

**TOWN OF NORTHFIELD, VERMONT
PLANNING COMMISSION
Minutes of April 3, 2024**

**6:15 pm at Brown Public Library Community Room
(also available remotely via Town GoToMeeting account)**

The meeting was called to order at 6:24 pm by Clerk Mitch Osiecki.

Roll Call: Present for the meeting were Planning Commission members Julie Lappin, Steve Davis, and Royal DeLegge. Clerk Mitch Osiecki was also present.

Also present were Carolyn Stevens, resident; John Stevens, Select Board Member; and Phil & Julie Susmann, residents.

All participants attended in person at the Community Room, except Carolyn Stevens and Phil & Julie Sussman, who participated remotely via GoToMeeting.

Organizational Meeting

Election of Officers

Steve Davis nominated Royal DeLegge to serve as Chair; Julie Lappin seconded.

Vote to approve: 3-0.

Steve Davis nominated Julie Lappin to serve as Vice-Chair; Royal DeLegge seconded.

Vote to approve: 3-0.

Steve Davis nominated Mitch Osiecki to serve as Clerk; Julie Lappin seconded.

Vote to approve: 3-0.

Meeting Date & Time

Members discussed meeting date and time. Agreed that the preference is to meet the first week of the month. Some flexibility on the day. Mitch noted that the PC has met on Mondays in the past; however, several Mondays are Federal Holidays.

By consensus, PC chose the 1st Tuesday of the month at 6:30 as regular meeting date and time, provided it does not conflict with other boards or bodies.

Approval of Minutes

Julie Lappin moved to approve minutes of Feb 7. Steve Davis seconded.

Vote to approve: 3-0.

Julie Lappin moved to approve minutes of Mar 6. Steve Davis seconded.

Discussion: Julie noted one typo: The PC response to John Stevens' comment #10 is missing the word 'not' and should read "... does *not* seem to present an inconsistency." Mitch will correct the text.

Vote to approve: 3-0.

Steve Davis moved to approve minutes of Mar 22. Julie Lappin seconded.

Vote to approve: 3-0.

Public Hearing on Proposed Zoning Regulations

Royal DeLegge formally opened the public hearing to take public comments on the proposed zoning regulations. Royal welcomed those in attendance for the public hearing.

Mitch noted that we received written comments from two parties prior to tonight's meeting. Copies of those comments will be appended to these minutes.

Question from Carolyn Stevens: Carolyn asked whether there are rural areas that might be considered appropriate for smaller lot sizes.

Response from Royal: The PC has not taken up that question yet but may well do so in the future.

Carolyn responded that she believes that there have been offers from some residents to assist in exploring this topic. Carolyn added that she thinks this question came up during the Select Board's public hearing on proposed zoning regulations on Feb 13.

The PC expressed willingness to work with residents interested exploring in this issue.

Comment from Phil Susmann: Phil noted that the PC has reverted to the current LDR zoning standards (5-acre minimum lots size and 200 feet of road frontage) but expressed his hope that the community is still interested in identifying areas where smaller lot sizes may be appropriate.

Royal DeLegge asked if there were any further comments.

Carolyn Stevens asked if any changes to the Town Forest are proposed at this time.

Response from Royal DeLegge: The PC has chosen not to take up that question at this time. The PC intends to address that issue in 2024.

With no further comments offered from the public, Julie Lappin moved to close the public hearing. Steve Davis seconded the motion.

Vote to approve: 3-0.

The public hearing was formally closed at 6:56 pm.

Discussion and comments from the Planning Commission.

Regarding comments about protecting the Town Forest against development, Steve Davis expressed his view that some of the protections that have been proposed are somewhat redundant.

Steve is also uncertain about a particular statement offered in David Mears' comments: "Within the Forest Reserve District, permitted uses include sustainable commercial forestry and related uses, and all other land development is prohibited."

Steve asked whether the Town Forest is being actively managed right now.

Mitch noted that there is a Town Forest Management Plan. The PC may wish to have further discussions with the Conservation Commission and/or Forest Stewardship Committee to learn more about forest management practices.

