

2011 ATM Article 20 – Route 20 Sewer, Planning Board Presentation

The Planning Board is enthusiastic in its support of this article. We have been working diligently with the Selectmen over the past decade to find solutions to the wastewater problems in the business district. This most recent effort to sewer Route 20 began in 1999 when the Planning Board was writing the master plan. It had been 37 years since the previous plan was written, and was long overdue. The master plan introduced the concept of sustainability, where issues are interconnected to provide long term solutions without burdening future generations. During the master plan public forums and surveys, residents expressed their ideas on what they wanted Sudbury to be and not to be. They wanted less reliance on residential property taxes, and more revenue from the commercial sector. They proposed getting there by creating a denser pedestrian village atmosphere where you could walk to stores and services. They wanted residential housing interspersed with the businesses. They also wanted to ensure the protection of the town's natural resources over the long term. These became the goals of the master plan. The objectives and strategies for how to accomplish those goals led us in the direction of moving forward with a Route 20 sewer system so that all of those issues could be addressed. And while we have tinkered in addressing economic development, streetscape improvements, vacancies and zoning along Route 20, we cannot create much more than what we have there now without the sewer. So that is what we have focused on over the past several years.

Lisa addressed the Needs Assessment, and the identification of critical needs of many of our businesses. This isn't just for show – without alternative wastewater disposal methods, the economic viability of some of our businesses, and the quality of our groundwater is at risk. We are at a turning point where we either commit to constructing a sewer system, or we don't. We can move forward with progressive planning and infrastructure development, or be faced with commercial vacancies and a failing business district.

SLIDES OF VACACNY SIGNS

Over the last week or so I have been engaged in conversations with many of my neighbors about the project. There have been criticisms that we should not proceed to design until residents know what the zoning will be, or what the development implications are. And while the desire to revise zoning along Route 20 has always been a part of the project, it is not the paramount issue. Protection of the town's drinking water is critical, and for that reason alone we should proceed in haste with the design.

But let's talk about zoning. Our current zoning is very protective of Sudbury's character, and is well suited for the present while we design the sewer system. We have strong zoning which supports the existing businesses and protects Sudbury against undesirable land uses, and have made some very important but small changes to zoning over the years to help reinforce the

Master Plan goals. In our business districts we prohibit fast food drive-throughs, we require parking behind buildings and the construction of buildings closer to the road, we have additional review processes for any commercial structure greater than 20,000 sq. ft., we have good landscaping standards. There is no immediate threat or risk that would require us to hastily make any changes. And installing sewers also will not dramatically increase developability of property. That will come with well thought out zoning changes, and a Route 20 master plan. We anticipate a parallel path to review zoning while the sewer system is being designed.

SLIDE of Zoning items

Soon after Town Meeting concludes the Selectmen will initiate a public process involving residents and businesses to begin planning for the future of Route 20 with decentralized wastewater. A Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) will be formed, which will include subcommittees on creating a vision for Route 20, writing zoning bylaws, defining the sewer service area, preparing bylaws and regulations for the sewer district including its operation, planning for other Route 20 streetscape improvements to be executed during the construction period, and other issues.

The CAC will be the catalyst for zoning changes directed by the residents and businesses, and will be the primary opportunity for residents to take part in shaping the future of Route 20. The Planning Board will be very involved in this process. There are many good examples in Massachusetts of successful mixed use business districts and corridors, and studying these examples will be the cornerstone of this effort. Preserving the character of Sudbury and creating development opportunities without allowing overdevelopment is of utmost concern, therefore adopting proper zoning controls needs to be carefully studied and executed.

Even without any zoning changes at all, the proposed wastewater system is planned to be designed and constructed to handle approximately 40% additional flow from the existing properties in the service area. This would allow additional restaurants to locate in the existing shopping plazas, accommodate the renovation of vacant 2nd floor office space into residential units and allow for expansion of existing properties where all other zoning bylaws are complied with. So for the immediate future, we could see some redevelopment and change of use among the existing businesses.

But the longer term vision, of what we want and will need to address in zoning and regulations, is an important and exciting part of the sewer project. Our vision for Route 20 will be its future. We do have some older examples of Route 20 redevelopment scenarios produced after the Route 20 Visioning Sessions were conducted in 2001. The premise then, and it may still be favorable, was to move buildings closer to the street so that pedestrian access was easier. With a sewer system, the construction of these street-side buildings may be accomplished in the larger plazas without the need to tear down the existing buildings. Parking and stormwater would still need to

be addressed, however shared situations are becoming much more popular with both of these. Redevelopment would open up tremendous opportunity for shared vehicle access and residential options as well. The following slides show redevelopment or new development options at Shaws, Sudbury Crossing and Sudbury Farms.

CECIL GROUP SKETCHES

Shaws (2 different views)

Corner of Nobscot and Route 20

Colonial Auto (Union and Route 20)

Sudbury Farms/Sudbury Crossing plazas

What you can tell from these images is that the scale and character of Sudbury remains. The goal here is not to reshape Route 20 into Route 9 in Framingham, or Route 20 in Marlborough. It is to create a denser central business area within the existing commercially zoned areas - more of a Sudbury main street – a place to go for services, a bite to eat, convenience shopping and leisure. Reducing corridor sprawl goes hand in hand with this vision as well, where outlying areas may be rezoned for less intense development, and incentives are given to relocate business in the central core. We think these goals are attainable.

KEY CONCEPT SLIDE

Let me also discuss how Zoning Happens, because this is really where the residents have an opportunity to have a say in the future of Route 20. We envision a year or longer process where options are presented, discussed, revised and advanced based on public meetings, design charrettes and surveys, similar to how the town-wide Master Plan was developed. Then, once a zoning scheme is chosen, it would advance to Town Meeting, where a 2/3 vote is required. The Planning Board will direct this process, and we would likely be ready for Town Meeting in 2013. This analysis will take into account traffic impacts, fiscal impacts of new construction, and wetland and stormwater impacts.

I want to end my presentation by going back to the need for the sewer system in the first place. It is about planning for the future - the future of our water supply, the future of our economy, the future of our community - and providing for basic infrastructure so that our future is sustainable. The need has been demonstrated. The benefits are for all residents and businesses. The time is now. The Planning Board urges your support of Article 20, and the ballot question at the Special Election in June.