

August 18, 2005

Newbury, New Hampshire

A Vision for the Future

The Past and Present

Like most communities in New Hampshire, Newbury has been experiencing a steady increase in population that stretches back some forty years. Newbury's rate of increase, however, has been faster than both the State as a whole, and many of the communities neighboring Newbury.

Newbury nearly doubled in population from 1980 to 2000, growing from 961 residents to 1702. By 2003 it was estimated to have a resident population of 1828. Forecasts are that the community will continue to grow. Historic trends would indicate that in the next twenty years, Newbury is likely to double again, to a year round population of some 3500 people. Many of these new residents will likely be people who were formerly seasonal residents and visitors, as seasonal homes get converted to year round dwellings.

It is likely that there will continue to be seasonal fluctuations in the population, with visitors and seasonal residents tending to come in the summer for the lakes and winter for the skiing. While these seasonal increases are welcome from an economic standpoint, they do place higher demands on municipal services than might be expected in a community where the population was level throughout the year.

Newbury is becoming an older community, as people retire here. The current median age is 42 years old. The number of young children is relatively steady, but as older residents arrive, the younger ones comprise a smaller and smaller percentage of the community. The number of children 0 to 4 years old dropped from a bit over 7% of the town in 1990 to a bit over 4% in 2000. These figures all set the stage for a discussion that Newbury engaged in at the beginning of the Master Planning process in June of 2005.

The Future

Clearly, growth will have an impact on the community, as new people arrive, as new homes and new roads are built. Growth can bring new energy and vitality to a community. It can bring new volunteers to serve on boards and committees and new ideas that people have seen work elsewhere. Properly managed, growth can be a considerable asset. Improperly managed, growth can also bring negative impacts, as more development brings more roads and roofs, which in turn can accelerate water run-off and

erosion. Development frequently brings additional traffic problems, and may tax existing levels of service by town departments and offices.

Although some might wish it otherwise, growth is likely in the future for most New Hampshire communities, and particularly so for communities like Newbury, with its attractive natural resources and easy access to Interstate 89. The pending widening of Interstate 93 will also bring additional growth to New Hampshire. So, rather than wish it away, Newbury is preparing to manage it. This master plan is a key component of that effort.

On a warm Saturday in June 2005, the Planning Board asked the public to attend a session where people could start to share their concerns for Newbury as they prepared for the future. The town's friends and residents were asked to envision how they would like the community to look and feel and function in twenty years, in the year 2025. People were asked to identify those things that made Newbury special, the things they would certainly want to see retained as important community elements. They were asked about their concerns, those things that were not working well at present and might deteriorate even more in the future if not attended to. And finally, they were asked for good ideas they had seen used in other communities, ideas that might be introduced successfully in Newbury.

About thirty-five people attended the Visioning workshop. The ideas were many! While some communities never really get beyond broad statements of "Wanting to preserve the rural character of our town," these folks were specific. They had lots of good suggestions! Rather than lose any of them with a broad, general statement, the following material summarizes and organizes them. It is almost a complete work program for the community for the next twenty years. Lets hope that the tasks all get done!

VISION STATEMENT – A REPORT FROM THE FUTURE

This statement envisions success. It is presented as a report from the future. It conveys that those things that people valued during the 2005 master planning process have been attained, their goals achieved. It envisions that those things that concerned people during the master planning process have been corrected and dealt with. So, it is a report not of what is, but rather of what we hope will be in 2025, our vision for the future.

As we look forward to the year 2025, we see that Newbury has indeed doubled in size to a year-round population of 3500 people, but we envision that it has guided and managed that growth so that the community still retains its essential rural and undeveloped feel. People still marvel at the beauty of its land and lakes, and are proud to live in Newbury. Although there are more people living here, communication by residents (both old and new) amongst themselves and with local institutions has improved. Traffic is controlled, orderly, and not excessive. The natural beauty has been preserved. Newbury has achieved this outcome by working hard on the following:

Natural Environment

Water Issues

Through implementation of a watershed management plan and continuation of a vigilant water quality monitoring program, the water quality and clarity of Lake Sunapee continues to be among the best in the State.

The water quality of Todd Lake, Chalk Pond, Mountain View Lake, and all of the streams that drain into and out of them are of a good quality as well, and are regularly monitored.

Although the amount of boating traffic is up, the speed of that traffic has been moderated, which has contributed to a reduction in both noise and shoreline erosion. **(Split opinions on this as a problem. Possible survey question.)**

The public's access to Lake Sunapee and other water bodies in Newbury has been improved, with both physical access for swimmers and boaters, and visual access for others. **Again, split opinion on visual access. Possible survey question.)**

Open Space

Open space has been preserved and the community still has a natural, undeveloped feel to it. This preservation has occurred both through the purchase of certain specific parcels, and, more generally, through the use of a clustered approach to development.