Discussion of the change to add 3- and 4-unit dwellings, along with 1- and 2-unit dwellings in the LDR district. No PC members expressed a desire to revert to 1- and 2-unit dwellings only. PC understands the Select Board may opt to revert to 1- and 2-unit dwellings only. No one had a sense whether there is currently and demand for housing of this type. There has been very little recent zoning activity seeking multi-unit dwellings even in districts where they are currently allowed.

No further comments offered.

Motion: Julie Lappin moved to forward the current version of the draft zoning regulations to the Select Board for their consideration and another public hearing. Steve Davis seconded.

Vote to Approve: 3-0.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 7 at 6:30 pm.

Mitch noted that the PC currently now two vacancies. There have been a couple of very informal inquiries about what is involved in serving on the PC. Mitch will continue to seek parties interested in serving.

Adjournment: Steve Davis moved to adjourn; Julie Lappin seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Comments to Northfield Planning Commission Re: PC Amended Draft of Northfield Zoning Regulations (3 2024)

Laura Hill-Eubanks 4 1 2024 (previous comments also included)

At the Select Board meeting of February 13, 2024, the Northfield Planning Commission (PC) was tasked by the Select Board (SB) with amending the Draft Zoning Regulations that were proposed by the PC. My understanding was that the PC was to remove the proposed substantive changes to the standards in the Low Density Residential (LDR) district, and revert to the standards that are currently in place (as per the 2016 Zoning Regulations). However, not all of the substantive changes to the LDR district as proposed in the initial Draft Zoning Regulations have been removed by the PC.

The substantive changes to the LDR district proposed by the PC in its original Draft Zoning Regulations included (at pages 51, 56):

- 1) lowering the current minimum lot size per dwelling unit from 5 acres to 2 acres;
- 2) decreasing minimum lot frontage from 200 feet to 100 feet;
- 3) increasing the number of allowed dwelling units from 1 and 2 units, to 3 and 4 units.

The PC did remove the changes to minimum lot sizes, and removed the changes to the minimum lot frontage. However, I had assumed that the PC would also remove the change that allowed for the increase in the number of units per dwelling (to 3 and 4, up from the previous 1 and 2 units), but this was not removed in the new draft. I'm not sure if this was an oversight or otherwise, so I wanted to bring it to your attention. Because it seems to me that if we're trying to revert to the current standards in the LDR district until such time as we can more thoughtfully determine what types of development should go where, and in which specific parts of the LDR, the increase in dwelling units should also be changed back to reflect the current standard of allowing up to 1 and 2 units per dwelling.

For the reasons I stated in previous comments, and as detailed in the Town Plan, we should not be encouraging an increase in development type or intensity in the entirety of the LDR. Those reasons include a lack of public infrastructure (sewer and water), and the potential for a higher level of negative impacts on the town's public resources (such as back roads) and on the significant natural resources present in much of this area (such as ridgelines and steep slopes, forest blocks and wildlife habitat, water resources, and scenic character). We should be looking more carefully at the impacts that may result in each type of land use area, and whether those areas can support development, before making a blanket change that would allow for an increase in development in all of the LDR areas, including those that are not appropriate for higher levels of building. [See Town Plan for more details, mapping, and recommendations for the different areas of the LDR district.]

Please consider removing the allowance for 3 and 4 units per dwelling and reverting to the current standard of 1 and 2 units per dwelling in the LDR district. It would be much easier to keep the current standard of 1- and 2-unit dwellings for now, than to change it back later, when the new standard may have already been relied upon to plan for development.

COMMENTS PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED:

Comments to Northfield Select Board Re: Northfield Draft Zoning Regulations

Laura Hill-Eubanks 1 8 2024

Attached to this document are my previous comments (with some minimal technical editing) that were sent this past December to the Planning Commission, and copied to the Select Board, regarding the PC's Draft Zoning Regulations. The Planning Commission did not seem to incorporate or address those comments in its draft. I now offer the following comments to the Select Board, in addition to those submitted previously, for its consideration.

