

**Village Core Planning Group**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**March 7, 2008**  
**1:00 PM**

Attendees: Mark Scarano (Grafton County Economic Development Council Executive Director), Ted Sutton (Lincoln Town Manager), John Hettinger (Village Core Planning Group Chairman), Marilyn Sanderson, Jennifer Codispoti (NH DRED Trails Bureau), Dennis Ducharme (InnSeasons Resorts), Joel Bourassa (InnSeasons Resorts), Paul Kasianchuk (InnSeasons Resorts), Beverly Mason (USDA Rural Development), Steve Epstein (USDA Rural Development), Bill Webb (Northern Forest Center), Glenn Coppelman (NH Community Development Finance Authority), Chris Thayer (Appalachian Mountain Club), Rich Lougee (Senator Gregg's office), Simon Thomson (Senator Sununu's office), Ed Brisson (Centex Destination Properties), Brian Baker (InnSeason Resorts), Mark LaClair (Lincoln-Woodstock Chamber of Commerce), Peter Moore (Lincoln Selectman and Planning Board member), Steve LaFrance (Horizons Engineering), Mike Sabourin (Saber Mountain and the Landing on Loon), Chester Kahn (citizen) and WT Bishop (citizen)

Mark Scarano started the meeting by describing the community focus of the project, and that he had invited many people from various branches of government to possibly assist the town of Lincoln with the Riverfront Park and Trails System. He asked everyone to introduce themselves, and said he had also spoken with North Country Council.

Town Manager Sutton spoke next about how the project has and will dovetail with so many developments. He gave a brief history of the economy of Lincoln, from the paper mill to Loon Mountain and the tourism industry. He explained that the Town is still recovering from that change, and felt there was a need to balance the economy. So he made a few calls, sent out a few letters, and had great response which led to the formation of the Village Core Committee this past summer. He expressed his appreciation to Chairman John Hettinger and his able partner, Marilyn Sanderson, and said he was excited to see all the people present at this meeting.

Chairman Hettinger explained that the Village Core Committee has been using the Village Center Plan, developed from 1997-2002 as the basic framework and built on that. Now some 1200 units are being built in the next 10 years, mainly along the north and south banks of the East Branch of the Pemigewasset River. This area has splendid vistas, which local residents want to continue having access to, as well as to the swimming, kayaking and walking also available in that area. But the Committee also wants to continue to improve the tourism infrastructure. Chairman Hettinger then gave a PowerPoint presentation, available at <http://www.lincolnnh.org/government/VillageCoreCommittee.htm>.

The presentation described the problems the group looked at:

- ❑ Commercial development projects on banks of Pemigewasset River tend towards privatization in support of future out-of-state second home owners, potentially limiting access to local Town residents.
- ❑ Compounding development activity is the present lack of easements and paved paths resulting in the river bank being in-accessible to local citizens, seniors and the handicapped.
- ❑ Presently existing walking/biking trails are disbursed over large areas within the Town and not well interconnected or known to visitors.
- ❑ Present trail system does not extend into Village Center area and Lincoln's commercial district, and does not connect with the State Park trail system, WMNF and future Heritage Trail.
- ❑ A formally integrated trail system in the Town of Lincoln would form a "hub" system in the White Mountains for use by locals as well as to stimulate, perpetuate and maintain a consistently high flow of tourism.
- ❑ A formally integrated trail system would provide an additional long term economic stimulant to the overall utilization of Lincoln's hospitality, restaurant and retail businesses throughout the year.

The next slide discussed the history of determining Lincoln's needs:

- ❑ A Village Center Plan was developed and adopted in 2002 by the Planning Board as a supplement to the Town of Lincoln Master Plan.
- ❑ Based on significant public input.
  - Community Survey by North Country Council
  - Community Forum
  - Key Issue Committees (Communications, Facilities, Economy, Main Street)
- ❑ Primary Goals
  - Transform the Village Center Area into a pedestrian/non-automobile friendly district.
  - Demolition of the old papermill Whitewater treatment plant.
  - Creation of a riverfront strip recreation area (Riverfront Park) on the north bank of the Pemigewasset River on an 18 acre parcel owned by the Town.
  - Acknowledging that the "local economic machine" is primarily fueled by tourism the Town should foster programs and policies that result in diversification of its tourist agendas.
  - Construct a trails network to connect the Village Center area and Lincoln's commercial district with Franconia State Park, WMNF and future Heritage Trail.

- Establish a formal network of snowmobile trails extending into the Village Center area.
- Plan reinforces and re-asserts the contention that a strong and healthy Village Center area will benefit all the citizens of Lincoln.

