

## Land use forum – Agriculture and Forestry

November 14, 2009 at the Community School

Planning Board members in attendance at this forum were – Dom Bergen, Nicole Maher-Whiteside, Steve Gray, David Little, and Becca Boyden

Nicole Maher-Whiteside moderated this discussion.

NM – If there is a need for land use regulation, what is it?

- I have a vision of what I'd like to see, but how does regulation affect that?
- NM – What is that vision?
- Vibrant active local agriculture, local foods, economic opportunity. Maintaining the landscape.
- Economic segment based on agriculture. How can govt. enable that. Make sure government doesn't get in the way.
- NY Times article from October 2008 – “Unite around food to save ailing town” – help create vision for local food economy.
- This vision is needed prior to forming regulations.
- There is a difference between “museum landscape” and “working landscape”
- Be careful about where industry is allowed.
- NM- People are concerned that cottage industry should be allowed anywhere in town.
- Difficult to enforce/determine what is “cottage”
- The intensity of the business – Agriculture vs. manufacturing – Agri-Business
- NM – The issue surrounding land use regulation is “What COULD happen”. Is there a need for particular rules regarding land use?
- Partnerships between town/family farms/non-profits, etc to make sure that prime agricultural land is not developed. Find the best entity to protect the land. Encourage cluster housing and denser village center.
- What if the rules are the to protect the land, but the cost to live there is too much?

- Is there affordable housing/
- Could agricultural building be put into current use tax guidelines?
- A certain level of farm income on taxations could determine whether something would meet current use guidelines.
- Exemptions might be able to be done, similar to elderly exemption, on a State level.
- People must talk to their neighbors, inform them of their intentions.
- Likes Rural Residential regulations
- Encourage cluster housing and move other businesses into commercial areas.
- Land use regulations makes people have to communicate their intentions to the community. An orderly system works because people know what the system should be.
- NM – What you are trying to do is to have people talk to each other.
- What can we do, outside of government, to facilitate the communication.
- Sustainable Tamworth
- Would like to see slaughter facility in town
- Defining intensity can be very difficult
- The first thing to do is define which parts of town will be agricultural. Variances can be made on zoning.
- NM – Is there good reason to try to make rules based on fears in the future?
- Intensity level could be determined by “Are you taking good care of your facilities.
- NM – Tamworth has a lot of opportunity. The village is not vibrant at this point. Businesses struggle to stay afloat. It is a normal shift. Economies change as cultures change. How do you plan for an uncertain future? What do we care about? Do we need a rule? We need to be careful about making too many rules.
- We have to start somewhere. It is DIRE now. We have to get a handle on it. Don’t avoid the issues.
- There is a need to be concerned about the future and to protect, but also, how do you support agriculture? How do we use town government to enable, but not restrict and prevent?
- Should we protect flood plain for future?

- Why protect it if it is not currently being used for agriculture?
- Bank your resources, save it for later in case you need it.
- Why doesn't the Town buy it to protect it?
- Weston Mass. Did this to protect their land for use in forestry and farming]
- NM – Is that something you could live with? Preparing for future agricultural use that is not currently being used?
- We need a vision and leadership
- How do you get into farming with no resources to start with.
- Is the Planning Board trying to decide what, if any, rules are going to be written?
- NM – NO. The Master Plan found that people wanted some type of land use regulation. These forums are to give everyone a voice in what should happen. The next step is to form a committee, consisting of 3 planning board members and 4 community members, to formulate some type of plan to present to the voters.
- What is the timeframe?
- NM – Can not commit to an answer. Some would like to see it at this year's town meeting, but that is not likely. Citizen participation in the process is critical.

This forum was closed at 11:34 am.

Recorded by Melissa Donaldson, Planning Board clerk