The Northfield Town Plan was written and approved after a great deal of study, debate, and public input and reflects the desire to balance growth and development with the protection of important natural resources. The Plan attempts to strike this balance by including policies that encourage development in the traditionally developed areas in and around the villages where there is adequate infrastructure, while also including policies that discourage development that would impact the significant and valued natural resources of the rural areas (where there is inadequate infrastructure and where the impacts to natural and public resources would be greater). The Town Plan is the basis and legal authority for the Zoning Regulations, meaning the Draft Zoning Regulations should conform with the Plan. Yet the Draft Zoning Regulations do not fully conform with the Town Plan because the Regulations fail to strike the balance in policies that the Plan calls for—policies that a majority of the town residents supported (see Town Plan).

The rural areas outside the villages are now designated as one large district: the Low Density Residential ("LDR") district. The Town Plan calls for protecting ridgelines and upland forest blocks, important wildlife habitat, source waters and water quality, working lands, and the scenic character of the rural areas in the LDR. And in keeping with the goals of the Town Plan, the Draft Zoning Regulations state the purpose of the LDR district is: to preserve open land for agriculture and forestry, and maintain traditional settlement patterns; support and regulate agricultural entrepreneurship; provide more robust protection of source water areas, endangered species habitat, and ridgelines; limit development in upland areas (elevations of one thousand eight hundred feet [1,800'] and above) characterized by steep slopes, thin soils and poor access, best suited for forestry, agriculture, recreation and low-density residential development. While the Draft's purpose statement for the LDR district generally conforms with the Town Plan, the development standards for the LDR district in the Draft do not—they generally disregard the goals of the purpose statement and the policies of the Town Plan, and in fact do just the opposite of what they call for: The Draft Zoning Regulations *encourage increased development* in all of the rural LDR district, *while leaving out protections for most of the natural resources that are specifically listed as deserving of more protection.*

It seems ill-advised and is contrary to the Town Plan to do one without the other: to encourage increased development in the rural LDR district (which was not envisioned by the Plan) while failing to protect that area's natural resources from the resulting impacts.

For this reason, and those detailed in my previous comments, I urge the Select Board to reconsider the drastic change in zoning that allows for smaller minimum lot sizes and larger dwellings in the entirety of the LDR district, while ignoring the need for the policies of the Town Plan that would protect the important resources of these rural areas.

Comments to Planning Commission Re: PC Draft of Northfield Zoning Regulations for 2023

L. Hill-Eubanks 12/4/2023

Note: I live in the Low Density Residential District in a very old farmhouse.

1. The Draft Zoning Regulations Are Generally an Improvement over the Previous Regulations

Overall, the draft regulations are an improvement over the former version. The draft is clearer and easier to read, and incorporates those things now required by law, such as allowing 2-unit dwellings in any zones where 1-unit dwelling units are allowed, and allowing Accessory Dwelling Units (dwellings smaller than the primary house on the lot) on all lots that have a 1-unit (single-family) dwelling. It also now includes some protections for water bodies (river corridors, wetlands, etc.) which are sorely needed to protect water quality, wildlife habitat, and to mitigate flooding and destruction of property. The regulations further add criteria that could lessen the impacts of development on natural resources through new site plan standards, and by adding standards to protect surrounding areas from the potential impacts caused by more intense uses such as gravel pits. I was also happy to see the current (2016) Flood Hazard Area regulations still included in this draft. If the FHA regulations are ultimately changed, and as flooding becomes more common and more destructive, my hope is that the new regulations will continue to offer at least the robust protections that they do now.

2. But the Regulations Should Not Encourage Increased Development in the Town's Rural Areas

What the regulations do not do well is something that the Town Plan (which is the basis for the regulations) had called for: 1) to guide future growth and development in such a way as to concentrate it in the areas that have traditionally been developed--such as the areas in and around the villages that have the infrastructure to support that growth (public sewer and water, utilities, paved roads, sidewalks, etc.); and 2) to protect the natural resources and special character of the town's more rural areas. (Policies generally referred to as "smart growth" (see 24 VSA §2791(13)). Currently, the town's significant rural areas are all included in one zone: the Low Density Residential (LDR) district. This district includes open space, agricultural fields, large forest blocks, mountainsides and ridgelines, rivers and

streams, important wildlife habitat, and many other natural features that make up the great and varied rural landscape that we all enjoy and rely on in many ways.

