

AMHERST PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, February 17, 2010 – 7:00 PM
Town Room, Town Hall
MINUTES

PRESENT: Jonathan Shefftz, Chair; Jonathan O’Keeffe, Denise Barberet, David Webber (7:05 PM), Richard Roznoy, Stephen Schreiber (7:04 PM), Bruce Carson and Rob Crowner

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director; Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner

Mr. Shefftz opened the meeting at 7:02 PM.

I. MINUTES Meeting of: February 3, 2010

Ms. Barberet thanked Ms. Brestrup for transcribing her exact words, at last, regarding the Planning Board Report on Article 13. She also asked whether on page 4, the phrase “1960’s Russian” should really be “1960’s Stalinist” referring to the original architectural design of the storage building. There was a consensus that both phrases had been used.

Mr. Webber MOVED to approve the Minutes of February 3, 2010. Mr. O’Keeffe seconded and the vote was 8-0.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS – SITE PLAN REVIEW and SPECIAL PERMIT

SPR2010-00005/M3724 – Meadow Street, Leigh F. Andrews and Donald A. LaVerdiere, Amherst Enterprise Park, Office Building *(Continued from January 20, 2010)*

Construct a 12,800 square foot per floor, two-story, wood-frame office building, with access and parking. (Map 4D, Parcels 2 and 3, LI and FPC zoning districts)

On January 20, 2010, the hearing for this case had been opened and immediately continued to February 3, 2010, without any testimony taken or evidence heard.

Mr. Shefftz read the preamble and proceeded with the public hearing. Mr. Shefftz expressed surprise that there were no members of the public in attendance, in contrast to the number of people who had attended the hearing on the storage building.

Ms. Barberet noted that the building had been changed to a three-story building, from a two-story building.

Mr. Shefftz stated that the Board would want to see a formal Traffic Impact Study for this project. He also noted for the record that no evidence had been taken and no substantial discussion had been taken place on January 20th regarding this project. Therefore Mr. Carson, who had been absent on January 20th, would be eligible to vote.

Mr. LaVerdiere presented information on the architecture of the proposed building. He stated that he had begun discussions with a publishing company which may wish to occupy the building. The company would like a storage area of approximately 10,000 square feet for books. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that the large rectangular portion of the building, which measures about 9,600 square feet, could be constructed with 20-foot high ceilings to accommodate book storage. The building would then appear to have three stories from the outside, but inside portions of the building may only have two stories, with the first floor having 20-foot high ceilings. The third floor would be contained within the roof area and would have dormers. If the publishing company occupies the building, it may use the third floor as office space. The dormers would break up the long roof line and thus make the building more visually appealing. If a portion of the building is devoted to storage there may not be a need for

more parking to accommodate the added floor. Mr. LaVerdiere noted that there were slight changes made to the footprint of the building from the plans that were originally submitted.

Bill Garrity of Garrity and Tripp, consultant to the applicants, described the site plan. He said that the site is 11 acres in size. There is 1,900 linear feet of frontage along Meadow Street. The property is zoned LI (Light Industrial) and FPC (Flood Prone Conservancy). He noted that there would be two areas for compensatory flood storage, one large area on the south measuring about one acre and one smaller area on the east, measuring about 0.2 acres. These areas are needed because there will be some filling of the 100-year flood plain in order to construct the building and the parking lot. There will be two dedicated easements, one for storm drainage and another one for the sanitary sewer line that runs through the site. Both easements will occur primarily on Lot 2 [the office building lot]. The building will be connected to the existing sanitary sewer line and to the municipal water line. For the two-story office building originally proposed there was a requirement for 65 parking spaces. Sixty-eight (68) parking spaces are proposed. The building footprint has changed slightly from what was shown on the plans submitted with the application. Both the Meadow Street façade and the east façade have changed. The square footage of the footprint has increased by 40 square feet per floor and a two-foot roof overhang has been added. All of the roof drainage will go into a rain garden on the east side of the building. The consultants have redone the drainage calculations and the net change is “infinitesimal”. The building coverage will increase by about 1,000 square feet.

