

## **Amendments to the Chester Zoning Bylaw**

### **Route 20 Commercial Overlay District**

Prepared by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission 03/21/07

Adopted at Town Meeting 5/14/07

#### **Amendment#1**

Amend Section 2.1 Zoning Map by changing the classification of the following parcels situated along Prospect and Emery Street from Residential and Agricultural/Residential to Mixed Use Village Business:

Assessors Map	Parcel Numbers
201	118,119
202	22,23,24,25,26.1,26.2,26.3,27,28,34,35

as shown on the proposed zoning map revision, dated 2007 on file with the Town Clerk's office.

#### **Amendment #2**

Revise Section 2.1 Zoning Map by changing the date of the referenced "Zoning Map of Chester, Massachusetts" from "1968" to "2007".

#### **Amendment #3**

Amend Section 2.0, Types of Districts, of the Chester Zoning Bylaw by adding a new zoning overlay district called the Route 20 Commercial Overlay District to read as follows:

### **2.0 TYPES OF DISTRICTS**

For the purposes of this Bylaw, the Town of Chester is hereby divided into the following types of use districts:

#### **Short Name**

#### **Full Name**

R

Residential

AR  
B  
I  
COD  
FWR

Agricultural Residential  
Mixed Use Village Business  
Industrial  
Route 20 Commercial Overlay District  
Floodplain and Westfield River Protection

#### **Amendment #4**

Amend the Chester Zoning Bylaw by adding a new Section 4.2, Route 20 Commercial Overlay District, to read as follows:

#### **4.2 ROUTE 20 COMMERCIAL OVERLAY DISTRICT**

##### **4.2.1 Purposes**

The purposes of the Route 20 Commercial Overlay District are to:

- (a) Promote economic development in accordance with Chester's Community Development Plan and community vision;
- (b) Promote economic development where the community has infrastructure to support it.

##### **4.2.2 District Delineation**

The Route 20 Commercial Overlay District is herein established as an overlay district that includes the following parcels situated along Route 20:

Assessors Map      Parcel Numbers

202

59,60,61,62,63,64,65,66,67,68,69,70,73,74,75,76,77,79,80,81,82,83,84,85,86

412

30,31,32,33,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,43.1,43.2,44,45,45.5,  
46,46.1,46.2,47,48,49,49.1,50,51,52,53, 54,55,56

414

2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13.01,35,36

as shown on the proposed zoning map revision, dated 2007 on file with the Town Clerk's office.

#### **4.2.3      Use Regulations**

(a) All uses permitted in section 3.07 business shall be permitted in the Route 20 Commercial Overlay District subject to issuance of a Special Permit and provided the proposed use complies with all Dimensional and Special Permit Regulations (unless waived by the SPGA). The SPGA is the Planning Board.

#### **4.2.4      Special Permit Criteria**

In addition to the Special Permit criteria under Section 6.5, the following design standards shall apply to the Route 20 Commercial Overlay District (unless waived by the SPGA):

##### **(a)      RESPECT EXISTING TOPOGRAPHY**

\* Every effort shall be made to retain as many of the landscape contours and historic features as possible. Builders shall respect the surrounding landscape on their building site by placing buildings to fit within the existing contours of the site rather than leveling a lot or excavating into a hillside.

\* Existing stone walls shall remain intact.

\* Groups of buildings and large commercial buildings along the undeveloped road segments shall be situated at an angle to the road to reduce the wall area visible from the road and clustered so as to minimize blocking views of landscape features.

\* Buildings shall be sited so as to maintain intact the ridge lines of hills and ledges. By placing them below the ridge line and ledge top, designers will not interrupt the natural tree and rock profile which is important for maintaining the appearance of the area. Minimizing the clearing made for a building on a hillside is also recommended, so that bare spots do not mar the view.

\* Every effort shall be made to maintain the existing natural vegetation between the road and new buildings to help buffer the impact of new buildings on the roadway. Placing buildings behind hills can also provide at least partial buffering.

\* The roadway shall continue to conform to the natural terrain and any work which would result in straightening, widening or leveling the roadway shall be avoided. If any grading is undertaken for erosion control, it shall maintain the



rolling topography and natural vegetation which characterizes the roadside.

- \* Widening of the shoulders of the road shall be avoided, to keep the road intimate and scenic and to retain as much natural vegetation as possible.

- \* Where possible, driveways shall be shared, so as to minimize the number of curb cuts on Route 20. Constructing a curved or angled driveway will improve screening of the building from the road and provide privacy.

#### (b) LANDSCAPING

- \* Outside village centers, the tree corridor shall be preserved. Locating new buildings directly on the roadway shall be avoided, as doing so may block a view of open space such as a farm field, or may require cutting down trees at the roadside and interrupting the vegetation corridor. Vegetation shall not be clear cut between the building and the roadway in order to create a suburban open lawn, an effect which is incompatible with the established rural atmosphere along Route 20. Rather, in wooded areas, retaining or establishing a twenty foot wide natural buffer of vegetation to screen buildings from the road is recommended.

