

In August 2010, based on a financial stability credit analysis, the Town was notified by Standard & Poor's Ratings Services that they had reaffirmed our previous year's rating upgrade to AA. The credit upgrade resulted from our discussions with Standard and Poor's analysts and the submission of financial documents and proof that Stow consistently applied financial management best practices. Given the troubling economic climate, this upgrade is significant and timely. The Town will save an appreciable amount of interest costs on our major capital borrowing for such projects as the Center School.

As a regular course of business, the Town Administrator performs a number of management functions relative to fulfilling the responsibilities associated with maintaining a close and productive working relationship with our fire, police, clerical and dispatch unions. For the last two decades, without exception, the Town's four labor unions and Town management have successfully negotiated and abided by all employee labor agreements without ever reaching an impasse or filing for arbitration. This cooperative track record is a tribute to both the Town's union employees and Town management.

Beyond serving the Town's interests and needs by attending to specific management issues such as the matters detailed above, the Town Administrator is generally engaged in regularly attending to matters associated with the day-to-day operations of the Town. In performing these duties, the Town Administrator is regularly in direct contact with most departmental staff and many Town board and committee members. In addition, the Town Administrator frequently works directly with local, state and federal agencies and officials, the public, and various private groups and individuals.

Respectfully submitted,

William Wrigley
Town Administrator

Susan McLaughlin, Administrative Assistant
Phoebe Haberkorn, Office Assistant

PLANNING BOARD

A five-member elected board with one appointed associate voting member, the Planning Board has specific statutory requirements. The Board reviews and approves the division of land under the State Subdivision Control Law (MGL c. 41) and the Stow Subdivision Rules and Regulations; serves as a special permit granting authority under the State Zoning Act and the Stow Zoning Bylaw; guides the process of Zoning Bylaw amendments under the State Zoning Act (MGL c. 40A); and adopts a Master Plan that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the town (MGL c.41).

By statute, the Board is charged with the responsibility of protecting the health, safety and welfare of Stow's residents. Guided by the Massachusetts General Laws, the Stow Zoning Bylaw, the 2010 Stow Master Plan, and citizens' comments and concerns, the Board strives to preserve and enhance the integrity of Stow's character through the use of these regulatory tools, while safeguarding property owners' rights. We recommend and specify changes to

development proposals to achieve these goals. Board members and staff strive to work with both applicants and residents to help shape projects so as to positively affect the impact to the community.

The Planning Department completes the Commonwealth Capital Application on an annual basis. The Commonwealth Capital Policy is a program for promoting better land use choices. Commonwealth Capital endorses planning and zoning measures that are consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles and encourages municipalities to implement these measures by using state funding as an incentive. Scores from the Commonwealth Capital Application are part of the evaluation process for each grant or loan program.

The Planning Department also tracks building permits for affordable housing units and submits the necessary documents to the Department of Housing and Community Development for certification.

The Planning Department provides GIS mapping services to various town boards and committees.

Organization

At the annual election, Kathleen Willis was elected to a 5-year term. Since she previously served as the Planning Board Chairman, we were happy that voters chose to elect her for another 5-year term.

Following the election, the Board elected Steve Quinn to serve as Chairman, and Lori Clark as Vice Chairman. Brian Martinson was appointed as the Voting Associate Member. The Associate Member's voting power is limited to Special Permit applications, in the case of absence, inability to act, or conflict of interest on the part of any member of the Planning Board or in the event of a vacancy on the Board. Malcolm FitzPatrick, and Donna Jacobs were appointed as non-voting Associate Members. Steve Quinn and Karen Kelleher were designated to endorse ANR Plans (Subdivision Approval Not Required). The Board appointed representatives to various Committees:

Community Preservation Committee: Kathleen Willis

Master Plan Committee: Kathleen Willis

Elementary School Building Committee: Stephen Quinn

Liaison to Zoning Board of Appeals: Ernie Dodd

Liaison to the Board of Health: Kathleen Willis

Liaison to the Conservation Commission: Lori Clark

Pedestrian Walkway Planning Committee: Lori Clark

Lower Village Sub-Committee: Lori Clark

Chapter 61 Study Evaluation Group: Karen Kelleher, Planning Coordinator

Liaison to Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAGIC): Donna Jacobs

Development Activity

The Board received a Petition for Special Permit/Site Plan for approval of four (4) hammerhead lots, as shown on a Plan entitled Highgrove Estates. This Petition is pending a Public Hearing.

The Board approved (2) Hammerhead Lot Special Permits

- Hudson Road, Hammerhead Lot Special Permits
- Randall Road, Hammerhead Lot Special Permits

The Board approved (1) Site Plan for the new Elementary School Building.

- Elementary School Building

The Board approved (1) one ANR Plan (Approval not Required under the Subdivision Control Law):

- Wheeler Road, creating one new lot

The Board voted not to endorse one (1) ANR Plan as it did not conform to the Subdivision Control Laws.

- Property off Barton Road

The Board voted to deny a request for a waiver for a setback requirement at the Derby Woods Subdivision (Sylvan Drive).

