

## **Planning Board 2009 Annual Report**

To the Honorable Board of Selectmen:

The Ashburnham Planning Board consists of five (5) elected members and one (1) appointed associate member. The Board has the responsibility of reviewing proposed development projects (residential subdivisions, business/commercial and industrial site plans, Common Driveway Special Permits, Open Space Residential Development Special Permits, Accessory Dwelling Unit Special Permits and Scenic Road Permits) and makes decisions on them in accordance with state/local bylaws & regulations. The Zoning Bylaw also allows the Board to review major residential developments to preserve the natural and cultural resources of Ashburnham by insuring the larger-scale of conversion of land to residential use does not consume all of the Town's woodlands, fields, farmlands, historic structures and landscapes, cart paths, stonewalls, geologic formations, water courses, wetlands, riparian zones, groundwater recharge areas, hilltops, scenic vistas, and other significant open spaces as well as providing a public voice and public authority in consideration of alternative approaches to conventional residential developments.

The Planning Board's official powers and responsibilities are provided through the Ashburnham Subdivision Regulations, Zoning Bylaws and as prescribed under the authority of the Subdivision Control Law enacted under Chapter 41, Section 81A-81GG of the Massachusetts General Laws. These rules and regulations have been enacted for the purpose of protecting the safety, convenience and welfare of the inhabitants of Ashburnham by regulating the laying out and construction of ways in subdivisions and providing access to lots therein.

Following the Annual Town election, Joe Daigle was appointed by a joint vote of the Selectmen and Planning Board to fill the term of Thomas Ruble and Thomas Ruble was appointed to a 3 year term as an Associate Member. The five member Board reorganized and John MacMillan was re-elected to the position of Chairman, Joseph Kalagher was re-elected to serve as Vice-Chairman, and Bruce Whitney was re-elected to serve as Clerk to the Board. The Planning Board regularly met on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday evenings at 6:30 p.m. in the Town Hall. In calendar year 2009, the Board conducted 18 regular meetings and performed numerous on-site visits as well as meeting with other Boards and Committees.

The Board is also responsible for preparing careful studies pertaining to planning issues in the Town and recommending zoning amendments for Town Meeting approval.

During the calendar year 2009, the Board approved 5 "Approval Not Required" (ANR) plans of land as compared to 8 in 2008.

The Board continues to monitor previously approved Lakeview Estates, Cashman Hill Estates, Bray Avenue subdivisions and Lakeside Village condominiums during the construction process. Current market conditions have slowed or stopped activity on these subdivisions during 2009.

No new Preliminary or Definitive Subdivisions were submitted to the Board during 2009, a continuing sign of the slowdown in the housing market.

At the 2009 Annual Town Meeting, the Village Center Zoning Study Committee presented a zoning proposal to amend the existing Village Center Zoning District. The zoning amendment

was passed by the necessary two thirds vote and created two new districts, a Village Center Commercial District and a Village Center Residential District. These districts were created to ease the need for complicated permitting and to help with commercial growth in the village center. The Board would like to thank those that worked on the Village Center Zoning Study Committee –

Stan Herriott – Chairman	Ashburnham Business Council
John MacMillan	Planning Board
Joe Kalagher	Planning Board
David Perry	Zoning Board of Appeals
Joseph Daigle	Zoning Board of Appeals
Jonathan Dennehy	Selectman
Jim Whidden	Historical Commission
Diane Hill	At-Large Member
Elizabeth McLaughlin	At-Large Member
Eric Smith	Former Town Planner

Bruce Whitney served as the Planning Board representative to the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission and John MacMillan served on the Tax base Study Committee. Joseph Kalagher and John MacMillan represented the Planning Board on the Village Center District Zoning Committee. Joseph Daigle also serves on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Town has been notified by the Attorney General that the amendment to the Open Space Residential Bylaw approved at the November 13, 2008 Special Town Meeting was disapproved. This disapproval was based on recent court decisions concerning Major Residential Developments and the way our bylaw was worded. The Board is working on a re-write of the bylaw to present at a future Town Meeting.

The Planning Board now has a great deal of information on the Town's new website it can be viewed at [www.ashburnham-ma.gov/](http://www.ashburnham-ma.gov/). We welcome your comments on the website.

Respectfully submitted,

John MacMillan, Chair  
Joseph Kalagher, Vice Chair  
Bruce Whitney, Clerk  
William Nolan  
Joseph Daigle  
Thomas Ruble, Associate Member