Mr. Garrity stated that he would provide the Town Engineer with new calculations on drainage, resulting from the larger roof area.

Mr. Garrity explained how the detention basins would operate. He stated that the sight distance from the entrances along Meadow Street, is over 500 feet. The posted speed limit is 40 mph.

The landscaping is shown on the plan. The trees along the roadway will be planted on private property. There will also be shrub plantings at the entrances and signs at each entrance as well.

Lighting for the site will be provided by two sets of shoebox-style lights, located at the edge of the parking lot. Mr. Garrity noted that shoebox fixtures are the most desirable because of the downward direction of the lights. Twenty-five-foot tall poles have been proposed because lights on lower poles are less efficient in terms of light coverage. He suggested that the Board members look at 100 University Drive for examples of 25-foot tall light poles.

Mr. Garrity pointed out the location of the drainage “ditch” that runs through the property and which the farmers would like to have cleaned out.

The flood elevation on this site is 152.9 msl, one-tenth of a foot higher than on the property to the south. The existing flood line passes through a corner of the parking lot and building. This area will need to be filled and therefore compensatory storage is being provided, by volume at a set elevation.

Mr. Garrity stated that waivers had been applied for a Traffic Impact Statement and to allow parking in the FPC zoning district.

Mr. Garrity stated that placement of trees along the roadway will not impair the sight distance.

Mr. Roznoy noted that the applicants had also requested a waiver from the requirement regarding maximum width of driveway. Mr. Garrity stated that the increased driveway width was needed because the roadway is not centered within the right-of-way, so the distance between the property line and the edge of roadway is reduced. In addition, a wider driveway opening will allow trucks and emergency vehicles to navigate the entrances more easily.

Mr. LaVerdiere stated that if the building has an area with 20-foot high ceilings, it will still have two sets of windows to make the building appear as if it had three stories.

There was discussion about the required number of parking spaces, since the floor area appears to have increased, due to the added story. Ms. Brestrup suggested that the Board consider the most intensive

use of the building when evaluating parking. The most intensive use would be a three-story office building.

Mr. LaVerdiere stated the caretaker's apartment will probably be on the third floor, especially if the building is used by the publishing company. He noted that in the LI zoning district the only types of offices allowed were those that received visitors by appointment only. This restriction will reduce the need for parking, since there will not be a constant influx of people. The LI zoning district does not allow doctors' offices and so there will be less of a need for parking. Mr. Tucker noted that it is in the applicants' best interest to have enough parking.

Mr. Crowner asked where a loading dock would go if part of the building were used for storage. Mr. LaVerdiere showed on the plan a potential location for the loading dock, on the east side of the building. Mr. Crowner expressed concern that a loading dock on the east might displace the rain garden. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that a loading dock could be designed on the south side of the building. He stated that the publishing company with whom he has been speaking would like to own its own facility. He has tried to design the building so that it might be suitable for the publishing company, or alternatively, for three floors of office space.

Mr. LaVerdiere noted that he had submitted a proposed Scope of Services from the traffic engineer, Fuss and O'Neill, and that the Town Engineer had made comments on the Scope, which the Board members had received.

Mr. Schreiber asked about how people would be accommodated who arrived by bus or on foot, since there are no sidewalks along Meadow Street. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that there are wetlands that would need to be crossed in order to install sidewalks along the road and that it was unlikely that this would be done. However, a bus stop might be located near the building. Mr. Garrity suggested that the PVTA bus could use the parking lot to loop into the site and turn around.

Mr. Schreiber noted that there was no building entrance on the Meadow Street side.

Mr. LaVerdiere suggested that a walkway could be constructed to connect the office building with the storage building. However there was no easy way to connect the office building to existing sidewalks in the area.

