**Planning Board Meeting Date**: January 2nd, 2025

**Time**: 5:30 PM

**Location**: In-person/Zoom

**Attendees** **In-person**: Dee Daley (Chair), Craig Smeeth, Graham Heagy, Aaron Bertram, Robert Fournier, Lou Garino

**Via Zoom**: Nichole Talbot

**Citizens In-person**: None.

**Citizens Via Zoom**: None.

**5:30 PM – Roll Call, Pledge of Allegiance.**

The Chair asked Lou Garino to sit as an active Board member in the absence of Josh Muhonen.

Voting members are Craig, Dee, Bruce, Graham, Lou, and Nichole.

**5:35 PM – Public Hearing – Proposed Amendments to New Ipswich Zoning Ordinance.**

**Review of Public Notice**

* A public notice regarding the hearing was published in the local newspaper, posted in the Town Hall, Post Office, and website.
* The notice outlined proposed amendments to Article XIII, Section E of the zoning regulations concerning cluster developments.

*Proposed amendment and updates to the Cluster Development Section (proposed amendment by replacement of Article XIII, Section E) as authorized by RSA 674:21 and RSA 675:1, II, relative to methodology of determining the number of lots and layout of the subdivision as well as updates to the items such as the use of soil type to determine minimum building lot size, incentives for development, etc.*

* Board members raised concerns about the potential for confusion regarding terms like "soil-based development" and "open space." It was agreed that clear definitions and examples will be included in public materials to address this.
* There was debate on whether the average citizen would fully comprehend the implications of soil-based development and the role of conceptual reviews. The Board discussed simplifying language for public-facing documents while retaining technical accuracy in the regulations.

**6:02 PM - Proposed Cluster Development Amendments**

The Board conducted an in-depth review of proposed amendments to Article XIII, Section E, of the zoning regulations related to cluster developments.

1. **Lot Size Calculation**:
   * Transitioning from fixed lot sizes to **soil-based lot sizing**.
   * Lot sizes will now be determined using a formula-based equation that considers soil type and septic suitability as defined by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) regulations.
   * Encourages the use of high-quality soil for smaller lots while ensuring adequate septic functionality.
2. **Development Incentives**:
   * **Density Bonuses** for developers incorporating community-beneficial features such as:
     + Public trails.
     + Playgrounds or recreational spaces.
     + Public access to significant natural features.
   * Flexibility to reduce open space requirements in exchange for these enhancements.
3. **Open Space Requirements**:
   * Increasing the minimum percentage of land designated as open space for conservation purposes from **25% to 35%** of the total development area (the original language was 50%).
   * Open space is defined as land reserved for permanent protection and passive use, such as walking trails, agriculture, or recreation.
   * A maximum of 50% of this open space can consist of wetlands or steep slopes to maintain its usability and value.

**6:16 PM – Motion to amend proposed Open Space Requirements**

Bruces makes a motion to amend the Zoning Ordinance Section 8: A to replace “minimum of **25%”** of total land area for conservation open space instead of **35%**. Seconded by Craig. Vote passes unanimously.

Bruce makes a motion to add the words to Section 3: B after “permanent protection” “such as conservation or agricultural land” Seconded by Craig. Vote passes unanimously.

1. **Conceptual Review Requirement**:
   * Developers will be required to submit a **conceptual plan** before formal subdivision applications.
   * This plan must outline:
     + Significant natural features (e.g., wetlands, slopes, forested areas).
     + Proposed layouts of lots, roads, and open spaces.
     + How the development aligns with the goals of conservation and efficient land use.
   * This step ensures that critical natural areas are identified by the applicant and the Planning Board and preserved early in the planning process.
2. **Flexibility for Specialized Clusters**:
   * New provisions have been added to encourage ideas such as agricultural clusters, allowing developers to incorporate resident activities into the design.
   * Flexibility to adapt clusters for unique needs, such as "cottage court" developments, which concentrate small homes around a shared open space.
3. **State-Regulated Standards**:
   * The proposed regulations and processes align with existing NHDES guidelines, particularly for septic systems and soil suitability.
   * Soil testing will remain a requirement to verify the feasibility of proposed lot sizes and septic systems.
   * Questions arose about how the soil type would be assessed. The State regulations identify appropriate sources of soil types as well as how developers would have the option to challenge state-determined soil classifications through certified engineering evaluations.

**Zoning Ordinance Changes Next Steps:**

The changes proposed in Zoning will be explored and refined in the Subdivision Regulations based on the results of the Town Meeting on this topic.

**Fee Schedule Revisions**

The Board reviewed the fee schedule to update it in line with current administrative and engineering costs. Key revisions included:

* **Site Plan and Multifamily Applications:** Increased base fees from $200 to $400.
* **Subdivision Fees:**
  + Minor subdivision: Increased from $250 to $300.
  + Major subdivision: Increased from $250 to $500, with $100 per lot.
  + Lot line adjustments now include a $100 per lot line fee and required engineering review.
* **Engineering Review Escrow:** Updated to require an initial $2,000 deposit, based on anticipated review costs.

The Board will finalize the language for the cluster development amendments, ensuring clarity and alignment with state regulations, and submit it for legal review. Supporting materials, including simplified explanations will be developed to aid public understanding. The revised Planning Board fee schedule will be posted for public notice, with a public hearing planned for February. The finalized cluster development amendments will be presented at the next public hearing on **January 22, 2025, at 6:30 PM**.

**6:50 – Motion to Continue Proposed Amendments to Article XIII, Section E and to Close Public Hearing**

Craig makes a motion to close Public Hearing and continue Proposed Cluster Development to Article XIII, Section E to date certain 1/22/25 @ 6:30PM. Nichole seconded. Vote passes unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Steven Satterfield