There remains a small, active farming community in Newbury.

Skyline and ridgeline development has been curtailed through implementation of zoning amendments approved in the late 1990s. The opening of large tracts on the forested hillsides below the ridgeline has been further curtailed.

Efforts have been pursued to link large tracts of open space with connecting corridors, so that wildlife can get from one area to another.

Miscellaneous Issues

A program has been undertaken to educate people about the dangers of radon in their structures and radon and uranium in their water supplies.

In general, Newbury still retains a pristine, country atmosphere in its water, in its air, and throughout the community. It remains a place of beauty.

Built Environment

Village Center

The erosion of commercial activity has been reversed in the Village Center, and the area has even been enhanced with a few new, small-scale commercial properties.

New design standards have assured a high quality of design on all commercial properties, and commercial properties now include attractive landscaping.

Traffic controls such as rumble strips and better markings for crosswalks have been installed in the Village Center, to slow vehicles that need to be there and to insure that they move at a pace that is comfortable for pedestrians walking through the area.

A community leach field has been developed to insure that none of the properties in this area is having a negative impact on the water quality of Lake Sunapee. The system has been developed to provide for limited business and mixed-use development growth in the village center. It is designed to serve all of the properties in the Village Center. Similarly, a filtering system has been established for all surface runoff.

Public Buildings and Facilities

A committee appointed by the Selectmen has spent considerable time, effort, and energy analyzing all buildings and/or historic buildings that are publicly owned or that serve the public. That effort analyzed the condition of these buildings, the cost of their

rehabilitation, and their potential re-use. The Building Committee report was adopted at Town Meeting in 2008, and has guided all building restoration work since that time.

The historic buildings in the Village Center deemed viable and needed for public service have been restored.

At the Library, programming has been expanded so that it now serves as a cultural center. Larger programs are regularly hosted in the restored Center Meeting House.

A winter skating area has been developed in the Village Center.

In South Newbury, all public buildings deemed viable and needed for public service have been restored and are now actively used by residents for a variety of activities.

The Town of Newbury has worked actively with the NH Fish & Game, the NH Dept. of Resources and Economic Development, area politicians, and others to refine plans for a full service boat launch at the State Park Beach that meets the needs of all parties. Similar cooperative efforts have allowed the Wild Goose site to be developed as an access point for car-top boats.

The Town has looked for and successfully acquired sites to improve its waterfront facilities on Lake Sunapee, Lake Todd, Chalk Pond, and Mountain View Lake.

The ski facilities at Mount Sunapee State Park have remained moderate in size, and continue to provide winter skiing for New Hampshire residents at a reasonable price.

The Park has remained open to the public on a year-round basis, and is a major attraction for hiking, sightseeing, picnicking, and other outdoor recreational activities.

Traffic

After years of planning with the NH Department of Transportation, a small bypass has relocated through traffic on Route 103 south of the Village Center rather than through it. A narrow route along the old railroad alignment south of the pond has been selected.

In addition to the small by-pass, physical constraints to traffic (such as the rumble strips and slightly raised crosswalks, known collectively as traffic calming techniques) have been installed to slow vehicles down in the Village Center.

The Village Center by-pass has allowed Newbury to remain a community without a traffic light.

The town has developed a multi-modal approach to handling traffic. Route 103-A now has paved shoulders, and can be safely used by pedestrians and cyclists as well as vehicles.

The Route 103-A biking shoulders connect with others on Routes 11, 103-B, and 103 so that a cyclist can safely travel all the way around Lake Sunapee. Other routes are being planned for loops from South Newbury, and even into Bradford.

Newbury has established a public policy to “Retain but Maintain” its dirt roads in the rural parts of town. Regular grading, watering, and the use of other surface treatments have reduced dust complaints to a minimum. **(This was also identified as a possible survey question.)**

New scenic vistas have been created both through some selective clearing and through construction of roadside turnouts, so that the views of Lake Sunapee are regularly available to all Newbury residents. **(Survey question, as above.)**

Trucks have been forbidden from using “Jake” brakes in Newbury. **(Some questioned whether this is an issue. Survey question.)**

Social Environment

The Mix of People

Newbury remains a very caring community, undertaking efforts to see that the needs of all of its residents are being met.

While Newbury remains a pleasant retirement area, efforts have been undertaken to attract younger families as well, so that there is a broad mix of ages at most social and community gatherings.