Mr. Tucker suggested that the Board not close the public hearing until the Traffic Impact Statement (TIS) was presented. The TIS should be presented in open session. All of the Board members stated that they would be present on March 17th.

There was discussion about exactly what use was being proposed for the building. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that for now he was proposing that the entire building would be office space and that it would be a three-story building. When the TIS is prepared the consultant will assume three floors of office space with a caretaker's apartment.

Mr. LaVerdiere stated that the third floor will contain less interior floor space than the first two floors, because the slope of the roof will decrease the floor area and the caretaker's apartment will also take up about 1,000 square feet. He stated that the area of the third floor will be about 7,600 to 8,000 square feet.

Ms. Brestrup suggested that the applicant present information on the area of floor space that will be devoted to offices, the area that will be devoted to the caretaker's apartment and the number of parking spaces that are required in the Bylaw to serve those areas. The applicant should make a statement about how many parking spaces are being proposed. If the number being proposed is less than the number that is required, the applicant should ask that the requirements be modified under Section 7.90 of the Zoning Bylaw and give the reasons why the modification should be granted.

Mr. LaVerdiere stated that Fuss and O'Neill would need at least 3 ½ weeks to complete a traffic study.

There was a discussion about farm vehicles and the fact that they may not be present at the time that the traffic study is done – late winter/early spring. Mr. Tucker noted that the farm community has expressed concern about the conflict between farm vehicles and passenger cars and trucks on Meadow Street. He suggested that the presence of farm vehicles might slow the traffic down. Ms. Barberet stated that there may be problems with safety resulting from the conflict between farm vehicles and other vehicles. Cars may pass slow-moving farm vehicles. Mr. Tucker stated that a Traffic Impact Statement does not address the behavior of drivers and that there is an inevitable conflict between cars, trucks, and farm vehicles.

Mr. Shefftz reviewed the Development Application Report. He noted that the applicant had not presented information about the size of the caretaker's apartment.

Mr. LaVerdiere stated that the caretaker's apartment will be approximately 1,800 square feet.

The Board agreed by consensus that a Traffic Impact Statement would be required for the office building and that the Scope of Services for the Traffic Impact Statement, as outlined by the consultant, was acceptable.

Mr. LaVerdiere stated that the Traffic Impact Statement would include the proposed storage building recently approved by the Board, as well as the office building.

Mr. Webber stated that the applicant's explanation about why 25 foot tall light poles were preferable seemed reasonable. Mr. Garrity reiterated that the taller poles would result in a more efficient footcandle distribution.

Ms. Barberet asked if the building would block the view of the lights. Mr. Garrity stated that the building will be taller than the 25-foot light poles and thus the building will [partially] block the view of the lights. The "shoebox-style" of lights can be baffled and that will prevent light from spilling over from the area that is to be lighted.

Ms. Barberet asked if the lights would be on all night. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that the lights would be turned off at 10:00 p.m. Ms. Barberet stated that if the lights are turned off at 10:00 p.m. then she will not have a problem with the poles being 25 feet tall.

Mr. Webber noted that there are already street lights in the vicinity that shine onto adjacent properties. Mr. Tucker noted that what will be visible will be the things that are being illuminated, not the lights themselves. He also noted that the illumination will be less visible during the summer when there are leaves on the trees.

Mr. Crowner asked about the hours of operation of the building. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that he has some tenants in another building who do business with China and need to work at night. He was willing to limit the hours of operation of the lights but reluctant to limit the hours of operation for the building itself.

Mr. Shefftz stated that a condition of the permit should be that the lights will be turned off at 10:00 p.m. The Board agreed by consensus that a photometric or lumen plan should be submitted.

Mr. Webber stated that the lights on the signs should be downcast.

