

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Which historic resources are most endangered, either from future development or neglect?

Respondent 1: Any historic resource that is privately owned could be in danger of future development or neglect if there are no protection measures in place.

Respondent 2: Houses, barns, interior stone walls, stone bridges, old stone foundations

Respondent 3: Future development could seriously impact the scenic vistas of our streets and roads, and of our agricultural lands. Neglect could impact the various old buildings, especially in the center of town, where 1 neglect example is obvious.

Respondent 4: There are two significant buildings in the National Register Dunstable Town Center District that at the moment are being neglected—a barn and a residence. We need to develop zoning incentives that encourage owners to maintain and preserve their buildings. To this end, an overlay district encouraging adaptive re-use projects would be helpful. The Master plan might suggest the formation of a Dunstable Center Strategic Committee to investigate an overlay district that preserves the historic character of the Center, while also encouraging its revitalization through zoning and business incentives.

Respondent 5: Barns

2. Do the Zoning Bylaw and other development regulations adequately protect natural and cultural resources? If not, what are the specific deficiencies? For example, should these regulations provide greater emphasis on the preservation of stone walls and historic foundations?

Respondent 1: The current bylaws and regulations seem to provide adequate protection for natural and cultural resources under jurisdiction.

Respondent 2: Yes, interior stone walls, old foundations, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, unique features (natural or otherwise)

Respondent 3: I think the stone wall regulations are adequate, but I recall nothing about foundations specifically.

Respondent 4: Regarding cultural resources, we do not have adequate protection as we have no monitored Local Historic Districts. A Demolition Delay Bylaw is not enough; it only buys us a little time. On the Cape, "The Cape Cod Commission Act" requires buildings within a National Register District to be subject to a review process if demolition or a substantial alteration (of greater than 1/3 of the building) is being considered, these are not Local Districts just NR Districts with slightly more teeth. They have the demolition delay by-law as well, but rarely implement it, as this other regulation heads off trouble before it gets to that stage. The Master Plan could suggest that Dunstable investigate and consider some preservation planning measures outside of simply the NR Districts and the Demolition Delay By-law.

Respondent 5: The Planning Board is already active in trying to conserve roadside stone walls. We don't do anything about historic foundations or historic buildings. Perhaps we could do more there. Suggestions on what we can do?

3. **Could Dunstable do more to encourage or require development practices that help to preserve and protect natural resources, such as provisions for low impact development or more detailed development guidelines for developers?**

Respondent 1: I'm not aware of what the current compliance requirements are for developers. Detailed development guidelines for residential and commercial development should include the preservation of as many healthy trees and natural resources as possible, the integration of pedestrian pathways, structural and aesthetic design that complies with the town's rural character, and the use of sustainably sourced, eco-friendly materials.

Respondent 2: Enhance the erosion control requirements, add slope protection to bylaw, enhance the bylaw language to protect wildlife habitat, add limits to the amount of impervious surface is allowed on a lot (i.e. more than 25% of lot)

Respondent 3: The Open Space Development By-Law seems to be stringent enough to protect the resources.

Respondent 4: Definitely yes

Respondent 5: As a Planning Board member. "Yes PLEASE" let's develop this type of guidelines.

4. Should the Master Plan recommend additional historic district designations in Dunstable?

Respondent 1: Yes, if such designations provide a measure of protection against destruction of historical and cultural resources, as well as permission and possibly an avenue to funding to refurbish or rebuild in order to maintain or provide improvements to structural safety and aesthetic character.

Respondent 2: Yes, the center historic district overlay should be revisited.

Respondent 3: The Master Plan could recommend more districts, but the process of getting them approved would take a very dedicated group of residents, or funds for a consultant to do the paperwork in compliance with state and federal laws. That said, there could be parts of Mill and Fletcher Streets, as well as individual buildings on Pond, North Main, High and Thorndike, Westford, Pleasant and Kemp Streets, as well as Valley Road, that could be included in such districts.

