

CHAPTER X

REGIONAL CONCERNS

INTRODUCTION

While the Bradford Master Plan focuses on issues within the Town or within the control of the Town, some emphasis should be given to the outside influences that have an impact on the community. Within the Central NH Region and beyond, regional concerns such as environmental factors, population and housing growth, transportation pressures, and groundwater strongly affect the Town of Bradford.

Partnerships opportunities are identified to foster good relations with neighboring communities on issues that affect multiple towns. Involvement in regional projects which include Bradford will help the community better place itself in a larger context and participate in activities which will benefit the Town. In this Chapter, specific ideas about how Bradford can become involved in those issues most important to the Town are given as well as a series of recommendations to help guide the Town in thinking how its actions can have an effect on the entire Region.

OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. To partner with neighboring communities and local groups to enable Bradford to improve the quality of life for its residents and be better able to respond to issues which affect the Town.**
 - a. Keep abreast of current developments in other communities through attendance at Planning Board meetings, reviewing minutes on their website, or by requesting to be mailed all monthly agendas and minutes.
 - b. Hold discussion about watershed and aquifer protection on a regional scale at joint Board of Selectmen or Conservation Commission meetings with neighboring communities and seek partnership opportunities to enhance the quality of those resources.
 - c. Work with neighboring communities to seek contiguous conservation lands and trails between Towns.
 - d. Attend other communities' Conservation Commission meetings, or request copies of monthly agendas and minutes, to stay informed about happenings and opportunities for partnership.
- 2. Take proactive action on regional issues which affect Bradford.**
 - a. Educate landowners about pollution, the resource of the aquifer, and the financial repercussions of its contamination via Town Meeting, brochures at Town Hall, informational meetings, etc.

- b. Conduct a watershed study to analyze the existing conditions of the aquifer and how it is being affected by development, and to recommend specific ways the aquifer can be further protected and enhanced.
 - c. Continue to keep the milfoil monitoring and education programs active by applying for grants annually.
- 3. To take proactive action to control the effect of the Town's internal concerns on neighboring Towns and the Region.**
 - a. Seek easements on agricultural use parcels to protect them from development.
 - b. Seek easement on contiguous open-space areas to protect them from development and preserve wildlife corridors.
 - c. Implement regulations for pre and post development storm-water management.
- 4. To become involved with state or regional groups, organizations and agencies to form relationships and to take advantage of free or low cost services and information.**
 - a. Sustain the relationship with CNHRPC to ensure that Bradford continues to utilize wise growth principles and techniques as the Town faces new development pressures.
 - b. Participate in the CNHRPC's Regional Resource Conservation Committee (R2C2) to help Bradford stay informed about what other regional conservation activities are taking place.
 - c. Continue participation in CNHRPC's Transportation Advisory Committee to ensure that the transportation interests of Bradford are represented.
 - d. Encourage the Planning Board members to subscribe to the free Plan-Link list-serve to be kept abreast of issues other towns in New Hampshire are facing with respect to growth.
 - e. Encourage Town officials to regularly visit the NH OEP website to view the calendar of educational planning workshops and events.
 - f. Enhance the Town's use of NHMA services to take full advantage of Bradford's membership.

INFLUENCES ON BRADFORD FROM NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES AND THE STATE

Bradford has a number of outside influences which may affect the Town but which the community has little control over. This section highlights the primary influences that Bradford should be concerned about and offers suggestions about how the Town can get involved. A small amount of participation in these multi-town activities will ensure that Bradford has a better “say” in what can happen. For many of these issues, Bradford can similarly affect other communities with its own actions.

Affordable and Senior Housing

Over the last several years, the lack of affordable and elderly housing has remained a problem within many New Hampshire towns. Affordable housing is defined as housing that costs not more than 30% of a household’s income. Included in this category are manufactured housing and rental apartments. Based on the regional affordable housing needs assessment conducted by the Central NH Regional Planning Commission, Bradford is close to meeting the amount of affordable housing it theoretically needs, but should work to encourage additional affordable housing development. Many towns in the area, like Bradford, do not provide their “share” of affordable housing, which, combined with the current housing market, means that many people in the regional cannot locate affordable housing.