But the draft regulations seem to encourage “not so smart growth,” by changing the current zoning to allow for smaller lots, and with more housing units per lot than would seem appropriate for the rural area that makes up the LDR district. I understand the need for more housing, but increased levels of development should take place where there is infrastructure to support it, and not where it will have the greatest adverse impacts on the rural areas and their resources, while also costing more to provide services there. In addition, as a former chair/member of the Planning Commission, the one thing we heard loud and clear as we wrote the Town Plan, was that Northfield wanted to keep the village areas alive and thriving. And to accomplish that, more development was desired in those village areas, and not in the more rural areas.

As the Town Plan states (excerpts at p. 46):

Northfield is seeking to encourage a greater diversity of housing options (apartments, townhouse/condo units, cottage/small homes, accessory dwellings, etc.) in and between Northfield Village and Northfield Falls in order to make it possible for households of various sizes, ages and income levels to live in town.

This plan calls for most new housing to be located in and between Northfield Village and Northfield Falls where it can be supported by existing infrastructure and further other objectives and policies of this plan.

Dispersed, low-density, rural housing costs more to service than compact, centrally located housing and increases the amount of infrastructure that must be maintained. Often such residential properties pay less in taxes than it costs to provide them with municipal and educational services, increasing the tax burden on all property owners in town. Northfield is seeking to discourage the continued expansion of housing into remote areas of town, particularly those not currently served by public roads and utilities.

The current (2016) regulations require a 5-acre minimum lot size for 1-unit and 2-unit dwellings. But the new regulations change that standard to allow for smaller (2-acre minimum) building lots, and would add a new allowance for larger (3-unit and 4-unit) dwellings. This seems to encourage more development in the rural areas, something the town had sought to discourage. These areas have no public sewer or water and are largely served by unpaved dirt roads. Conditions there make development in this area more expensive, with more detrimental impacts, and with higher costs to the town to provide services. By changing the entire district to a 2-acre lot minimum, it seems as if not much thought was given as to where increased development should and should not take place, even within this district.

Increased development in the LDR district will create more traffic on unpaved roads, whose maintenance and quality the town can barely keep up with or afford as it is now. Services in

general (such as emergency and law enforcement), will be more difficult to provide in remote areas. And utilities must sometimes be upgraded to serve new housing. This all costs more money, which the town's residents have thus far not always been so happy to provide.

The LDR district should be given much more attention before such a drastic change, if any, is made to such a large rural area. My suggestion would be to leave the LDR as it is for now: 5-acre minimum building lot that allows for 1- and 2-unit dwellings and Accessory Dwelling Units. I understand the zoning is taking a great deal of time and effort and there is a push to get it done, but the draft regulations may reflect a rush to finish that could result in unnecessary impacts. A more thoughtful approach would be to take the time to look at the different areas and conditions around the LDR (and other districts) to see where new development, and types of development, might occur before making further zoning changes. Any changes that are ultimately deemed desirable, could be made now or by subsequent amendments to the regulations.

For example: The current LDR area could include added districts for forestry, conservation, and/or recreation in those areas with important natural resources that should be protected, and that are not so appropriate for development, (such as ridgelines and steep slopes, large intact forest blocks that provide forest resources and wildlife habitat, and important town resources, such as the Town Forest). There may be areas that could support more housing, such as along paved roads with utilities in place and soils that would support water and septic, and that would lessen impacts to natural resources and rural esthetics. These areas could be zoned separately within the current LDR district area. But the rural areas need more consideration, and potentially protections, than they are being given in the draft regulations.