There was discussion about whether parking should be allowed in the FPC zoning district. Mr. O'Keeffe asked about the depth of flooding in the parking lot. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that there will be no flooding in the parking lot and that the 100-year flood will not enter the parking lot at all because the parking lot area will be filled and raised to an elevation above the 100-year flood line of 152.9 msl.

Mr. Webber stated that, in his opinion, there was no need for screening or for landscaped islands in the parking areas because the parking areas are behind the building and there is sufficient green space surrounding the site. Mr. Tucker noted that the reason for requiring landscaped islands in the parking lots is to allow space for trees to be planted to provide shade in the parking lots.

Board members asked to see information on the maximum use of the building and what the maximum parking requirements would be for the maximum use.

Ms. Barberet suggested that there be a condition requiring that native trees species be used on this site, as had been required on the storage building site. Mr. LaVerdiere stated that oaks and two types of maples would be proposed.

Mr. Shefftz noted that the Board needed to determine if it would grant the waiver on the driveway width. He indicated his belief that this waiver should be granted.

Ms. Barberet asked to see what the building would look like from Meadow Street. She noted that it is a big building and she would like to see how it fits into the context of the landscape that exists there now.

Mr. Carson asked about the color of the building. Mr. Webber noted that the applicant had given a very good presentation on the architecture of the storage building and indicated that it would be helpful to see a similar presentation on this building.

Mr. Tucker stated that there should be an attempt to reflect the architectural elements of the surrounding buildings and that more architectural detail was needed at the entrances.

Mr. LaVerdiere agreed to work with his architect on more detailing for the building.

Mr. O’Keeffe MOVED to continue the public hearing to March 17, 2010, at 8:00 p.m. Mr. Roznoy seconded and the vote was 8-0.

SPP2010-00002/M4468 – 178 North Pleasant Street, Jason Brown

Request modification of front setback requirements for free-standing sign under Footnote a, Table 3 of the Zoning Bylaw. (Map 11D, Parcel 231, B-L zoning district).

Mr. Shefftz read the preamble and opened the public hearing. Jason Brown presented the application. He stated that he was requesting a modification of the front setback requirement for a free-standing sign. There had been a “pre-existing” sign in that location. Between tenants it had been knocked down and the surviving post cut off flush with the ground. He did not have any information on how long ago this happened.

Mr. Shefftz reviewed the Site Visit Report for the Site Plan Review [SPR2010-00007] for Clearwater Restaurant at 178 North Pleasant Street, which had been approved in January 2010. At that site visit the Board had noted the location of the proposed sign.

Mr. Brown stated that the proposed sign structure would be 8 feet tall and 4 ½ feet wide. The sign itself would be 2’ x 3’ and would be supported on 4” x 4” posts. It will be lighted from above by two lights that will be aimed down onto the sign. Mr. Brown plans to build a decorative planter box around the base of the sign and plant it with flowers. He might use a chain or a bar to secure the sign to the posts. The Board expressed concern that the sign might be stolen if it were not secured properly.

Mr. Webber MOVED to close the public hearing. Mr. Schreiber seconded and the vote was 8-0.

Ms. Barberet asked a clarifying question about the location of the proposed ramp and fence.

The Board found, under Section 10.38 of the Zoning Bylaw, Site Plan Review, as follows:

10.380 – N/A

10.381 – The proposal is compatible with existing Uses and other uses permitted by right in the same district, because it is a sign for a restaurant in the Limited Business zoning district and there are other similar signs in the vicinity.

10.382 – The proposal would not create a nuisance because it is an attractive sign.

