

Approved 3/25/09

**HAMPDEN PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
March 11, 2009
Town House**

Meeting called to order: 7:20pm

Members Present – Charlie Dolben, Chair, Joseph Kruzal, John Matthews, Bob Howarth and Judy Jackson, Associate.

Member absent – Neil Flynn

Introductions of the board members and the clerk were made.

The Order of Business, Statement of Authority and the legal notice were read by Mr. Dolben. This Public Hearing is being held for all persons interested in the proposed zone change of an approximate 7 acre parcel on the corner of Somers Road and East Longmeadow Road, formerly the Hampden Nurseries property, from Residential 4 to Business. The proposed change is requested by Michael Cimmino, Hampden Farms.

Applicant's Presentation: Gary Weiner from Ecotec Environmental, Michael Cimmino the new owner of the property and Charlie Schmidt were in attendance. Mr. Weiner explained that Mr. Cimmino is proposing to expand the business zone so that the whole parcel, approximately 9.5 acres, will be zoned business. It currently is zoned Residential 4 except for a 150' strip along East Longmeadow Road and a 100' strip along Somers Road which is zoned business already. Mr. Weiner pointed out other properties in town that Mr. Cimmino has developed and noted that the buildings are built to fit in with the small town look. A proposed development was displayed. Mr. Cimmino would like to see a village-type development for small businesses, professional office space, small retail stores and/or a pharmacy. There would be a 50' planted buffer strip. This is just a concept plan; he has no prospects right now. He has to first rezone the property before any of this could happen. Mr. Cimmino stated that he does not plan on flipping the property to a developer and will not make a strip plaza or another restaurant. He would like to create some sort of a village which will be beneficial to the town. It will be done respectfully and he will take the abutters into consideration. Mr. Cimmino noted that he will be happy to answer questions and offered to meet with the neighbors to discuss his plans further. Mr. Schmidt also said he would be happy to take any questions.

Report from other agencies: The Historical Commission sent in a note stating that they had no comment on the petition. No other reports were received from other departments. Rick Green, Selectman, stated that he had no specific comment. Mr. Matthews asked if this would be built in phases. Mr. Cimmino said he will not speculate. He currently has no tenants in hand. He would like to see a physician's office, maybe a

pediatrician in there. He also noted that the town could use some more retail business, and he does not see building in the back part of the property for a few years. Time will tell with the current market. The existing octagonal building will stay.

Audience questions/comments: There were several questions from the audience.

Dawn Barnes (for her father Stanley Barnes, 20 Meadowbrook Lane):

Will abutters be notified as phases move ahead? Lighting from Rediker's and Monson Savings Bank can be seen on Meadowbrook Lane. Mr. Dolben stated that the bylaws require a special permit and public hearing for most uses including retail establishments. Abutters are notified when there is a public hearing. Some site plan reviews are procedure and do not require a notice. Mr. Cimmino answered that there is new commercial lighting available now. He is sensitive to the neighbors and will meet with them and do what he can.

Elva Jenkins, 40 Meadowbrook Lane:

How will the land be maintained? The area behind her house has always been kept mowed. Mr. Cimmino was familiar with the area and said that he will keep it maintained.

Rita Vail, 141 Woodland Drive:

What area will be rezoned? Mr. Weiner used the map to explain and show the area that is now Residential 4.

Austin McKeon, 28 Potash Hill Lane:

Mr. McKeon noted that there are two existing road cuts. Mr. Cimmino stated that there would not be any more. What about a water supply? Mr. Cimmino said that wells would be put in. What is the Planning Board's vision and how would it benefit the town? Mr. Kruzel noted that times have changed traffic patterns would have to be looked at. Mr. Matthews stated that we can only go by what Mr. Cimmino is presenting. Things change as the town progresses. We can cluster our businesses and will have to understand traffic flows. Mr. Cimmino believes that this is the right spot for growth and right for the Town of Hampden. This will bring taxes in to town. Judy Jackson added that this is one of the few places left in town where business could go. The Planning Board will do their homework.

Lynn Zanolli, 142 Raymond Drive:

Traffic gets very difficult at the intersection, especially on the weekend. A traffic light may be necessary at the intersection of Wilbraham Road, Allen Street, East Longmeadow Road and Somers Road. Mr. Green stated that the Selectmen are continuously monitoring that corner. Maybe another traffic count will be done. A traffic study will be coming soon. They are well aware of the safety and frustration issues. Mr. Green explained that there is a lot involved in putting up a traffic light.

Julia Jalbert, East Longmeadow Road:

Would a big box store be put up there? Mr. Cimmino has no intention of that. He would be open to a CVS there if Mr. Schmidt could design it to fit in with the small town-village look. Mr. Cimmino would like to mimic the look of Monson Savings Bank with white clapboard on the buildings, green areas and heavily landscaped.

With no more questions being raised, Mr. Dolben declared the Public Hearing closed at 8:08pm.

Submitted by: Deborah House, Clerk