

**Town of Marlborough
Public Forum
Community Room – Marlborough Elementary School
November 29, 2004
7:30 p.m.**

Nancy Bader began the public forum by introducing herself, Peter Hughes (Director of Planning & Development, Town of Marlborough) and Mr. Dennis Soucy (Chairman of the Marlborough Planning Commission). Mrs. Bader stated that the town is facing some challenges in the short-term with respect to commercial development. The purpose of the public forum was to discuss a vision for Marlborough in the next 5-10 years and to obtain input from residents on what kind of development they would like to see. Also, it was an opportunity for the public to ask questions about the planning process. First Selectman Bader told residents that there will be additional public forums over the next several months to get people involved in the planning and development process. She explained that the Community Development Advisory Commission (CDAC) has been formed as an advisory commission to the Board of Selectmen and the other town boards and commissions, to help with this mission.

Peter Hughes presented a Powerpoint presentation on various town information, including population statistics for the town and the region, as well as home construction and home sale price statistics for the town and the region. He noted that Marlborough has undergone an incredible growth in house construction, with an ever-increasing median home sale price. The town has tripled in population since 1960. Latest census data puts Marlborough's current population at 6,094. Mr. Hughes also discussed land use and designation in town. He explained that Marlborough has a very high percentage of open space (3,700 acres out of a total 14,976 acres), relative to other towns in the state. Mr. Hughes also reviewed the 2004/2005 town budget. He explained that the town's budget is approx. \$16 million. There is very little commercial development to help support the tax base. The total assessment value for non-residential properties in town is \$24.8 million, which generates approx. \$1 million in tax revenue. Individual homeowners pay the bulk of taxes, \$11 million. The average residential tax in Marlborough is \$5,460. Mr. Hughes further explained that the town will experience an increase in debt over the next three years (from both the elementary school renovation and the RHAM renovation), which will put additional strains on taxes.

Mr. Hughes gave a brief overview of current town projects, which include:

- The sewer project
- The business park land acquisition
- The library expansion study
- The Town Hall renovation/expansion study
- The Plan of Conservation & Development Update

There were several public comments about these items, particularly the library renovation study. Many residents spoke out against renovating/expanding the town library because it is a relatively new building and many people questioned the need for a larger facility.

Mr. Hughes then provided a list of *potential* future town projects, which include:

- Additional youth athletic fields
- New firehouse
- Indoor swimming pool

- Recreation center
- Sidewalk/streetscape improvements
- Public water supply for town center

Many residents commented on the above list, particularly the indoor swimming pool, which could cost approx. \$8 million. Everyone who spoke up about the indoor swimming pool said that the town should not proceed with it because it is too expensive. A Hebron resident who attended the forum encouraged the town leaders to work with surrounding towns on capital improvement projects that could benefit the region, when possible. Nancy Bader explained that the town needs a lot of things and taxes are already very high. She and the other selectmen and town officials are looking for the public's input on what they see as priority items. Mr. Hughes explained that a town survey will be sent to each household sometime in January to gather this type of information from the public.

After the Powerpoint presentation, the forum was open for public comments and questions. There were a variety of comments and questions from a broad range of residents. Following is a brief summary of the majority of the comments:

- Many people are concerned about the library expansion project. Those who spoke out said that they did not see a need for a larger facility, particularly in this age of technology when data and information storage is getting smaller and smaller. A library employee provided a brief explanation of why the library needs to expand.
- Many senior citizens spoke up about how it is getting more and more expensive to live in Marlborough. Some seniors are getting pushed out of Marlborough as a result of the high taxes and this is a real concern.
- Some people commented that they moved to Marlborough for the open space and they do not want to see the town become overly developed.
- Many residents commented on the future town projects and noted that these items are "wants" not "needs". The town has to be realistic in what it can afford to do.
- A couple residents commented on the poor condition of some town roads. Tom Giola, Director of Physical Services, explained that repair work on certain roads has been put off until after the sewers are installed.
- When asked by a resident whether the town had any interested commercial developers, Mr. Hughes said that several people have approached the town with interest. Mr. Hughes noted that the Planning Commission recently reduced the maximum square footage amount for commercial buildings from 60,000 square feet to 45,000 square feet. Several residents commented on this change and there was an open discussion about the possible types of buildings that could be constructed within this size regulation.
- When asked by a resident about architectural standards, Mr. Hughes explained the steps the town is making to implement an architectural review board and a Village District Act. This will give town control over building size, architectural features, paint color, landscaping, etc. He explained that there will likely be three or four different commercial zones in town, with different zoning requirements. For example, larger buildings would likely be permitted on sites set back from Rte. 66, as opposed to buildings right on Rte. 66.
- One resident noted that the town has very few basic services, such as trash pick-up. Nancy Bader explained that the volunteer fire department and ambulance service are reaching a point where there are few new volunteers coming on board. The town may very likely have to look at contracting these services in the future.

- Several residents said that the town has enough playing fields and no additional fields should be built.
- Dennis Soucy, Chairman of the Planning Commission, stated that the commission is trying to keep the rural character of the town while also attracting new commercial development to increase the tax base. This is a challenging task.
- There was a discussion about the new golf course/housing community on the former Rankl farm property and the increased traffic flow that will likely result. One resident asked whether additional access to Rte. 2 could be constructed in town. Mr. Hughes said that this is not an option but traffic implications will be considered as part of the commercial development process.
- Tom Giola said that it is important for everyone in town to get involved in the planning process. Town officials and employees work for the people of Marlborough and it is important that everyone participate in the process and help shape Marlborough's future. He also noted that there are several vacancies on various town boards and commissions and this is a great way for people to get involved.

At the end of the meeting Nancy Bader stated that the next public forum will probably be held at the end of January, once the town survey has been completed. She also noted that the Powerpoint slides from the evening's presentation would be available to view on the town's website, www.marlboroughct.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Sciano