- 10.383 – The proposal would not be a substantial inconvenience or hazard to abutters, vehicles or pedestrians because it is proposed to be located out of the clear sight triangle, as defined in Section 6.27 of the Zoning Bylaw.
- 10.384 – N/A
- 10.385 – The proposal reasonably protects the adjoining premises against detrimental or offensive uses on the site because it is an attractive sign.
- 10.386 – The proposal ensures that it is in conformance with the Sign regulations of the Zoning Bylaw, because this Special Permit is allowing a modification of the front setback requirement and otherwise the sign is in conformance.
- 10.387 – N/A
- 10.388 – N/A
- 10.389 – N/A
- 10.390 – N/A
- 10.391 – N/A
- 10.392 – N/A
- 10.393 – The proposal provides protection of adjacent properties by minimizing the intrusion of lighting because the lights on the sign will be downcast.
- 10.394 – N/A
- 10.395 – The proposal does not create disharmony with respect to the architecture of existing buildings in the vicinity because it is an attractive sign.
- 10.396 – N/A
- 10.397 – N/A
- 10.398 – The proposal is in harmony with the general purpose and intent of this Bylaw.

Mr. Crowner MOVED to approve the Special Permit application. Mr. Carson seconded and the vote was 8-0.

There were no conditions imposed on the Special Permit.

Mr. Shefftz asked that the Planning Board members save their packets for the Meadow Street Office Building for the continued public hearing in March.

III. APPEARANCE

Puffers Pond 2020 Committee – Elisabeth Hamin and Evan Shopper

Update and report on progress to date and the timeline for moving forward

Ms. Hamin and Mr. Shopper of the Puffers Pond 2020 Committee presented information about the issues with which the Committee is grappling. They stated that Puffers Pond is widely used, is free and has few regulations. It will be “loved to death” if things remain unchanged. The question is how to keep it as a recreational place without destroying it. Preservation and recreation are both important. Mr. Shopper noted that there is an on-line survey about Puffers Pond. He encouraged the Planning Board members to take the survey. Safety and preservation are both topics of discussion. The Mill River area, trails that pass through the area and wildlife all need to be dealt with. There is no budget to maintain the pond. Dredging needs to be considered. If the pond is not dredged, sediment will accumulate and it will become like a swamp. The pond was dredged 20 years ago. If it is to remain swimmable, it needs to be dredged. Parking and accessibility are also issues. There are sometimes 400-600 people on the south beach. This is wearing down and eroding the land. Some of the questions to be considered are:

- How many cars should be accommodated?
- Should fees be charged? If so, how much?
- Should there be different fees for Amherst residents versus non-residents?
- Should there be a parking fee or a usage fee?

- How should the money be used?

State Street is not safe. Should it be closed, made one-way or seasonally closed? What about emergency vehicles and handicapped access?

The trails are eroding and falling in. Should there be high-traffic and low-traffic areas? If the pond is to be used how can we control the use?

Ms. Hamin stated that Puffers Pond should be considered as conservation land first.

The Puffers Pond 2020 Committee would like to hear from the Planning Board about its questions and concerns. The Committee is hoping to wrap up its work by May. Committee members will come back to the Planning Board when they have some recommendations to present.

Mr. Tucker stated that from a planning standpoint the pond is ecologically unique. It also has substantial archeological significance in that there are 18th and 19th century mill sites in the area. The Planning Board needs to think about traffic and recreation access, and related impacts some distance from the pond.

Mr. Shopper noted that whatever choices are made, there will be “ripple effects”.

Mr. O’Keeffe suggested that a representative from the DPW should be on the Committee.

Ms. Hamin noted that a representative of the Committee had met with the Fire and Police Departments regarding closing State Street. These departments did not have a problem with the proposed closing since there is no residential development on that end of the street.

Mr. Roznoy asked about the fact that there is no budget and expressed concern about silt clean-up and trash collection.

Ms. Hamin noted that there is some support in the summer from the Conservation Department and that a Pancake Breakfast is held each year by the Friends of Puffers Pond to raise money. The money raised from the Breakfast pays for staff at the pond. If the plan is done quickly then the town can apply for a “Self-Help Grant” for capital costs to renovate the area.

Ms. Barberet asked if CPA funds might be used even though CPA funds had not been used to purchase the property, since this is technically conservation and not recreation land.

