

**TOWN OF WALPOLE**  
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September 4, 2008

To: Town of Walpole Planning Board

From: Town of Walpole Select Board

Re: Adoption of "Farms, Forest, Streams and Wetlands: Walpole's Conservation Plan" into the Town's Master Plan

As Selectpersons of the Town of Walpole, we commend the Planning Board for its dedication in revising the Master Plan for the people of Walpole. We recognize the time you have spent in extra meetings and the thought you have exhibited throughout the whole process.

We wish to express our opinions and concerns at this public meeting and request that our comments become a part of the meeting's official minutes. A copy will be provided.

We have three areas of concern we want to express:

1. The adoption of the entire Conservation Commissions Plan as it was written in 2006.
2. The insertion of "overlays" of districts rather than a direct approach for change through a warrant article, and
3. the confusion that may result from a Master Plan which has the potential to conflict with current zoning ordinances adopted by vote of the townspeople of Walpole at Annual Town Meeting and North Walpole at Annual Village Meeting.

First, the Conservation Commission, as an appointed body, has a specific role under RSA 36-A:2 to index all open space, marshland, swamps and other wetlands. As a result of this role, the Commission may then recommend "a program for the protection, development or better utilization of all such areas." Including the entire Conservation Commissions Plan may exceed the Commission's authority and confuse, rather than enhance the Master Plan. We suggest the Planning Committee adopt the Conservation Commission's Objectives (found on pages 12 & 13)

that do not duplicate objectives already in the Master Plan. Further, we suggest the index of wetlands, swamps and open spaces be attached as an Appendix to the Master Plan.

Second, the proposed Master Plan contains several “considerations for overlay districts.” We aren’t sure what “overlay” means in reality. If it is the intent of the Planning Board to introduce Warrant Articles for such things as “Historic District,” we believe that it is prudent to be more direct than to state an “overlay” is being considered. The use of the term “overlay” suggests a vague form of restriction is being applied.

Our third and final comment is in regards to the Master Plan. It is important to remember that Master Plans are advisory in nature to be used as a guide for development in a community; they have no force of law. It is our opinion that the Master Plan should not conflict with current Zoning Ordinances. Nor should the Master Plan seek to restrict a person’s right to enjoy and use his/her land. We believe the Master Plan as it considers the future must acknowledge that change in the Plan will occur as the larger environment changes and different priorities become apparent.

We urge the Planning Board to use its best independent judgment as it is charged with amending the Master Plan by RSA 674 and communicate the Plan to the Town as a whole as widely as possible by a variety of means. It is imperative that the Citizens of Walpole understand the role of the Master Plan.

Respectfully shared,

Sheldon Sawyer, Board Chair

Whitney Aldrich

Jamie Teague