This effort to attract younger families has been aided by working with local housing groups and land trusts to see that there are a

variety of housing types available, from upper end market rate units, to workforce housing units, to units for lower income individuals.

Multi-family units have been constructed and are part of the effort to expand housing options. All municipal workers who choose to can afford to live somewhere in the community.

The new residents have swelled the pool of local volunteers, and people are regularly encouraged to participate in town activities. There is a once a year welcoming picnic, where recently arrived residents can learn of the volunteer opportunities and be made to feel a part of the community.

Local Government

Local government remains small, responsive, and approachable. This applies equally to the staff and the elected officials.

The Town continues to provide a high quality of municipal services, and has excellent staff in all areas, including fire, police, ambulance, highway, recycling, sewer, recreation, library, and the municipal office staff.

By effectively utilizing the new pool of volunteers, the Board of Selectmen has been able to undertake the following initiatives:

- To create a Council on Aging;
- To organize Citizens for Newbury, which seeks out new volunteers and coordinates volunteer efforts;
- To organize a Candidates' Night for those running for public office;
- To improve local recycling efforts.

The Selectmen and others have worked to keep the town's property tax rate low.

Newbury has taken the lead in promoting inter-municipal cooperation in the area by hosting the first Lake Day, where selectmen, planning boards, and conservation commissions from around Lake Sunapee gather for a day annually to share ideas and thoughts on common issues and concerns.

Lake Day has fostered a more formal, on-going inter-municipal group, where local officials regularly meet with representatives from other communities and with county and state officials, as well as with the Congressional delegation.

The Selectmen and police chief, working in cooperation with the County Attorney and County Sheriff, have developed programs to prevent the theft of stonewalls and the rocks that comprise them from along Newbury's country roads.

Development Controls

Newbury has worked hard here. It has kept individual's rights very much in mind as it considered new regulations. It has attempted in all cases to follow a program of Education before Regulation, seeking voluntary compliance wherever possible.

Its second approach has been to enforce fully all existing regulations, and to be absolutely clear as to who has those enforcement responsibilities, whether it is the board of selectmen, the building inspector, the fire chief, or others.

Nevertheless, over time, the Selectmen and others have felt a need:

- To strengthen the existing zoning regulations;
- To institute design and landscaping standards for commercial properties;
- To institute further controls on steep slopes and ridgeline developments;
- To establish standards that will control light pollution;
- To require performance bonds on all development projects;
- and
- To curtail the casual sale of boats and cars along major roadways.

The community has adopted all these regulations.

Finally, the Board of Selectmen has been given the authority to expand the hours of the Code Enforcement Officer as necessary to assure regular compliance with all building and development regulations.

Communications

Previous concerns about the difficulty in getting community information around to all citizens have been corrected by:

- Re-establishing the public bulletin board at the post office;
- Improving the town web site;
- Developing an e-mail notification tree for people interested in receiving public notices from various boards;
- Instituting a community newsletter, similar to the *Bradford Bridge*;
- Instituting a number of community events, picnics, and additional concerts where people can catch up with each other.

Negotiations with various service providers have resulted in improved cell phone and Internet access.

Recreation

There is a well established network of bike and walking trails, both along existing roads, along Class VI roads, and across other properties though public easements.

The Fishersfield Recreation site has been completed and is a valuable town asset.

Recipients of Current Use tax benefits are encouraged to accommodate the development of walking trails across their properties.

There are a wide variety of recreational opportunities, both formal and informal, with a particular emphasis on providing for the youth of the community. .

The Village Center has been revitalized and serves as a community gathering area.

Economic Development

The Board of Selectmen has organized a committee to work with local businesses, and to serve as a link between them and resources that are available for economic development.

This new committee is working hard to promote the area as a four-season region.

The committee has been successful in assisting with the creation of new businesses, possibly including:

- A day care center
- A farmers market
- A farm stand
- A pharmacy
- A grocery store

Efforts have been undertaken to locate these new businesses in buildings in the Village Center, to the extent feasible, so as to re-enforce its role as the economic heart of Newbury. Other businesses have been added at the 103/103-B traffic circle and in South Newbury.

Development controls have permitted the remainder of Route 103 to remain rural in character, and have prevented its becoming a commercial strip.

Finally, in reflecting on its current situation in 2025, it is reported that residents in attendance at Newbury's annual town meeting in that year introduced a resolution from the floor. The request is that the town express its thanks to the far-sighted group who led the public discussion regarding the tone and direction of the master plan for the Town of Newbury in 2005, and that the town also give thanks to the many citizens who have worked so hard in the intervening years to achieve the vision outlined in that document. The motion is unanimously approved without debate!