Followed by a history of efforts to address the issues:

- Sidewalks have been added to west side of Connector Road for pedestrian usage especially aimed at residents of Village Green senior housing.
- In 2002 The Town completed the 1.3 mile long paved Penstock Trail from Village of Loon to Forest Ridge Road.
- Completed sidewalks in Village Core for pedestrian traffic.
- Planning Board working with developers to maintain public access to Riverbank and public right of ways.
- However trails remain disconnected, and access to River in Village Core remains difficult for local residents, handicapped and seniors.

He then described a two-pronged proposed solution:

- Construct a trails network to connect the Village Center area and commercial district with Franconia State Park, WMNF and future Heritage Trail making Lincoln a “hub” for trails in the White Mountains.
- Build a Riverfront Park, to include access roadway, parking lots, restroom facilities, amphitheater, pavilion displaying historical & environmental info focusing on the paper mill and logging industries, canoe/kayak put-in/take-out, picnic tables/benches.

Chairman Hettinger then went over the feasibility/engineering studies already started:

- Route of Riverfront Park Trail defined (GPS Survey).
- In process of working with property owners on easements.
- Cultural resources survey completed.
- Wetlands delineation pending.
- Riverfront Park in the process of being designed. To include:
  - Restroom Facilities
  - Pavilion displaying historical & environmental facts re. paper mill and logging industries
  - Amphitheater
  - Kayak/Canoe Put-In/Take-Out
  - Parking Lots
  - Access Roadway

And the project costs and timeline, as we know them so far:

- Riverfront Park estimated at: \$1.5MM.
- Trails Network estimated at: \$0.8MM.
- Estimated Time for Completion is: 5 – 10 Years.

The presentation concluded with some pictures showing the beautiful views taken from the proposed trail just a few days ago. After pointing out aerial photos on display, Chairman Hettinger opened up the session for questions.

Mark Scarano asked how this fits in with InnSeason's plans. Dennis Ducharme explained that the easement through his property is basically in place, and he will be building a 170-unit resort in place of the old paper mill, and the North Country Center for the Arts theater would be located in that resort, with outbuildings next to the park and trails. Construction of these buildings would be happening around the same time as the projected trail and park construction, so that would fit together well. GCEDC Executive Director Scarano felt this showed good private/public partnership.

Town Manager Sutton pointed out that there would be trails on the opposite side of the river as well, running through South Peak and the Landing at Loon. There would be further connection of snowmobile trails in the future, as well, but today's presentation is geared more towards the first few phases of the project. So far, everything has been moving forward on good will and cooperation.

Mr. Scarano asked Glenn Coppelman to speak about the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority and any programs that might fit this program. Mr. Coppelman described a tax credit program, where his organization awards up to \$5 million per year in tax credits to non-profits who apply in mid-summer. The project then sells tax credits to private parties, and for every dollar those parties purchase, 75% can be used to reduce NH business tax, plus the entire amount can be counted as a charitable contribution. It works out to about 10-11 cents out of pocket. The average award last year was \$200-300 thousand, though he's seen awards from \$50,000 to \$1,000,000. This program does require some match, but it is not firm on specifics. Preferred projects have many different sources of funding. Mr. Scarano asked if a municipality or Chamber of Commerce could be the applicant. Mr. Coppelman replied that he would need to check, but usually the awards have been to a non-profit. He said that RSA 162L explains this program well and is a good guideline. He did point out that some part of the project should help low-income people.

Mr. Scarano asked Mr. Coppelman whether Community Development Block Grant funds could be used for this. Mr. Coppelman said that the strings are much tighter, the match requirements are firmer and the requirements to help low-income citizens and create economic development through more jobs are more stringent. He felt that these funds could be used to upgrade roads, water, sewer, etc. instead. Town Manager Sutton felt that since the trails and park would increase tourism throughout town, it might apply. Mr.

Coppelman said that today's presentation was geared more towards information sharing and that detailed brainstorming should be left for later.

Bill Webb from the Northern Forest Center wondered if we had a treasurer lined up for the committee yet. Town Manager Sutton said that the group had been discussing becoming a non-profit corporation, and asked if that was better. Mr. Coppelman replied that CDBG funds need a municipality to apply, but other funding options may need a 501c3 organization. Mr. Webb also asked about T21 funds, but the Town Manager said we had already submitted an application for this trails program grant. Mr. Scarano also offered his agency, Grafton County Economic Development Council, as a 501c3 through which grant monies could be funneled.