The Board approved modifications to the Ridgewood AAN Special Permit:

- To allow the requirement for affordable housing units to be consistent with the Inclusion of Affordable Housing Bylaw.
- Acknowledgment of the State's Permit Extension Act, created by Section 173 of Chapter 240 of the acts of 2010, which allows an additional extension to July 24, 2013 (two years beyond the extension to July 24, 2011, previously granted by the Board.

With the assistance of the Board's Consulting Engineer, Susan C. Sullivan, P. E., the Board reviewed plans and monitored ongoing construction of five (5) subdivisions and two (2) Special Permits:

- Linear Retail – Stow Shopping Center
- Derby Woods I&II (Sylvan Drive and Dunster Drive extension), a 33-lot subdivision, located off of Harvard Road
- Butternut Farm Golf Course
- Arbor Glen Active Adult Neighborhood
- RidgeWood at Stow Active Adult Neighborhood
- Taylor Road Planned Conservation Development

Zoning By-laws

One (1) Zoning Bylaw amendment was brought forth to Town Meeting: To amend the Floodplain/Wetlands Overlay District to reflect Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) 2010 Countrywide mapping format, as required by FEMA, to ensure Stow's continued participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. The proposal was adopted at the May 2010 Annual Town meeting and approved by the Attorney General.

Master Plan

The Board reviewed and commented on a draft master plan and adopted the final plan, which will serve as a basis for decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the town.

Housing Production Plan –

The Board voted to accept the Housing Production Plan and looks forward to working with the Stow Municipal Affordable Housing Trust on the implementation plan to provide the necessary tools to provide diversity in Stow’s housing stock in a manner that is compatible with the town’s historic architectural traditions.

Appeals

One (1) five (5) lot Subdivision Plan (River Hill Estates off of Barton Road), approved in 2007, is under appeal pending a decision from Appeals Court.

Enforcement Issues – The Board continued to work with the Building Commissioner, property owners and developers on enforcement issues related to compliance with signage, lighting and Special Permit Conditions.

Fees Collected

Fees collected in 2010 in the amount of \$2,497.40 offset expenses incurred for processing applications and for miscellaneous copies. The Applicant is responsible for plan review and inspection fees.

Work Plan

The Board’s work plan continues to include efforts to maintain Stow’s rural character, and has taken large steps in its planning goals for Lower Village. In addition, they have made great strides with walkway/sidewalk planning, and continue ongoing assessments of the Town’s future land needs, updating Rules and Regulations and the Zoning Bylaw, light pollution/signage issues, and affordable housing. The Board also continues to keep abreast of proposed changes to Massachusetts General Law such as proposed Community Land Use Reform and Partnership Act, as well as grants and technical assistance opportunities.

Lower Village – The Board retained the services of Coler & Colantonio, Inc. to establish an existing conditions base plan and to evaluate the previously proposed traffic alternatives of the 2006 Lower Village Traffic Study, prepared by Fay, Spofford and Thorndike. Phase I of this project is to prepare an existing conditions survey plan showing topography, right-of-way, monuments, pavement, curb cuts, utility covers, walks, walls, fences, curbing trees, building corners, entrance elevations, road cross-sections, and utilities. The Board will seek additional funding in 2011 to move forward with Phase II, to evaluate the preferred traffic alternatives outlined in the 2006 Lower Village Traffic Study, identify constraints and opportunities, and propose recommendations.

The Lower Village Sub-Committee continued its efforts towards implementation of a standard streetscape in the Lower Village and is now preparing a final report, including a recommended action plan to implement its vision: “Our goal is to create an identity for our historic Lower

village, consistent with the rural character of Stow. By addressing visual, functional and safety issues through a public-private partnership, we seek to enhance the Lower Village as the vital business center of our community.”

In 2010 the Lower Village Sub-Committee:

- Performed an informal traffic speed survey
- Established a design for permanent traffic islands
- Established a Gateway sign design
- Updated the Standard Streetscape Specifications
- Sponsored the annual Spring Clean Up day
- Kept abreast of the Board of Selectmen’s efforts for a public water supply
- Began working on the Lower Village Common Improvement Plan
- Provided input to the Planning Board

Thanks to the Highway Department for completing the installation of walkways along Pompositticut Street to the Maynard town line. This will foster pedestrian traffic to the Lower Village.

Walkways - In 2010 the Walkway committee formulated a plan for a two-phase approach. They created an informational brochure, had two public forums to gather input and feedback from citizens, and wrote several newspaper articles. They hired and contracted with a local engineering firm to design walkways along Route 117 for Phase I. They were completed to the 75% level by year’s end. An inventory of the existing walkways in Stow was developed in preparation for Phase II prioritization, and with input from the community, further developed a prioritization scheme for future walkway projects.

Light Pollution - The Light Pollution Sub-Committee continued working with developers, property owners, the Planning Board and Building Commissioner to ensure compliance with the lighting bylaw adopted in 2007. The Sub-Committee continues to urge residents and business owners to confine their lighting to their property by re-aiming or replacing fixtures to achieve better lighting that is not bothersome to others.

In addition, the Board created a FAQ outlining key aspects of the lighting bylaw as well as the Town’s sign bylaw to help residents and businesses comply with the Bylaws.

