

TOWN OF SOUTHBOROUGH

Planning Board

17 Common Street Southborough, MA 01772

MEMORANDUM

To: Boards and Committees
From: Vera Kolas, Town Planner
Date: January 2, 2009
Re: Suggested Discussion Questions - Southborough All-Boards Meeting – Zoning Bylaw Update

Please review the following questions in preparation for the All Boards meeting on Wednesday, January 7th.

1. What is your role in planning, zoning, development review, and permitting?
2. The new Southborough Master Plan contains many policies and recommendations that involve changing the town's zoning and subdivision regulations. What do you think the Master Plan implementation priorities should be?
3. Setting aside the Master Plan and looking strictly at existing provisions of the Zoning Bylaw, what provisions seem most problematic? For this question, please think of "provision" as a distinct section of the Zoning Bylaw, such as Major Residential Development, Common Driveways, Signs, Parking and Loading Regulations, or Lower-Impact Development.
 - a. Are the provisions clear?
 - b. Are they consistent with other provisions?
 - c. Are they effective at accomplishing the Town's existing policy objectives?
4. How do Southborough's development review and permitting procedures work today?
 - a. For example, is the existing division of roles and responsibilities for special permits and plan review clear to all concerned: town boards, the building inspector, other town staff, applicants, and residents?
 - b. Is the permitting system efficient?
 - c. Does the permitting system provide for consistency and predictability of decisions?
 - d. Do you think the permitting system could be improved, and if so, how?
5. Overall, is the Zoning Bylaw easy to use? Is it organized in a way that makes it easy to find related information, e.g., all of the requirements that might apply to a given parcel of land in a given zoning district? Do you think the format and structure of the Zoning Bylaw could be improved, and if so, how? Please comment both from your direct experience as a board member and what you've heard from applicants or the general public.

6. Overall, do you think the town's regulations and procedures for non-conforming uses, structures, and lots work well?
 - a. Should they be changed in some way, e.g., streamlined or clarified, such as by adding a list or table of changes to nonresidential uses that would categorically be considered not more detrimental to the surrounding neighborhood or area?
 - b. If the new Zoning Bylaw were to make some existing development non-conforming, should the town's policy objective be to (1) provide as much flexibility as possible for existing uses to remain in place and evolve over time, or (2) provide very limited flexibility in order to encourage (or effectively force) those uses to become conforming?