

## Master Plan Hearing January 8, 2013

The purpose of tonight's hearing is to present an amendment to Goshen's Master Plan. The town's Master Plan was last amended in 2002 and the document being presented tonight is the product of an effort begun in the fall of 2008.

I plan to be brief, hopefully less than 30 minutes for a summary. I'll provide an introduction of how we arrived at the amended document, followed by a brief summary of significant points. I assume there may be questions from the public.

Per RSA 674:I-1 it is a duty of the Planning Board to prepare and amend a Master Plan to guide development of the municipality. The primary purpose of such a document is to guide the Planning Board in performance of its duties in a manner that (quote RSA 673:2) "...achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning, and wise resource protection".

The Planning Board contracted with the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission for professional planner assistance in amending the plan. The UVLSRPC facilitated a Community Visioning Workshop; assisted with development, execution, and data summary for the Community Attitude Survey; and developed products that included:

- Land use and natural resource maps
- Population and Housing report
- Economic trends report
- Community facilities and services report
- Transportation report
- Energy report, and
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis.

The above products have been incorporated into the Master Plan amendment being presented this evening. If it had not been for turnover in the UVLSRPC staff, this update probably would have been completed at least a year sooner.

Membership on the Planning Board has changed over the years since the project of amending the plan was initiated in 2008. I'm presenting tonight as a Planning Board alternate member primarily because I was the Planning Board Chair during the project and was primarily responsible for production of the amended Master Plan document. Over the course of several months current board members and alternates reviewed and commented on a draft of the Master Plan to produce the document presented to the public. I want to thank all past and present Planning Board members for their efforts on this project, as well as those members of the public who took time to inform this and future Planning boards through their participation.

As with most products of this type, I expect it contains some items that each of the Planning Board full time and alternate members disagree with. I expect it contains items some members

of the community disagree with. Yet this poses no real problem in moving forward with adoption of this Master Plan amendment.

Why? Because Master Plans, such as this one, provide guidance to the Planning Board and do not establish any specific time table for implementation of recommendations. And the Master Plan is not the only source of input to the board. Everyone here tonight should also understand that when specific changes to town regulations are proposed, additional public hearings are required by state statute to ensure opportunities for public participation in the development of those regulations that guide land use development and growth within the community.

### Methods

In fall of 2008 the Planning Board held a Community Visioning Workshop at the Goshen-Lempster School facilitated by a planner from the UVLSRPC. This was essentially a brain storming session to help identify key issues that would form the basis of the Community Attitude Survey.

The Planning Board and UVLSRPC discussed options for obtaining public input and settled on use of a mailed Community Attitude Survey as a practical, cost effective, and reasonable approach. The survey mailed in the spring of 2009 used the Town tax record database to obtain mailing addresses and attempted to eliminate duplicate mailings to individual households. UVLSRPC planners felt this approach would provide responses from a representative sample of the public; it was never designed to be a complete census of all Goshen taxpayers. A chance to win \$50 in Goshen Transfer station punch cards was offered as an incentive to increase the number of responses. A total of 658 surveys were mailed and 122 were returned completed (18.5%). Since this was a household survey, it is likely that the 122 responses represent more than 122 individuals. While a higher number of responses is always desirable, consider that in 2009 there were 582 registered Goshen voters but that only 149 or 25.6% voted on the ballot to elect Town officials.

UVLSRPC used US Census and other available data, Workshop results and Community Attitude Survey results, as well as personal interviews with department heads and other Town officials to prepare various reports under contract to the Town.

UVLSRPC staff presented preliminary results at a public hearing in Goshen. Throughout the process of developing the first full draft Master Plan amendment report all Planning Board meetings were open to public participation.

John Wirkkala and myself acted as authors/editors to obtain additional information from department heads, to incorporate information from the previous Master Plan into the current amendment, to summarize accomplishments since the last Master Plan amendment, to identify future issues, and to consolidate UVLSRPC reports and other materials into a single document that constitutes the Master Plan amendment that is the subject of tonight's hearing.

## Synopsis

### Vision and Goals

I view this amended Master plan as a “stay the course” continuation of the previous Master plan with an emphasis on maintenance of the qualities that define Goshen as a small, rural community. That sentiment is clear in the Vision statement. READ JUST VISION PAGE 6

“Managed growth” does not mean “No growth”. It simply means growth that occurs in a manner that can be supported by the Town infrastructure and by the natural environment.

READ EACH OF 7 GOALS PAGE 6

It should not be surprising that there is a need for the Town to evaluate long-term alternatives for municipal buildings (options: relocate and rebuild vs retain and remodel).

It should also not be surprising that the need for a Capital Improvement Program is emphasized in this amended document. In my opinion, the highest priority for the Planning Board in 2013 should be development of a CIP and members of the public should push for one to be completed.

Now I'll briefly step through each of the UVLSRPC reports.

### Population and Housing

The 2012 Census placed Goshen's population at 810, which surpasses the previous high in 1840 of 779 people. The expectation is that Goshen's population will continue to increase slowly.

The average age of Goshen's residents increased by nearly 7 years from 40.3 years in 2000 to 47.0 years in 2010. Between 2000 and 2010 the number of resident in the 45-59, 60-74, and 75 and older age groups increased, whereas the number of residents in the 5 and under and 6-19 age groups decreased. It was noted that a similar trend was apparent in data for our neighboring town of Lempster.

In terms of housing, Goshen saw a doubling of renter occupied housing units from 28 to 57 between 2000 and 2010, an increase in owner occupied homes from 251 in 2000 to 287 in 2010, and a decline in seasonal use homes from 97 in 2000 to 80 in 2010 (table 8).