Respondent 4: I'm not sure we need additional Districts. There are areas that could be further researched and more thoroughly documented however: Pond Street, as well as the Hollis, Fletcher and River Road areas

Respondent 5: Maybe not districts but perhaps specific "thing" guidelines. For example, I actually have a dilapidated old mill foundation on my property. Perhaps we could develop guidelines related to how to protect such things.

5. Does Dunstable do enough to protect historically significant town-owned properties? Relative to other local needs, how much financial priority should be placed on protecting, restoring and revitalizing these properties?

Respondent 1: It seems that there is adequate protection for historically significant town-owned properties. There are municipal and education deficits that must be addressed. If income to the town continues to rely heavily upon increases in residents' property taxes, then spending money to restore and revitalize town-owned properties should not be a priority.

Respondent 2: Not sure... I admit am not familiar enough with this. But from one perspective, all properties have some historic significance. What properties are we talking about?

Respondent 3: Dunstable tries to preserve historic properties, but the realities of revenue make it difficult to justify at times. That is one of the significant values of having the Community Preservation Act to help with such preservation.

Respondent 4: If we plan ahead of time, preserving and protecting historic properties can be made a priority. At this early stage we should begin to plan for a restoration of The Union School, which is owned by the Town and leased to the School District. This building is underutilized and could serve many purposes within the community i.e. a cultural center such as Roudenbush Community Center in Westford. In the near future, the Union School will need significant rehabilitation, we can begin to prepare now!

Respondent 5: Well we just voted to spend a fair amount of money to restore old curtains for the town hall. So I'd say there already is a solid driving force in Dunstable actively protecting historical town-owned properties.

6. **Should CPA funds be used for preservation improvements on private property in exchange for a preservation restriction?**

Respondent 1: Not any more, unless there is indisputable proof that said property requires protection because it serves the **greater community** by providing necessary (not additional) protection of water or air resources not currently provided by the land already under preservation restriction. The large amount of currently protected private property is taxed at a significantly lower rate which allows the owners to pay a much smaller percentage than their neighbors, many of whom are seniors on fixed incomes and families on tight budgets. As there is no viable commercial tax base in place to contribute to the town income, which is almost entirely dependent upon property taxes. Thus, the burden of funding the town and schools rests heavily on seniors and families who pay the full tax rate.

Respondent 2: Interesting concept to consider. I think that would be great. Is it that allowable under CPA?

Respondent 3: I am not conversant enough with the legalities of CPA to answer whether it can be used for private properties, with or without a restriction.

Respondent 4: Yes, if the property is historically significant and in an area of high public visibility.

Respondent 5: I think we should explore using CPA funds on everything that could enrich the town, that is within the scope of the CPA project.

7. Should the Town strengthen its local wetlands bylaw to include an extended area of adjacent upland? Should the bylaw also address intermittent streams and seasonal drainage channels?

Respondent 1: No, if adjacent upland is deemed to offer sufficient protection. Yes, if the intermittent streams and seasonal drainage channels are deemed to significantly impact water resources for the town.

Respondent 2: Thru the Conservation Commission bylaw there is a 60' no structure zone already, and a policy of 25' area of natural vegetation. I am not sure what is meant by that addressing seasonal drainage channels/intermittent streams as they are already protected. What is more important are isolated wetlands and vernal pools. Limiting the amount of impervious area on a lot should also be considered.

Respondent 3: Yes, and yes.

Respondent 4: No response

Respondent 5: I think Dunstable already extends the wetlands designation beyond state and federal guidelines but if I am wrong I'm open to discussion.

8. Are the Town's historical documents and archives adequately protected and stored. If not, what improvements are needed?

Respondent 1: Based on my limited knowledge about this, it would seem that they are adequately protected and stored.

Respondent 2: Some of this has been done already and would that it continues. Having a museum of sorts would be great.

Respondent 3: They are adequately protected as to what is already stored in the Town Hall safe, but there may be others in the basements and attics of local homes, just because there was not town hall until 1907 in which to store anything, and local officials and volunteers worked out of their own homes to perform the town's work. More of the town records could be preserved and the Historical Commission, with CPA funds will be working on that project.