Rich Lougee had some ideas for land and water conservation, but for the town only. Jennifer Codispoti also brought up the recreational trails funding opportunities. Marilyn Sanderson said we'll apply for land and water conservation grants when we get to the portion of the trails and park on the town land, but we're currently working on InnSeason's property. Ms. Codispoti said her group would be meeting next Wednesday.

The Appalachian Mountain Club is also a 501c3, said Chris Thayer, and they have been expanding into communities via walkable trails, etc. He described a land trust project in South Portland, and that the AMC professional staff does consulting, design, even some construction and reconstruction. He lives north of the Notch and is happy to see Lincoln looking at its own industry, and said he's always happy to be part of trails.

Mr. Coppelman said the two parts of Phase one described in the PowerPoint could be broken down into smaller pieces for fundraising, and Chairman Hettinger explained that we had already done that by applying for a grant for the first 600 feet of paved trail, for example. Ms. Codispoti asked about not paving, to save money, and Chairman Hettinger said that we had thought about that, but decided against it to ensure handicapped access, both for local residents and visitors. She replied that hard-packed crushed material actually costs less, holds up well and costs less to maintain, in her experience. She will send information on this to Chairman Hettinger, saying that it is being used on railsto-trails projects. She described two miles of stone dust materials, excavator work and all equipment costing about \$45,000. Mr. Lougee asked about requirements regarding paving within a certain distance from the river. The Town Manager said we were hoping to pave closer to downtown, and then move to more natural surfaces farther out. Mr. Thayer described permeable material being used at the Highland Center and Zealand Falls.

Joel Bourassa mentioned the historical significance of the stretch of trail behind the Town Hall area, due to the paper mill. He wondered about kiosks, and if this would be a help in funding opportunities. Ms. Codispoti said that the RTP funding could be used for this as an interpretive trail. Mr. Webb also suggested a building that contained both the restrooms and interpretive center could be a better bet for funding.

Mr. Scarano asked if funding might be available due to the trail and parks location near the Kancamagus Scenic Byway. Mr. Lougee said he would check, Mr. Coppelman said

he had seen something done that way. Mr. Thayer said that the AMC had received funds that way, but he wasn't sure if the proximity was close enough in this case.

Ms. Codispoti and Town Manager Sutton mentioned the snowmobile trails going across the Kancamagus Highway and up Franconia Notch. Maybe they could work together on the sections further from downtown that need bridges. Currently the snowmobiles come into town next to Connector Road and then back via the railroad tracks.

Mr. Coppelman wondered about the LCHIP program for natural resources and cultural/historical resources. Ms. Sanderson said she had already been in touch with them. Beverly Mason from Rural Development said she really liked the park area.

Mr. Scarano said that before Mr. Ducharme created any new jobs with his growth plans, he should contact Mr. Coppelman regarding a CDBG grant. The Community Development Block Grant is worth \$20,000 per job with a 25 job ceiling, even though Mr. Ducharme said he would be creating 100 jobs. Mr. Scarano emphasized that Mr. Ducharme would need to sign on the dotted line of that grant application, not the town of Lincoln. Mr. Coppelman and Mr. Lougee explained that one needed to show that the jobs were being created as a direct result of the trail, i.e., that he would not be hiring these people if the trail did not go through. Mr. Ducharme responded that if the downtown area of Lincoln were not being redeveloped, he would not be building. He said that if neither he, nor Ed Brisson from Centex, were not doing what they were doing (building/developing), no one else would either.

Chester Kahn said that a prime asset of the area is the second-home owner, as they are the largest population of owners. He wondered about somehow having them each contribute \$1000, which could somehow be reduced off their property tax and reimbursed to the town. Mr. Scarano explained that the tax credit he spoke of earlier was for businesses, and asked if the town would raise funds through taxation. Town Manager Sutton said that he was dealing mostly with the developers, who will be benefitting from the trail system and park via tax increment funding. Mr. Coppelman noted that the second-home owners would need to donate to a 501c3, but some lawyers have said that the Town of Lincoln is already a charitable organization.

Ed Brisson talked about the surveys they do at Centex Destination Properties regarding the things that are important for a visitor to an area. Almost every one shows walking, hiking and biking. These trails bring visitors who create jobs. Mr. Coppelman said we'd need to build that story for the Community Development Finance Authority. He also mentioned that some visitors or second-home owners come from southern New Hampshire and have businesses there that would qualify for their tax credit program.

Mr. Scarano asked if there were any more questions or comments, and there were none. Town Manager Sutton thanked everyone for coming and thanked Mr. Scarano for putting the event together. He felt that both the information and networking would be very beneficial, and that something good always came out of these types of meetings.

The date for the next meeting ... March 25, 2008.