This is a time to think more seriously about zoning that balances the need for people to have a place to live well, while also protecting the natural resources that we need to sustain life. This can be a difficult balance to achieve. But climate change and loss of open and natural spaces is already causing impacts we can see and experience, such as flooding, deadly and drying heat, species extinctions, and more. Before deciding on changes to zoning for our land use areas, we should be looking closely at new development and the impacts, both good and bad, that it can have on people and their environment.

3. Protections for the Town Forest: A Special Plea

Several years ago, and as a former member of the Conservation Commission, I worked on a project to purchase and add the summit of Paine Mountain to the Northfield Town Forest. At the time, the summit had been owned by TDS Telecom. The summit and the entire Town Forest offer great benefits to the people (and wildlife) of Northfield and beyond. It's part of a large continuous forest block that provides important wildlife habitat, watershed protections, climate change mitigation (trees), nature-based recreational opportunities, and beautiful scenery.

As the summit project progressed, more and more community members got involved to see it through. Some of the people that worked on it are current and former town Conservation Commission and Select Board members. More than two years and countless volunteer hours were spent on the project, which was finally completed in 2018 after a successful Town Meeting Day vote and lots of fundraising. And the addition of the summit had a snowball effect, as even more community members have put in additional time and effort (and love) into making the Town Forest one of Northfield's most valued resources.

But the one thing we have not yet accomplished is to provide long-term protections for the Town Forest. Considering all the investment of money, time, and energy (and love) that has gone into the Town Forest up until now, it's time to ensure that it remains intact for all of us, now and into the future. There are two ways to do this: Place a Conservation Easement on the land, which will conserve it forever; or create a new zoning district that would allow for only forestry, conservation, and recreational uses--as it is currently used. As it stands, the Town Forest is now included in the Low Density Residential district, which leaves its fate open.

Ultimately, the Town Forest should be placed under a Conservation Easement. This would forever protect the land and its natural resources--and all the other things we love about it. Some of us tried to get this type of protection in place previously, but were unsuccessful, mostly due to the opposition of some former members of the Select Board (as is their prerogative). I'm hopeful that the new iteration of the Board will see the need for this step and finally get it done (for which many of us would be eternally grateful).

In the meantime, the Planning Commission and Select Board could start protecting the Town Forest by zoning it as a separate district for conservation/forestry/recreation. This would prevent (for now) any types of development that are not in keeping with the purposes of a Town Forest. Until a conservation easement is put in place, a zoning district for the Town Forest would go a long way toward giving it some of the protections (and love) that it deserves.

Mitch Osiecki

From: David Mears <david.k.mears@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, April 1, 2024 3:19 PM
To: Northfield Planning Commission; stephen fitzhugh
Cc: Whalen, Jeremy; Jeff Schulz; Kenneth Mccann; Mitch Osiecki; Select Board; Ruth Ruttenberg; Nigel Hicks-Tibbles; Mariela Swiech; Deborah Zuaro; Russ Barrett
Subject: Conservation Commission Suggestions on Zoning Bylaws

Dear Northfield Planning Commission: Thank you for your continued work to update the zoning bylaws. I write on behalf of the Northfield Conservation Commission to follow-up on our exchange before the Select Board.

At our meeting last week, the Conservation Commission members agreed to recommend that you designate the Town Forest as a "Forest Reserve District" on the zoning map, and include the following language in the next version of the bylaws:

"Forest Reserve District: The purpose of the Forest Reserve District is to produce wood products, maintain wildlife habitat, protect water supplies, and provide forest recreation and conservation education. Within the Forest Reserve District, permitted uses include sustainable commercial forestry and related uses, and all other land development is prohibited."

I also write on behalf of the Conservation Commission to flag a question regarding the other topic raised by the Conservation Commission in its comments on the bylaws, relating to the minimum lot size and density levels in the Low Density Residential District. The draft of the bylaws prepared by the Planning Commission and formally considered by the Select Board at their February 13, 2024 meeting included a proposed revision to the LDR District reducing minimum lot size from 5 acres to 2 acres, and increasing

density from 1-2 units to 3-4 units per lot. The Planning Commission comments (copied below) on that draft included a recommendation to leave the minimum lot size at 5 acres, and density at a level of 1-2 units per lot in order to protect open space and natural resources in Northfield, among other benefits.