Respondent 4: CPA funds were recently utilized to restore and improve accessibility of the Town records. An area of significant concern is the preservation, consolidated storage and display of the Tyngsborough-Dunstable Historical Society holdings. Although these materials and artifacts are not "town owned" they are significant to the Town of Dunstable.

Respondent 5: I don't know.

9. Should the Town develop a forest management plan for the remaining forested town-owned lands?

Respondent 1: Yes, if there is no plan in place for these lands and it benefits the community as a whole.

Respondent 2: Yes

Respondent 3: I don't know enough about the forestry plans in effect to answer this.

Respondent 4: Yes, this is a positive investment in the forestland. By having a plan we would be preserving and maintaining the health of the forest and wildlife, encouraging productive usage and providing greater public walking access in the form of timber trails.

Respondent 5: Yes, if we don't already but I thought we already do.

10. Should the town adopt a shade tree bylaw and/or reference the state's Shade Tree statute with the Scenic Road Bylaw? Should the Scenic Road Bylaw be expanded to provide more discussion on the permitting process, criteria, and process for designation of a roadway?

Respondent 1: It would be helpful to include a summary of referenced bylaws so that Committee members not familiar with said bylaws can provide an informed response. Scenic roads should be protected to the extent that they are properly maintained and preserved without hindrance to thoughtful growth; and if a state or federal designation provides funding for such maintenance and preservation, all the better.

Respondent 2: Yes. Yes if that means further protection of maintain the rural look of the roadways.

Respondent 3: Yes and yes

Respondent 4: I support a shade tree by-law if it would protect our historic trees and scenic roadways. We need far greater protections than we have now! Perhaps we could avoid the destruction of some of our most precious and oldest trees: let's not forget the hangman branch on Thorndike Street and the oversized swimming

pool on a trailer whacking the 400 yr old oak hang man tree on East Main, What we have now, has proven not enough! We need bigger fines and the Tree Warden should have greater authority. What other preservation tools are available to protect our scenic roadways and historic trees? What can be done on Rte 113? Why not consider implementing a MA State Scenic Byway designation along 113 from the Tyngsborough line through Dunstable to protect the historic and rural character of the gateway into town.

Respondent 5: Although I am not one for obstructive bylaws, I do feel Dunstable should designate some roads and Scenic Roads and enhance the permitting process guidelines for such roads.

11. Should the town develop a plan for controlling invasive species, as recommended in the 2010 Open Space and Recreation Plan?

Respondent 1: Yes, and it should apply to invasive species that are deemed harmful to water or air resources or to humans or wildlife.

Respondent 2: This is a huge undertaking and would be expensive so a large part of such a plan would finding grants to do so. The invasive are very widespread and numerous in species, but yes, I think is something to consider further.

Respondent 3: Yes

Respondent 4: Yes

Respondent 5: I have no idea. Is it really a major issue for Dunstable. I mean humans could be considered an invasive species. :)

12. Should the town prioritize lands under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B for future acquisition, as outlined in the 2010 Open Space and Recreation Plan?

Respondent 1: According to the 2010 Open Space and Recreation Plan, more than 3,100 acres are currently held in Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B. Of this, more than 2,200 acres of farmland are classified under Chapter 61A, and not all of this land is actively farmed even though this classification mandates that the land must provide a yearly minimum economic return from agriculture. The focus should be on bringing this vast amount of already “acquired” land up to compliance in a way that benefits the town vs. individual property owners.

Respondent 2: Yes

Respondent 3: No, it is sufficient to have them under restriction, with the penalties that ensue for getting them out of 61. If a property comes up for sale, it can then be a matter of discussion whether there is any value to the town owning it, given the fact that the town is not in the farming business.

Respondent 4: Yes, if we plan ahead – so that when significant land comes up for sale Dunstable has made advance preparations to secure it through a combination of preservation tools.

Respondent 5: Yes

13. What can the town do to improve water and shoreline access along Salmon Brook, Unkety Brook, the Nashua River and Massapoag Pond?