### Economic Conditions and Trends

Approximately 13% of Goshen's workforce remains in Goshen (including town employees, self-employed, and those working for others) and 67% work in nearby communities.

Probably few need to be told this, but data indicate the recession set-back modest income growth that had been evident in the region between the 1990 and 2000 censuses.

Near term Goshen housing demand will most likely be linked to regional economic development and desire for second or vacation homes. Preserving and expanding Goshen's tax base will rely on maintaining those community characteristics that make it an attractive place to live.

### Community Services and Facilities

Generally community services received a positive rating (excellent, very good, good) by over 50% of community attitude survey respondents.

Large blocks of respondents (45% of more) thought spending for services, equipment, and facilities should remain the same. Proposed budgets that request increases for equipment purchases, facility upgrades, or new construction will likely require well-defined needs and scope of work to garner public support.

### Transportation

For brevity I'll gloss over this section bit. To state the obvious: Goshen doesn't have a lot of road mileage, but maintaining roads and bridges is a major component of Goshen's annual budget. Managed growth and a CIP for roads could be ways to help keep these costs in line with public willingness to pay for them.

### Energy Resources

There appears to be a high level of community support for energy efficiency and renewable energy practices (pg 81 stats). Encouragement of high speed internet, which the Town has been active in pursuing, could help promote home-based businesses in Town. Insulation of the Town Highway Garage and installation of energy efficient heaters in town office rooms are examples of steps already taken to reduce energy consumption and lower costs for taxpayers. The Energy and Technical Assistance Project included other relatively low-cost measures that could be taken to reduce energy consumption and see a pay-back on initial investment in 5-7 years.

The Master Plan suggests the board investigate ways to use land use regulations to promote opportunities for energy conservation or alternative energy production. The emphasis here is to provide opportunities and incentives, rather than mandate a specific approach. Within existing Town regulations for example, a developer could construct an open space subdivision and cluster buildings to reduce costs for interior streets and other infrastructure. Town regulations don't mandate this approach, but rather provide the developer with that option if they wish to use it.

### SWOT Analysis (Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats)

I won't elaborate in this analysis, but suffice it to say that while Goshen has a lot going for it there are two major weaknesses that should be tackled by the Planning Board and Select Board in 2013: 1) Lack of a CIP, and 2) Degrading town facilities. The two items are obviously related and could be tackled together.

## Natural and Critical Resources

A report published in 1999 titled “The Economic Impact of Open Space in New Hampshire” concluded that open space in New Hampshire directly supports four economic sectors: agriculture, forestry, tourism and recreation, and second homes. Without open space New Hampshire communities and the state would see income, jobs, and taxes derived from those sectors diminished.

Goshen already has a lot of open space land. Goshen properties are divided into tax classifications of residential, commercial, and exempt. Based on 2012 records, none of the 100 acres of commercial property are in current use tax status. Of the 580 acres of exempt property, 15% of the acres are in current use. Over 11,100 acres (about 46% of Goshen’s residential total acreage) are in current use tax status.

So obviously, Goshen has a lot of “open space”. Does it need more? Some people see open space as locking up the land from development...development that would expand the tax base and reduce individual taxes. Yet a University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service study in 1996 (Does Open Space Pay?) concluded that if land is taken out of open space and converted to residential use, under existing tax structure it would typically cost more for services than is generated in taxes. Recreational or seasonal housing could be exceptions, since they frequently more than cover the additional service costs. Commercial development may also require fewer services than residential development of the same property.

But...let’s be realistic...

The Economic Conditions and Trends Report concluded Goshen’s commercial development would be limited to small scale home-based endeavors and thus the Town should ensure that local land use regulations not detract from the town’s “bread and butter” residential tax base. First preserve what makes Goshen a desirable place to build and live. And remember...individual land owners are making their own decisions about putting land in current use tax status or developing a conservation easement for their land, or for creating an open space versus conventional subdivision.

Based on the Community Attitude Survey, 77% of respondents supported conservation easement approach to land conservation where the land remained property of the owner; 83% supported conservation through donation of the land to the town; only 43% agreed with land conservation involving purchase of property by the Town.

## Planning Board Accomplishments

Since the Master Plan guides the Planning Board, a brief summary of how the board reacted to the 2002 Master Plan is informative. For additional details, read the entire Land Use and Development section of the current amendment.

Since the 2002 adoption of the Master Plan amendment, the Planning Board has brought forward for voter consideration 47 proposed changes to the Zoning and Building Ordinances. The voters approved 40 of these proposals.

Driveway Regulations were adopted in 2003; Excavation Regulations were adopted in 2004, Subdivision Regulations were amended in 2005 and 2006, and following voter approval of authority to do so the board adopted Site Plan Review Regulations in 2005.

Regulation review should be a regular duty of each Planning Board and provides opportunity for public participation in defining what “managed growth” looks like in Goshen.

That’s the end of my brief summary...there’s obviously a lot more detail within the Master Plan itself, which includes accomplishments and issues by department, as well as a summary of all Community Attitude Survey question results.

### Public Questions

#### Updates for changes in fact

As with any report of this nature, points of fact sometime change prior to final adoption or publication of the document. There are several instances of such factual changes in the amended Master Plan being presented.

Facts change...the board can decide 1) to amend to reflect those changed facts or 2) adopt the document with facts as they were when it was developed for the hearing.

- Fairpoint DSL and fiber optic at town office, library, Fire Station.
- Insulation town garage, heaters town office
- NS&G excavation permit approval
- NS&G Supreme Court Case withdrawl

### Board Discussion and Vote