In response to the Select Board's recommendation, the latest draft version of the zoning bylaws has restored the 5 acre minimum lot size. The new draft would, however, not alter the Planning Commission's original recommendation to change the density to 3-4 units per lot in the LDR District. We are not certain whether the retention of this proposed change is an oversight, or intentional. Either way, we continue to recommend that the current density of 1-2 units per lot be retained in the zoning bylaws until the Town has had the opportunity to consider other, more strategic, ways to alter the zoning bylaws to encourage development.

We are happy to discuss if helpful.

Sincerely, David Mears, Vice Chair, Northfield Conservation Commission

To: Northfield Town Selectboard
From: Northfield Conservation Commission
Date: January 8, 2024
Re: Proposed Zoning Bylaw Revisions

Request: We write to respectfully request that the Selectboard send the proposed Northfield Zoning Regulation changes back to the Northfield Planning Commission with instructions to,

1. remove any changes to the Low Density Residential (LDR) District requirements, specifically the changes in Tables B (changing minimum lot size from 5 acres to 2 acres) and C (allowing 3 and 4 unit dwellings). These proposed changes, applying to nearly the entirety of Northfield outside of the Northfield Village and Northfield Falls, are inconsistent with the purpose of the Zoning Regulations, the purpose of the LDR District designation, and the Town Plan. So dramatically increasing the allowed density of development in the LDR District has the potential to significantly impair Northfield's natural resources, increase inefficiency in transportation and energy use, and reduce flood resilience. In addition, this change threatens to increase the cost of services and infrastructure that would be needed to support this level of intensity of use; and
2. consistent with our prior communications to the Selectboard and Planning Commission, direct the Planning Commission to revise the Northfield Zoning Regulations to provide additional protections for the Town Forest and Dustin's Pasture by designating both areas as conservation districts for the purpose of making these natural resource areas area off-limits to development.

With regard to our first request, we understand that the passage of revisions to the Town Zoning Regulations is time-sensitive given changes in state law. That time-sensitivity should not, however, be the basis for significantly increasing the allowed LDR District density in a manner that will have significant, long-term and potentially irreversible impacts and further, that has largely escaped public notice or discussion. For this reason, we request that you vote immediately to request that the Planning Commission submit a revised version of the amended Zoning Regulations before you adopt. Doing so will allow for a more considered and deliberative process before embarking on making such a significant change of course to the future of the Town of Northfield.

With regard to our second request, the change to the Town Forest designation is not time-sensitive and we would be pleased to work with the Planning Commission to make this change in a future round of Zoning Regulation amendments. We would note, however, that we made this request to the Planning Commission previously and the Planning Commission summarily rejected our request without explanation or the opportunity to discuss. For this reason, we request that the Selectboard direct the Planning Commission work with the Conservation Commission to explore options for increasing protections for the Town Forest in future Zoning Regulation amendments.

For the Selectboard's convenience, we have collected some of the relevant provisions of the existing Zoning Regulations and the Town Plan relevant to your decision and demonstrating that changing the allowed density of development in the LDR District is inconsistent with both documents as well as a significant divergence from the direction of Town decisions in the recent past related to land use:

A. Inconsistent with "Intent and Purpose" of Zoning Regulations:

1.2.1 To promote the public health, safety, and welfare, and reduce the potential for fire, floods, explosions, and other dangers.

1.2.2 To implement the goals and objectives of the adopted Northfield Town Plan in accordance with its vision and goals.

1.2.3 To encourage and promote development that furthers the goals of the Northfield Town Plan for the area in which it is sited, in the villages and wider town, while preserving Northfield's land, forest, water, wildlife, and air resources for present and future generations."

B. Inconsistent with the Purpose of the Low Density Residential District (Zoning Regulations Section 3.2.1):

"The intent of the Low Density Residential District is to preserve open land for agriculture and forestry, and maintain traditional settlement patterns; support and regulate agricultural entrepreneurship; provide more robust protection of source water areas, endangered species habitat, and ridgelines; limit development in upland areas (elevations of one thousand eight hundred feet [1,800'] and above) characterized by steep slopes, thin soils and poor access, best suited for forestry, agriculture, recreation and low-density residential development."