Mr. Tucker offered to look into this possibility, but noted that seeking grant funding might be a better path to take.

Mr. Crowner asked if bike access would be two-way even if State Street became one-way.

There was discussion about how to handle parking, including the possibility of using meters, stickers, a parking kiosk or paying at a gate.

Ms. Hamin noted that a studio of landscape architectural students is working on a project having to do with the pond. The students will be making a presentation in early March about their proposals. She will let the Planning Board know when the presentation will take place.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

A. Electronic Meeting Notices & Mailings? - Discussion

The Board discussed whether the members wished to receive their meeting packets electronically or by mail.

Mr. Shefftz said that those who wish should be able to continue to receive their packets by mail.

Mr. O’Keeffe stated that he would be satisfied to receive the entire packet electronically; however, it would be helpful to have paper copies available at the meeting. Ms. Barberet stated that she prefers

paper format and she is willing to come to Town Hall to pick up her packet. Mr. Webber prefers email, but would also like paper copies during the meetings.

Ms. Brestrup stated that it would be difficult for staff to send packets in different formats to different people. The Board agreed by consensus that they were willing to receive the packets in electronic format, but that some may also opt to receive paper copies. Mr. O’Keeffe asked that the packets be posted on the website. Mr. Tucker agreed that this would be a good idea, but that it may be difficult to implement immediately.

Ms. Barberet and Mr. Carson would like to receive packets in paper format. They will come in to Town Hall between 12:00 noon and 2:00 p.m. on the Friday prior to a meeting to pick up their packets. If the packets have not been picked up by 2:00 p.m. the Planning Department staff will mail them.

B. Planning Commissioners’ Journal

The Board noted that the latest issue of the Planning Commissioners’ Journal was devoted to helping Board members to deal with contentious public hearings. Mr. Tucker stated that he has recently sent for issues that are related to holding public meetings and hearings and the staff will be providing those issues to the Board members.

C. Citizen Petition – This petition was discussed during the report of the Zoning Subcommittee.

D. Other – None

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Signing of decisions

SPR2010-00003/M3408 – Amherst Enterprise Park – Meadow Street –
Climate-controlled Storage Building – Andrews & LaVerdiere

The Board signed the decision that was approved on February 3, 2010.

B. Other – None

VI. FORM A (ANR) SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS – There were no ANR applications.

VII. UPCOMING ZBA APPLICATIONS

The Board declined to review the following application:

ZBA FY2010-00009 – Robert Lowry – Request for a Special Permit to transfer ownership of an existing Class II restaurant (ZBA FY2004-00029), with no changes, under Section 10.34 of the Zoning Bylaw, at 17 Kellogg Avenue (Map 14A, Parcel 64, B-G, MP and DR Zoning Districts).

VIII. UPCOMING SPP/SPR/SUB APPLICATIONS – No upcoming applications were noted.

IX. PLANNING BOARD SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Zoning

Mr. O’Keeffe reported on the work of the Zoning Subcommittee (ZSC), which met on February 17th, right before the Planning Board meeting.

University Drive – The ZSC discussed the proposal to rezone a parcel on University Drive, located immediately south of the Newmarket Center, from OP (Office Park) to B-L (Limited Business), in order to support development of affordable housing for seniors and a mixed-use development. The

ZSC had voted to recommend this zoning amendment to the Planning Board for approval. The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on this proposed amendment on March 17th.

Development Modifications – The ZSC continues to work on the replacement for the Phased Growth Bylaw which is now being called “Development Modifications”. Mr. O’Keeffe encouraged people to review this proposed amendment since it is complicated; there will be lots of questions about it. The ZSC had discussed the timing of this amendment and continues to be optimistic about it being ready for the Spring Town Meeting. However the complicated nature of the amendment may cause it to slip to Fall Town Meeting.

