

The Hadley Commoner



A Newsletter by Hadley Neighbors for Sensible Development

No. 3, April 2006

Residents bring new bylaw to advance Long Range Plan

More than 70 Hadley residents have joined together to bring a top priority of the Long Range Plan to Town Meeting for a vote on May 4.

The Compatible Building Size Bylaw would enact the retail and business size recommendations of the Long Range Plan. The Plan was adopted by the Planning Board in February and approved unanimously by Town Meeting in October 2005.

The Compatible Building Size Bylaw would limit business buildings to 50,000 square feet—the size of a regular supermarket or office building.

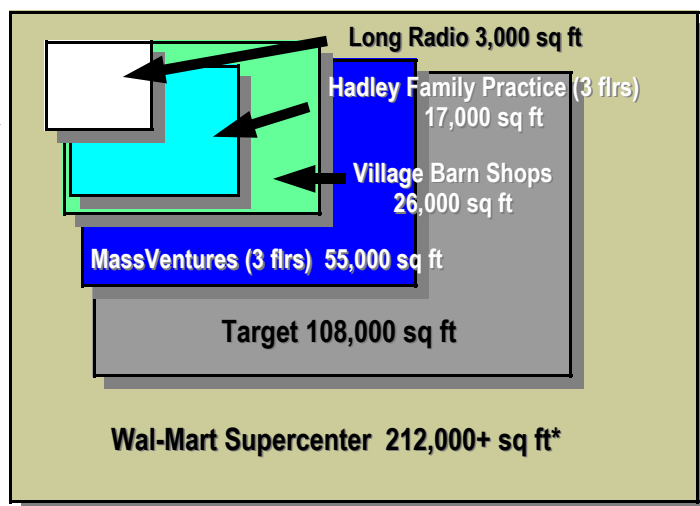
The Plan ranks the measure as an “Immediate/High” priority, the most urgent category. The bylaw text is taken directly from page 106 of the Plan.

Traffic concerns prompted residents to bring the bylaw forward. Traffic forecasts from the Lowe’s and Wal-Mart Supercenter developers now show that even with proposed widenings of Route 9, delays and accidents will increase at almost every intersection on Route 9, as well as several residential streets. The Long Range Plan says one of the best ways to control traffic is to limit the size of high-volume commercial stores.

Smaller stores and office build-

ings, in contrast, draw less traffic, especially on Saturdays, when shopping at “big box” stores peaks.

The Plan recommends that developers be allowed to exceed the 50,000-square-foot limit if they offer Transfer Development Rights (TDR) provisions, such as funds for farmland protection or other compensation.



This creates a safety valve to help insure that well-designed projects that benefit the community are allowed.

Residents are working closely with the newly created Long Range Plan Implementation Committee to fine tune the bylaw language. Because the Committee held its first meeting after the Feb. 15 deadline for Town Meeting articles, residents submitted the bylaw by petition.

In the coming months, residents hope to work with the Committee on the TDR provisions to be voted on within the year. To lend your help, contact info@hadleyneighbors.org. ■

**Roads and parking bring paved and built areas to 18 acres, or 793,000 sq ft.*

Wal-Mart & Lowe’s must fix wetlands & traffic info

Unanswered questions and incomplete information continue to delay the Wal-Mart Supercenter and Lowe’s.

In February, developers of the Wal-Mart Supercenter expansion at the Hampshire Mall suspended hearings before the Planning Board and Conservation Commission until June 2006. This followed the filing of a 91-page report by residents in December 2005 that documented large areas of undisclosed wetlands at the proposed Supercenter site.

The Conservation Commission ruled in January that wetlands on the site must be protected; the Department of Environmental Protection upheld that ruling in March. However, the developer is still fighting the decision and has now taken DEP to court. Legal challenges could take up to two years. In the meantime, Wal-Mart may be taking other steps to advance the project.

Meanwhile, traffic concerns about Lowe’s have led to a 30-day extension of the public comment period on the project’s Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), to May 10. A traffic engineer working for the Planning Board said that because of missing information and uncertainty about traffic mitigation proposals—including the widening of Route 9 at both East and Middle Streets—neither Lowe’s nor Wal-Mart should be approved until all traffic problems are resolved.

On April 5, the Planning Board wrote to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs asking the state to intervene and require the developers of the Lowe’s, Wal-Mart and Home Depot projects to cooperate with the Town on a plan to manage all the traffic from these projects before they go any further. ■



About This Issue

We are pleasantly surprised by the generous donations of many Hadley residents that have allowed us to bring another issue of *The Hadley Commoner* to you.

We are heartened that so many in our community find this news useful, and we will continue publishing as funds allow.

For more information or to offer your support, visit www.HadleyNeighbors.org; send email to info@hadleyneighbors.org; or write us at P.O. Box 202, Hadley, MA 01035. ■

Great Meadow News: More Farmland Saved

More prime farmland in Hadley's Great Meadow along Cemetery Road has been protected. Since 2004, the Kestrel Trust has secured nine parcels to preserve a total of 40 acres in this historic area. The 350-acre Great Meadow has been farmed continuously since 1661; it is one of the few remaining farming areas in New England that retains the original lot layouts of the first colonial settlers.

Today, the Great Meadow is owned by dozens of people. Development of even one parcel will alter the historic character of the entire meadow. Five additional parcels have been identified where landowners want to continue farming and are willing to give up their development rights in order to protect the land. We are inspired by their example and encouraged by the strong support of the Kestrel Trust and Hadley residents for preserving this land.

If you are able to help, please contact the Kestrel Trust at (413) 695-3468 or find out more at www.kestrreltrust.org. ■

Calendar

Tues., May 2, 7:30 pm Planning Board hearing on Compatible Building Size Bylaw proposal, Town Hall.

Thurs., May 4, 7:00 pm Town Meeting, Hopkins Academy. Compatible Building Size Bylaw scheduled for vote.

June 13, 7:30 pm Conservation Commission hearing on Wal-Mart Supercenter/Hampshire Mall expansion resumes (tentative).

Tune in to TV-5 for live and repeat broadcasts of these meetings.

Hadley Neighbors for Sensible Development
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*May 4th Town Meeting (7 pm):
Your vote can help move the
Long Range Plan ahead!*