Respondent 1: According to the Technical Paper, Massapoag Pond has high levels of mercury, Unkety Brook has low dissolved oxygen levels detrimental to sustaining aquatic life, and Nashua River is considered impaired based on the assessment of macroinvertebrates and total phosphorus. What would be the logic or purpose in improving access to these impaired water bodies? If we as a town are committed to preserving our rural character, we should also be committed to maintaining the health of our natural resources and protecting our wildlife.

Respondent 2: Access for what? There are several areas that provide access already. There is a lot of privately owned land along these water ways that the town cannot encourage access to. Furthermore, keeping the shorelines of these areas vegetated is essential to the stability and health of these resources.

Respondent 3: The Town owns property along the streams, but not along Massapoag. Shoreline access is available for canoes along Salmon Brook and Nashua River. Owning or controlling access on Massapoag would not be an inexpensive proposition, and liability kept the town from acquiring property there in the past.

Respondent 4: Prioritize the preservation of and public access to these areas in the Master Plan and other long-range initiatives. Work to provide more fishing, canoeing access points.

Respondent 5: Salmon Brook already has great access. I have no knowledge of town owned access to Massapoag Pond, and Unkety Brook but there is now a wonderful

potential for direct access to the Nashua River that should be made easily accessible to the public directly next to the river, not a long portage away. So “Yes” let's improve public accessibility to the Nashua River near the newly acquired conservation land on River St. It could be an amazingly wonderful resource for Dunstable!

14. Could the town do more to encourage the preservation of its remaining agricultural land? What actions would you suggest?

Respondent 1: The town can do more to encourage sustainable economic return on all its agricultural land in ways that maintains our rural character, benefit the community, and provide income for the town. Examples include increasing/varying and selling farm products (fruits, vegetables, hay, sustainable timber), establishing businesses such as farm-to-table restaurants, farmstands, farmer/artisan markets, enhancing our vast expanses of land with outdoor recreation and eco-tourism (parks, public animal sanctuaries, zipline and outdoor adventure activities). The town should proactively pursue protection and funding from state, federal, and other relevant organizations for the our natural, cultural, and historical resources.

Respondent 2: Encourage the owners of them to put the lands in APR or CR's, encourage the concept of No Farms No Food and buy locally. Support the farmers markets and businesses that sell the products of these farms. Educate the public via Nextdoor, N2N, town website, etc the benefits of these things.

Respondent 3: Since we cannot force landowners to do any specific thing with their property, it only remains that we encourage agribusiness as much as possible to keep the working farms working.

Respondent 4: Prioritize the preservation, acquisition of and continued farming of agricultural land. Public involvement should be encouraged – in the form of CSAs or community gardens, if appropriate.

Respondent 5: I think industry pressures are going to make any such endeavors fruitless. Sadly the local “family” farm is a thing of the past.

15. Should the Town actively promote its historic and cultural resources through a marketing program?

Respondent 1: Absolutely. Many residents aren't aware of the plethora of natural, historical, and cultural resources in their own backyard. These resources are

maintained by the town supposedly for the townspeople to enjoy. As such, they should be willingly promoted and shared. Some of these resources if managed properly may provide viable income to the town. There is a general sentiment that these resources are purposely obscured so as to be enjoyed by a chosen few. I believe it is mainly due to the lack of proactive communication from the various boards and committees to residents, as well as residents' willingness to proactively plug in.

Respondent 2: Yes, the more we know of these things, the more we appreciate them which makes us more connected to the town.

Respondent 3: Marketing programs take money and people, so I'm not sure what we can do to promote our resources that we don't already do in the form of Concerts, Grange Fair, and trails.

Respondent 4: Yes, I envision Dunstable moving towards establishing a **Massachusetts Cultural District** that draws people to the area, encouraging economic development through cultural and agri-tourism. See the MA Cultural District Initiative.

Respondent 5: What are we marketing for? My understanding of marketing programs are they are used to promote sales. What are we selling? Not sure I understand this question.