Presently, seniors aged 65 and older account for 13% of the population in Bradford. This number is expected to increase within the next 10 years. With this increase, there will be greater need to increase housing opportunities for the elderly. The senior residents often need to rely on others for transportation to surrounding communities to meet the needs (i.e. grocers and health care). There is a developing interest in New Hampshire communities to provide senior housing to residents.

Bradford desires to retain its “empty nesters” and seniors within the Town for a multitude of reasons. Older people have an institutional memory, offering continuity and a direct historical perspective to the development of the Town. They are a tremendous resource with their interest in the community. Their presence and experience enhances the culture of the Town.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

All towns in the Central NH Region should look to encourage affordable housing within their community to try and attain their “fair share.” The Town should approach legislators to develop legislation which requires this of all municipalities. Discussions should be held among all area town planners and planning boards to help facilitate the regional affordable housing dialogue.

Urban Sprawl and Smart Growth

Sprawl has become an increasing problem in many of the communities throughout New Hampshire. As population increases, the amount of land being developed increases. Often this development has been spread throughout the landscape. The end result is often a greater reliance on automobiles, the development of new roads, a loss of open space, and increased costs to the taxpayers through infrastructure extensions (police and fire service, road maintenance, etc).

The Town of Bradford has a concentration of its population located in the northeastern quadrant of town, with significant populations also scattered through the center of town, and in the southern areas. This results in a sprawling pattern which is not easily served by infrastructure. Growth from southern and eastern New Hampshire is moving to the Central Region and Bradford will be affected by the transportation and development patterns from points south as well as west and east.

Regional development has serious implications in the degradation and loss of prime wildlife habitats (including aquatic) and the expansion of invasive plant and animal species. Similarly, a loss of regional environmental quality can be expected as area water bodies and air quality are negatively affected. These types of degradation can be attributed to many factors.

Loss of the rural character of Bradford and surrounding communities will continue if towns do not act upon this issue. Smart Growth is a method of combating sprawl involving thoughtful planning for future growth. The lack of planning between towns results in the communities (which are often affected by the growth of another) enacting measures to address new growth pressures. These include decreasing lot size and setback requirements, encouraging mixed-use land development in appropriate areas, innovative zoning techniques and avoidance of developing open space and farmlands.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

The Town should stay informed about regional growth patterns and consider implementing regulatory techniques, such as those outlined in the **FUTURE LAND USE CHAPTER** to help offset the effects generated by the increased population and development in the area.

Watershed Protection

A watershed is an area of land drained by streams or rivers and is a connected hydrologic system in itself, although it is always part of a larger watershed. Disturbances which affect the groundwater of an area can have an impact on the entire watershed. Bradford lies within the Warner River and Lake Massasecum watershed.

Industrial and residential development in the Lake Massasecum watershed and the associated aquifers can have a negative impact on the water quality of the entire watershed. Development in Newbury, Sutton, Warner and other local towns has an effect on the water quality in Bradford. Increasing recreational use of Lakes Massasecum and Todd and other surface waters will eventually result in degradation of the water, embankments and aquatic habitat.

Consideration of watershed effects should be made when developing land throughout Bradford. Strong efforts need to be made to protect and manage those lands closest to Lake Massasecum and its watershed. This will help to decrease the potential contaminants that may reach surface waters and ground water.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

The Lake Massasecum Improvement Association addresses many issues related to the water quality of the Lake itself and the greater watershed. Coordination with other area towns should continue in order to ensure that the health of the watershed is maintained.

Bradford should participate in discussions of proposed developments of regional impact and their effects on the watershed. The Conservation Commission should educate landowners about pollution, aquifers and watershed quality.

Milfoil in Lake Massasecum

Undesirable exotic species of milfoil and other non-native aquatic plants have been in the State since the late 1960s and can currently be found in over 50 waterbodies in New Hampshire. Milfoil can be found in Lake Massasecum in a cove at its northern end. The Lake Massasecum Improvement Association monitors Lake Massasecum and works with the NH DES to control the further spread of exotic milfoil in the Lake.