- \* Commercial developments shall have landscaping plans which provide screening for all outbuildings and support structures with evergreen trees and bushes at least 5' in height.

- \* Landscaping plans for commercial developments shall require maintenance and replacement when necessary.

- \* For both environmental and aesthetic reasons, landscaping plans shall place the highest priority on preservation of existing vegetation. Plans for new landscaping shall emphasize plants and trees native to the area.

- \* To avoid a formal appearance to the landscaping more suitable to urban areas, natural borders and landscape edges shall be retained to soften the effect of new construction. For instance, retaining hedgerows along stone walls or wooded back lots is recommended.

#### (c) ARCHITECTURE

- \* New buildings or additions to existing buildings shall try to fit in to the existing architectural environment of scale, materials and design elements. Reinterpreting rather than mimicking traditional features is the best way to

respect traditional architecture in new construction. Traditional architectural features which can be used in a manner consistent with contemporary styles, such as porches, bays, dormers, and porticoes are encouraged. Introduction of historical styles from outside the region are shall be avoided.

- \* Rehabilitation and reuse of existing buildings is recommended. Placing new uses in older, vacant or under-utilized buildings is a means of keeping the historic fabric of a town and is a practice with long tradition in the hilltowns.

- \* Rather than constructing larger scale buildings, expansions to existing buildings shall consist of residential scale ells, wings and compact additions.

- \* Roofs shall follow precedent in the community with respect to form as well as height. Along Route 20, gable and hipped roofs are traditional residential forms and shall be encouraged for new construction and additions.

- \* Buildings shall be limited to two and a half stories in height in a residential neighborhood and three stories for a commercial neighborhood where three-story buildings already exist. A useful rule of thumb is that new construction height should come within 10% of the average height of historic buildings in the district.

- \* For new construction and alterations, the use of traditional building materials is recommended: wood or brick for the body of the building, stone for foundations. Roofs of asphalt shingles or slate or traditionally painted tin are consistent with the historical buildings found along the corridor and should be used.

- \* Additions to an existing building shall be compatible with the original and should use consistent scale, height and wall-to-opening ratio. Additions should be distinguishable from the original building, yet be compatible with it using similar materials, colors, textures and details.

- \* Dark colored mechanical equipment shall be placed out of direct view of the roadway, at the rear of buildings or screened. Satellite dishes, air conditioning units, solar panels, and television antennae shall be placed where they will not detract from the building or view. Roof top mechanical units should be screened with railings.

#### (d) SIGNS

- \* New signs shall be placed so they do not silhouette against the sky or



interrupt a distant view. Rather they shall be placed against a backdrop of vegetation or building so as to blend with the surroundings.

- \* New signs shall be placed on the building itself or perpendicular to it. Signs on historic commercial buildings have traditionally been placed in the area between the first and second stories, which was established as a sign band. This practice should be retained. Signs hung from the building should be small scale and located above the first story. No signs shall project above the roof or parapet.

- \* As with buildings and structures along the roadway, signs and their supports should be constructed to blend into the landscape in color and materials. Signs of wood, brick or stone are appropriate natural materials. No reflective backs shall be used. Plantings to soften the effect of signs are recommended.

- \* Free-standing signs shall be set back from the roadside and buffered with plantings.

- \* Lighting shall be exterior to the sign and indirect; never interior, direct or flashing.

- \* Small, directional, tourist attraction signs shall be permitted in the state right-of-way.

(e) LIGHTING

- \* No lighting shall spill over on the roadway or on an adjacent property.

- \* Outdoor lighting poles shall not exceed 15 feet in height when they are located in or adjacent to residential areas or where there are scenic vistas. In areas of no residential use or where views do not exist, lights shall not be mounted above 20 feet.

- \* The intensity of the light fixtures in a parking lot shall not exceed 250 watts. Lights shall be downcast. Lighting fixtures themselves shall be compatible with the rural setting in which they are installed and be made of materials which blend into their setting.

- \* Parking lots shall avoid tall light fixtures which cast shadows over trees and create unsafe areas in the lot. Rather, lower, more frequent fixtures shall be used.

(f) PARKING

\* Parking lots shall be provided at the side or behind new commercial and institutional buildings, rather than immediately in front of them. Lots shall be screened from street view by vegetation, and for the more extensive lots, landscaping between parking rows shall be installed to avoid the asphalt desert look.

\* Parking lots need not always, or exclusively, be surfaced with tarmac. Grass or grass and gravel combinations can be much more consistent with the rural setting along the byway.

The SPGA shall have the right to waive any and all of the criteria in this section.

**4.2.5 Conflict with Other Laws**

The provisions of this bylaw shall be considered supplemental of existing zoning bylaws. To the extent that a conflict exists between this bylaw and others, the more restrictive bylaw, or provisions therein, shall apply.