Zoning and Land Use Considerations – The Board continues to explore new zoning and land use regulations such as design guidelines, Form Based Zoning, Stretch Code, and Affordable Assisted Living Facilities.

Zoning Maps -The Planning Board requested mapping services of Aerial Survey and Photo, Inc. to digitize Wetlands/Floodplain Overlay District, as defined by IEP (Interdisciplinary Environmental Planning) Wetlands Map; the Assabet River Technical Report; the Flood Plain - Plan and Profile Heath Hen Meadow Brook study; and the Middlesex County Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM).

Water Resource Monitoring- The Board contracted the services of Jay Billings of Northeast Geoscience Inc. (NGI) to advise the Planning Board on potential requirements for Water Quality Monitoring at Golf Courses. They reviewed chemical application reports from existing golf courses and plan to make recommendations to the Board on appropriate ways to move forward.

Regional Planning

The Board also continues to keep abreast of regional activities. Board members and staff frequently attend meetings of the Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and Minute Man Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC), a sub-group of MAPC, serving the communities of Acton, Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow and Sudbury.

Thanks

None of the planning efforts would be possible without the enormous contributions by Stow residents, who serve as volunteers on the boards and committees and Town staff. It is a pleasure to continue working with all of you.

The Board extends a special thanks to:

Our very capable professional consultants - Susan Sullivan of Places Associates, Inc. and Town Counsel, Jon Witten, of Daley and Witten, LLC.

The Highway Department for their cooperation in implementing our Lower Village Planning efforts.

Lower Village Sub-Committee - Chairman Don McPherson, Bruce Fletcher, Karen Kelleher, Barbara Sipler, Laura Spear, Russ Willis, Phil Moseley, Brian Martinson and Lori Clark.

Light Pollution Sub-Committee - Chairman Russ Willis, Bill Chiarchiaro, Greg Troxel, Victoria Fletcher and Margaret Tucker.

Pedestrian Walkway Planning Sub-Committee – Chairman Kristina Wile, Martha Monroe, Lori Clark, Joelle Spear, James Salvie and Associate Members Daisy Dearborn and Phyllis Fitzsimmons.

The Master Plan Committee – Chairman Marcia Rising, Karen Kelleher, Kathleen Willis, Charles Kern, Stephen Dungan, Rebecca Mattison, and Roy Miller. Consultant Michelle Ciccolo and Nancy West of The Ciccolo Group. Also, Planning Board staff, Karen Kelleher and Kristen Domurad provided a great amount of support to the Master Plan Committee. Kristen Domurad's outstanding mapping skills were invaluable to the Committee.

The Stow Municipal Housing Trust – Chairman, Donna Jacobs, Mike Kopczynski, Quince Papanastassiou, Trish Settles, Cynthia Perkins, and Laura Spear. Consultant Karen Sunnaborg of Karen Sunnaborg Consulting.

As can be seen by this report, the Board had another busy year, but this amount of work would never have been possible without the tireless and outstanding efforts of Karen Kelleher, and Kristen Domurad, who not only work diligently for the Board, but also for other Town Boards and Committees and the general public with whom they interact on a daily basis.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Quinn, Chairman
Lori Clark, Vice Chair
Kathleen A. Willis
Ernest E. Dodd
Leonard H. Golder
Brian Martinson, Voting Associate Member

Malcolm FitzPatrick, Associate Member
Donna M. Jacobs, Associate Member

Karen Kelleher, Planning Coordinator
Kristen Domurad, Administrative Assistant

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Conservation Commission consists of seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to administer and enforce both the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Town of Stow Wetlands Protection Bylaw and associated regulations. Areas subject to protection under these regulations include wetlands, rivers, streams, other water bodies and their banks, and flood plains, among others. In addition to these resource areas, the Commission must review and if appropriate, stipulate conditions under which proposed activities within 100 feet of the resource or 200 feet of ponds and streams must be conducted. The Commission also works to manage over 1,200 acres of conservation land throughout the community and a network of trails on these lands, and to protect additional high priority lands. Trail maps and permit applications are available in the Conservation Commission office, which is located in the Town Building.

Currently, the Commission consists of seven members with varied backgrounds and a common interest in environmental issues. In addition, we have the strong support of several associate members who work on special projects, such as wetland delineation, drainage issues, trail mapping, forestry management, community gardens and open space planning. Additional support comes from our full-time Conservation Coordinator, part-time Secretary and part-time Conservation Land Steward.

Conservation Land Updates

Land Preservation: Pulte Homes of New England, LLC, transferred Title to Open Space Parcel B, a 20-acre parcel of land currently in agriculture located at Arbor Glen on Hudson Road, to the Town of Stow. The Conservation Commission will continue to manage the parcel for agriculture.

Land Maintenance: Permits were issued for guided walks and educational activities featured at several of our conservation properties. The walks are sponsored by the Stow Conservation Trust and serve to familiarize participants with the trails and natural resources unique to the area.

There were numerous instances of trees down across trails after snow and high winds; the Steward removed the obstructions and potential hazards from Marble Hill, Gardner Hill, Heath