Milfoil is a submerged aquatic plant with fine, densely packed, feather-like leaves whorled around a main stem. It can grow up to 15 feet and may exhibit a three to six inch spike-like flower above the waterline in July. Exotic plants are spread principally by visiting motorboats, and also from discarded fish tanks. Through wind relocation, milfoil can also infest streams. There are six native milfoil species present in the state that do not cause problems.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

Because it is extremely easy for milfoil to infest waters and is not possible to eradicate, close inspection of boats and the education of boat owners is critical. The Lake Massasecum Improvement Association should continue to keep the milfoil monitoring and education programs active by applying for grants on an annual basis.

Loss of Regional Agricultural and Farm Lands

There has been a steady decline of agricultural and farm lands in New Hampshire over the past several decades. Like most New Hampshire communities, Bradford was once an agricultural based community. The decline of agricultural lands and farms have resulted in the loss of lands that are economically, aesthetically and ecologically important. Some benefits of farmlands are that they provide food, wildlife habitat and flood control, in addition to their aesthetic qualities.

The most common reason for the loss of this land is development. Increasing development of farmlands occurs due to the poor economic return for agricultural products combined with the ease of converting farmland to development. This trend is not unique to Bradford, and combined with Regional and State occurrences, little agricultural land remains in active use in New Hampshire. When neighboring communities practice the same type of development of farm lands, the scenic rural quality that makes the State unique and is cherished by its residents is decreased.

Land in Bradford is being rapidly removed from current use. Agricultural pastures in Town are being sectioned off for subdivision and residential development. Agricultural lands are very attractive to development because of their soils, lack of steep slopes, and few trees to remove.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

The Natural Resource Conservation service is available to assist communities and landowners, usually free of charge, with issues related to retaining farmlands. Bradford

should take advantage of their assistance to best learn the options for protecting this valuable resource. Farmland should be placed into conservation easement as readily as forested parcels. The Town should actively seek easements on agricultural use parcels to protect them from development.

Developments of Regional Impact

At the time of plan acceptance, the individual Planning Boards of New Hampshire communities should determine whether or not the project before the Board is a development that has regional impact. As provided in RSA 36:55, a development would be considered as having regional impact if the project could reasonably be expected to impact a neighboring community because of its size, proximity to the neighboring community's transportation networks, proximity to aquifers, and if facilities such as schools and solid waste are shared. If the Planning Board concludes that a project is a development having a regional impact, notice has to be provided by certified mail to the respective regional planning commission and the affected municipality. All recipients will have the status of abutters for the purpose of being provided notice and giving testimony.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

Bradford and area communities should regularly coordinate their planning efforts, including the regular use of the developments of regional impact statute, obtaining copies of Master Plans and regulations, and holding sub-regional planning conferences on a semi-annual basis.

Telecommunications Towers

The dependence on and installation of cell towers are becoming prevalent in New Hampshire, including in the Central NH Region. Some communities do not permit telecommunications towers while neighboring towns actively promote them. Areas of "holes" exist where cellular reception is lost, and coverage is spotty at best. There is a level of inconsistency among towns, some of which regulate the placement and aesthetics of towers which are erected.

Bradford has the telecommunications regulations to provide a uniform and comprehensive set of standards for the development of telecommunications facilities and the installation of towers and antennas and are designed to protect and promote public health, safety, community welfare and the aesthetic quality of the Town. Other goals of this ordinance include maximizing the use of existing towers and buildings to accommodate new antennas, retaining local responsibility for use of public-rights-of-way and ensuring compliance with FCC regulations on radio frequency exposure guidelines.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

The Town should attend state and regional conferences on telecommunications issues to remain educated on the issues. Representatives can lobby for complete cellular coverage and the development of consistent regulations.

These opportunities are not the influences reviewed in the previous section but offer a chance for Bradford to join with other Towns to develop a project or produce a legacy. Regionally, towns may accomplish together what they could not accomplish alone because of funding, increased resources, or because of the sheer size of the goal. Bradford should take advantage of the following special opportunities that will make a lasting a difference to the community.

PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The benefits to being involved with regional groups are a heightened awareness of how outside actions will have an impact on Bradford and the ability to take advantage of the services and knowledge that is available to members or representatives. The shared pool of resources is an asset waiting to be tapped. In addition to the regional groups and organizations mentioned in the previous sections, solid relationships with the following entities should also be developed.

Central NH Regional Planning Commission

The Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) is a voluntary member-driven planning advisory entity in the Concord area. Twenty communities are served. Membership to the CNHRPC provides access to free or low cost planning services such as Master Plan development, development review assistance, traffic counts, zoning ordinance revision, educational workshops, geographic information system mapping, information on latest available programs, grant projects, and statistical data.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

The Town of Bradford is currently a member of the CNHRPC. The Town is fully represented and takes advantage of the services CNHRPC offers. The Town should sustain its relationship with CNHRPC to ensure that Bradford continues to learn how to utilize wise growth principles and techniques as the Town faces new development pressures.

Regional Resource Conservation Committee

The Regional Resource Conservation Committee (R2C2) is an advisory committee of the CNHRPC that meets quarterly. Comprised of Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Board of Selectmen representatives from the 20 towns in the Central NH Region, the group discusses issues which affect their communities and holds guest speaker presentations to inform the R2C2 about the latest environmental or land preservation topics.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

Bradford does not have representatives to the R2C2, possibly because of a turn over in Conservation Commission members. The Town should appoint two representatives to the CNHRPC's R2C2.

Transportation Advisory Committee

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is an advisory committee of the CNHRPC which is comprised of local appointed representatives from communities within the region as well as members from other local, state, and federal agencies. The official purposes of TAC are

to provide technical advice and policy recommendations regarding transportation planning issues. The TAC organizes and recommends projects for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, the State Transportation Improvement Program, and ranks Transportation Enhancement and Congestion Mitigation-Air Quality grant applications for funding. TAC meets quarterly.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

Bradford currently has a representative on the TAC. It is recommended that the Town continue to appoint representatives to CNHRPC's TAC to ensure that the transportation interests of Bradford are represented in the future.

NH Office of Energy and Planning

The Office of Energy and Planning (NH OEP) – formerly the Office of State Planning - is based in Concord and is legislatively required to plan for the orderly development of the state and the wise management of the state's resources; compile, analyze, and disseminate data, information, and research services to advance the welfare of the state; encourage and assist planning, growth management, and development activities of cities and towns; administer select federal and State grant-in-aid programs; and participate and advises in matters of land use planning regarding lakes and rivers management programs. The Office of Energy and Planning typically does most of its work with communities through the regional planning commissions.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

The Town should be aware of the projects and services that the OEP offers. Particularly, the Planning Board should subscribe to the free Plan-Link list serve to be kept abreast of issues other towns in New Hampshire are facing with respect to growth. The NH OEP website should be regularly visited to view the calendar of educational planning workshops and events.

New Hampshire Municipal Association

The NH Municipal Association (NHMA) was formed over 50 years ago by a group of concerned local officials who felt that by pooling resources and concerns, New Hampshire communities could better work together with a common voice. Today, NHMA represents 233 of the 234 Granite State communities and offers legal and technical assistance, legislative representation, training and workshops, and personnel services.

How Bradford Can Get Involved

Bradford is currently a member of the NHMA. The Town should enhance its use of NHMA's services to take full advantage of its membership.

SUMMARY

Although every community, including Bradford, is faced with its own internal issues and concerns, Town governments need to be aware that it may not have much control over another whole set of issues that will affect the Town from the outside. Many different regional influences, from transportation growth to environmental threats to population and housing influxes, will exert degrees of pressure on Bradford. Bradford needs to be adequately prepared to handle these exterior demands by becoming involved in the regional processes and therefore being in a better position to respond positively to forthcoming pressures or problems.

Establishing a relationship with regional groups and abutting communities will ensure that communication lines are open and that Bradford finds itself in the best position to influence whatever demands come this way.