C. Inconsistent with Town Plan:

Goals: (Excerpts)

- **Goal #1:** To plan development so as to maintain the historic settlement pattern of compact village and urban centers separated by rural countryside.
- **Goal #6:** To maintain and improve the quality of air, water, wildlife, forests, and other land resources.
- **Goal #7:** To make efficient use of energy, provide for the development of renewable energy resources, and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
- **Goal #13:** To plan for, finance and provide an efficient system of public facilities and services to meet future needs.
- **Goal #15:** To encourage flood resilient communities.

Chapter Two (Land Use)(Excerpts):

- **Transportation:** It is not fiscally sound for the town to increase its road maintenance costs by accepting or upgrading roads serving remote, low-density areas of town.
- **Utilities, Facilities and Services:** Providing infrastructure allows for compact development in and between the village areas, providing a viable alternative to scattered, low-density development that fragments and degrades natural resources and open space.
- **Energy:** This plan supports the work of the Energy Committee to promote energy efficiency, conservation and renewables, and it establishes land use policies to encourage efficient, compact development patterns that facilitate reduced energy consumption.
- **Housing:** Continued efforts will be needed to effectively implement policies that would guide new housing into existing settlement areas and away from remote areas of town, which furthers the energy and resource protection goals of this plan. . . . This plan supports new and rehabilitated housing in downtown and village areas.
- **Flood Resilience:** Northfield Village and Northfield Falls are exposed to flood and erosion risks that will become more extreme in future decades as a result of climate change. Future land use and development decisions need to respond appropriately to those hazards to minimize future damage or loss. Flood resilience needs to be considered in the upland areas as well to ensure that land development does not contribute to downstream flooding.

Future Land Use Recommendations: The future land use map and recommendations in the Town Plan make plain that the vast majority of the land in Northfield currently zoned LDR should be protected as “Rural Moderate,” “Rural Low,” or “Resource Protection,” all designations inconsistent with the proposed 2 acre minimum lot size combined with allowing up to 4 unit dwellings per lot.

Chapter Three (Resource Protection): Nearly the entirety of the recommendations this section of the Town Plan would be put at risk by the proposed changes to the allowed density of development in the LDR District.

Chapter Four (Transportation)(Excerpt):

Recommendations (excerpt): “The most effective actions the town can take are to: (1) adopt land use policies that discourage scattered, low-density development in remote areas of town and encourage compact development in village areas and along major travel corridors as set forth in Chapter 2. Land Use, and (2) ensure that facilities and services are available so residents can choose more energy efficient modes of transportation such as transit, carpooling, bicycling or walking.”

Chapter Five (Utilities, Facilities and Services):

Policy #1: “Focus higher-density housing, commercial, industrial and institutional development in and between Northfield Village and Northfield Falls where it can be efficiently served from existing or planned utility networks, and where the availability of that infrastructure will reduce development costs.”

Chapter Six (Energy):

Policy #1: “Promote compact, walkable neighborhoods in and between Northfield Village and Northfield Falls that offer residents efficient homes and reduced automobile dependence / miles driven. Also see Transportation Policy.”

Chapter Seven (Housing):

Policy #1: “Promote compact, walkable neighborhoods that offer a range of quality housing options in and between Northfield Village and Northfield Falls.”

Page 46: “Dispersed, low-density, rural housing costs more to service than compact, centrally-located housing and increases the amount of infrastructure that must be maintained. Often such residential properties pay less in taxes than it costs to provide them with municipal and educational services, increasing the tax burden on all property owners in town. Northfield is seeking to discourage the continued expansion of housing into remote areas of town, particularly those not currently served by public roads and utilities.”

Chapter Eight (Economic Development):

Objective #1: “Maintain and enhance Northfield Village’s business district with a mix of small-scale retail, dining, entertainment, service and office uses located in a compact, walkable downtown setting.”