Ms. Brestrup interrupted the ZSC report to clarify who should sign the decision for SPR2010-00003, Climate-controlled Storage Building, being circulated for signatures. Mr. Tucker stated that those who were eligible to sign, i.e. those who had attended the public hearings but chose to abstain, may sign the document. Those who were not eligible to vote, because they had not attended the public hearing, should not sign the document. Ms. Barberet noted that the signature of those who chose to abstain should not indicate their approval of the application.

Social Service Article – The ZSC has been discussing a proposed new use category for non-profit social services agencies that are not affiliated with a religious or educational institution.

Four Unrelated Persons – One of the definitions of “family” in the Zoning Bylaw states that a “family” may consist of no more than four unrelated persons living together. This definition has created problems where aggregations of more than four unrelated people have been living together. Last year some people were evicted as a result of the enforcement of this Bylaw. It is a concern to the student community. A representative of the student community came to the ZSC last year to discuss the issue. Now a citizen’s petition has been submitted. This will be placed on the Warrant for Spring Town Meeting and the Planning Board is required to hold a public hearing on it. Mr. Tucker had presented information about how other communities handle this issue. The ZSC will be taking up this proposed amendment at upcoming meetings.

X. PLANNING BOARD COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Mr. Schreiber reported that he had attended a meeting of the PVPC last week. There was a presentation on the upcoming federal census. Massachusetts is in danger of losing representation in Congress, due to loss of population. College students, elderly people and undocumented people are often missed in a census. This time there will be a focus on college students. For census purposes, the criteria for where one lives are as follows:

1. Where you live on April 1st or
2. Where you live for 6 months plus one day.

Another topic of discussion was the aging workforce in the Pioneer Valley.

B. Community Preservation Act Committee

Ms. Barberet reported that there have been a number of CPAC meetings since the last time she reported. Projects that have been discussed fall into the categories of affordable housing, open space, acquisition of land for recreation and historic preservation. There is a meeting scheduled for February 18th at 6:00 p.m. (not 7:00 as advertised). The CPAC is seeking input from the public. The members may deliberate but they probably will not vote on the 18th.

C. Agricultural Commission

Mr. Roznoy reported that the Agricultural Commission had met the previous week. There will be a town-wide farmers' breakfast held to get input from the farmers. Topics of interest are tenant farmers, how farmers market their produce and the fact that renters of farmland apparently cannot establish farm stands.

D. Save Our Stop Committee

Mr. Schreiber stated that the Save Our Stop Committee had not met recently, but there was a meeting scheduled for February 23rd. He deferred to Mr. Tucker for a report on other progress regarding train service in Amherst.

Mr. Tucker stated that there are two sources of federal grant programs that may be of help in saving rail service in Amherst. One source is federal stimulus funds. The other source is called "TIGER" funds. Substantial funding has been received by Massachusetts applicants from both sources. The Town of Amherst is trying to work on an upgrade of the New England Central Railroad line that runs through Amherst. This would provide access to "points east". Currently the "T" from Boston only goes as far west as Worcester. There is an effort to expand it to the west. The "Knowledge Corridor" program for train service on the west side of the Connecticut River has been funded. There is a need to rebuild extensive sections of the line in that corridor. From a passenger point of view the "Knowledge Corridor" is a good idea. From an economic point of view it may not be the best idea. A rail-use preference survey has been developed and responses are being sought.

XI. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

Mr. Shefftz reported that his baby daughter would be receiving her first round of vaccinations on Friday.

XII. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR

Mr. Tucker reported that there would be a transition from his role as the primary staff liaison for the Planning Board to Ms. Brestrup assuming that role. In the near future, however, Mr. Tucker will be attending meetings and he will also be maintaining a role in the preparation of zoning amendments.

He also reported that the Amherst Orchid Society Show would be held Saturday and Sunday (February 20th and 21st) at Smith Vocational School.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT – The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Christine M. Brestrup, Senior Planner

Approved:

Jonathan Shefftz, Chair

DATE: _____