Regional commissions and councils of government in MA are advocating for commuter rail connections; 3 most popular destinations are Brattleboro, Northampton, and NYC
  - d. As “sunny day flooding” occurrences increase, more people will move to I-91 and Rt 2 west corridors (impact of climate change)
  - e. If Boston experiences 1 or more hurricanes like Sandy, some may begin to exit the city for more inland areas
  - f. Exit 1 area increasingly attractive to “commuters”
2. Tools for managing growth
  - a. In place
    - i. current town plan (which expires 2020)
    - ii. Merits of Act 250 permits are evaluated based on zoning regulation, which don’t apply in Guilford, or town plan policies. Chris Campany says that, generally speaking, “it’s advised that any town consider the extent to which plan policies direct growth to where it is wanted by the town and if, in the absence of bylaws (for those without zoning), they’re okay with being reliant solely on the state’s Act 250 process.
    - iii. Also, Chris noted that “In Act 250 it’s town plan policies that have standing. To have more solid standing those policies should be prescriptive with “shall” and “will” language rather than “consider” or “support” or other passive language.”
  - b. To be considered
    - i. 2020-2028 Town Plan
    - ii. Other?
3. Challenge: to put in place tools and policies in advance of being pressured by growth that is out of our control. Be pro-active, not reactive.
4. **Exercise: envision what Guilford looks like if there are more commuter residents in next 10 years**
  - a. What if one (or more) 100-acre Guilford farm sprouts 20 – 30 housing units each?  
What’s the impact on
    - i. Infrastructure (roads, water, land use)
    - ii. Water resiliency, especially since Guilford chose not to protect itself further through FFEH ordinance
    - iii. Natural wildlife habitats
    - iv. School
    - v. Transportation (more cars, pedestrian and bike safety, policing)
    - vi. Town services and current town government structure
  - b. What if there’s more commercial development as a result of increased # of residents?

- c. How would Guilford concentrate growth around compact settlement areas? Would we want to?
- d. One family and its business entity own 536 acres (private) and 313 acres (themed camp experience development) of contiguous acres. What if this occurs a couple more times in Guilford?

Even if no growth takes place, Guilford will benefit from thinking through these issues. If growth occurs, Guilford *may* be in a better position to shape and manage it.

N.B. one advantage of a larger tax base is that taxes could conceivably decrease. Also, access to faster broadband and more childcare services would increase.