

I. INTRODUCTION

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The Master Plan is an advisory document developed by the Planning Board to assist the community as it plans the town's future. This Plan is an inventory of existing conditions within Warner, an evaluation of current conditions and a plan for the future. This Plan will be helpful in developing future ordinances and regulation because effective planning and drafting of regulations cannot occur without sufficient knowledge of existing conditions and future trends.

The Master Plan, and the annual Capital Improvements Program, are helpful tools in guiding Warner's growth in a direction desired by Town residents. To reflect existing conditions and community values, the Master Plan should be reviewed by the Planning Board annually and updated as necessary.

1997 Master Plan Survey

With Warner's population at an all-time high, and the Town experiencing increasing commercial and residential development pressure, the Planning Board decided to initiate this Master Plan update. The first step in updating the 1989 Warner Master Plan was to determine the extent to which citizen views have changed over the past ten years. The Master Plan Survey Committee developed a survey which was based on a Master Plan survey previously distributed in 1987.

In November 1997, the Master Plan Committee distributed approximately 1,250 surveys to landowners and residents of Warner. The Survey was comprised of nine sections: community services, business and economics, home businesses, housing, parking, environmental concerns, roads and bridges, historic and visual character, and demographics. The survey results can be found in Appendix A.

Community Services:

A comparison with the 1987 Master Plan Survey shows that citizen views of community services have remained fairly consistent over the past ten years. Services such as snow removal, fire protection, and road maintenance are still viewed favorably and receive high ratings of satisfaction; youth recreation facilities and adult education still rate poorly. Community services were rated, on average, three times higher than in 1987, with services such as the police, transfer station, youth recreation and the library rating significantly higher. Concerns about public lake and river access as well as public kindergarten have also increased slightly since the 1987 survey.

Of all of the community services listed, the Transfer Station received the highest rating of satisfaction with 88.2 percent, and police protection was rated as needing the most improvement, with schools ranking a close second.

The most favored community service listed in the survey was the general protection of the environment, with 82 percent of the respondents ranking it as important. Other favored services included public lake and river access, youth recreational facilities, and public kindergarten.

Business and Economics:

Respondents favored encouraging commercial and industrial growth, especially in concentrated areas, such as industrial parks. The location of new businesses, such as professional business offices, medical offices and pharmacies, were preferred over convention centers or auto service stations. Residents favored a wide variety of commercial activities with a mix of commercial and industrial growth. The preferred locations for future commercial development were in the Exit 7 (Davisville) and Exit 9 areas, with the expansion of the commercial districts beyond the existing zones considered unfavorable.

Home Businesses:

The majority of the respondents opted for leaving the definition of home occupation unchanged.

Parking:

Additional parking for the Fall Foliage Festival, established businesses, and for handicapped use was not seen as necessary, although residents felt that off-street parking should be better identified.

Housing:

The most important housing need identified was for the increased availability of elderly housing. Responses to the manufactured housing questions indicated no great preference for changing the current policy: half of the respondents wanted change and the other half were satisfied. Of the people wishing to change the policy, there was great support for limiting manufactured housing to specific areas of Town.

Environmental Concerns:

The highest priority identified in the 1997 Survey was the protection of the environment. Across the board, respondents favored continuing the 75 foot vegetative stream buffer requirement, using the zoning ordinance to protect and preserve the natural landscape, encouraging the Conservation Commission to work toward preserving habitat zones, increasing the Town conservation fund to purchase easements, limiting the negative impacts of recreation, and increasing the amount of land under conservation protection.

Respondents also favored actively encouraging good forest management practices, creating a forest/mountain district consisting of large lot zoning to encourage timber production,

continuing the current use assessment to encourage active farming operations, using easements to preserve open areas, and dedicating the revenues derived from the current use tax penalty to purchase conservation easements or development rights.

Roads and Bridges:

Roads such as Kearsarge Mountain Road, Pumpkin Hill Road and Burnt Hill Road were favored for New Hampshire scenic road designation. Respondents also favored creating a committee to review the need for new roads, bridges, intersections and connector roads on an ongoing basis.

Historical and Visual Character:

Protection for historic districts and structures was favored, especially for the Village Center. Respondents also favored the creation of regulations to maintain the natural landscape integrity of ridgelines and hilltops.

Demographics:

Approximately 233 of the respondents were homeowners in Warner and 8 were renters. The average length of time the respondents have lived in Warner is between 8 and 10 years, with the median length of time being 20 years.

The 1999 Master Plan Update

Using the above survey results and input from all of the Town Departments, Boards and Committees, as well as the general public, the Committee updated the 1989 Master Plan to reflect the current needs and future desires of the Town. The policy recommendations outlined in this Plan will be used by the Planning Board to revise specific regulations and ordinances. They also can serve as guidelines for other activities and projects, such as land and water resource protection, transportation improvements and historic preservation.