

## Morris POCAD: Notes on Format

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### POCAD Structural Goals

- Umbrella topics within the 5 main subject matters
- Concisely summarize information about subtopics
- Present objectives and plan recommendation at the end of each of the 5 subject matters pertaining to the subtopics

## Education and Cultural Resources

### EDUCATION

#### School System Overview

Morris is part of the Regional School District #6 that serves the populations of Morris, Warren, and Goshen. The district is comprised of 3 elementary schools located in their respective towns and a middle and high school that share a campus in Litchfield.

James Morris Elementary School provides education to students from prekindergarten to 6<sup>th</sup> grade. Wamogo, the secondary-education facility, services 7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students, with a 7-8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school.

Wamogo's programming includes their agriscience tract for 9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade students. In addition to servicing district families, the program is available to students living in Burlington, Harwinton, Litchfield, Plymouth, Terryville, and Torrington. The agriscience curriculum includes plant science, animal science, vet science, aquaculture, agriculture mechanics, food science, natural resources/environmental science, and biotechnology

- James Morris School – 401 students in 2018-2019
- Wamogo Middle School – 102 students in 2018-2019
- Wamogo High School – 407 students in 2018-2019

### Historical Enrollment Data

School enrollment in Regional School District #6 decreased by 23.2% (258 students) from 2008-09 to 2018-19. James Morris School's enrollment shrunk from 551 to 401 students during this period.

(include NESDEC chart)

**Historical Enrollment By Grade**

Births	School Year	PK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	UNGR	K-12	PK
45	2008-09	14	77	69	78	75	77	81	80	84	80	118	88	114	89	0	1110	11
50	2009-10	11	46	88	72	82	68	79	77	84	84	95	109	80	107	0	1071	10
55	2010-11	14	66	57	87	73	87	70	81	76	80	113	92	97	77	0	1056	10
41	2011-12	7	62	63	54	83	77	86	70	85	75	102	99	89	94	0	1039	10
48	2012-13	18	34	65	61	60	85	72	88	69	88	110	104	99	84	0	1019	10
40	2013-14	41	51	33	69	59	62	80	73	85	68	116	102	96	91	0	985	10
47	2014-15	51	40	49	36	69	58	58	82	70	86	112	109	91	84	0	944	9
41	2015-16	57	48	39	50	34	65	53	53	77	67	127	110	104	86	0	913	9
39	2016-17	69	40	59	56	49	62	38	63	55	56	114	94	114	115	0	915	9
44	2017-18	73	49	38	48	54	43	57	34	61	51	102	109	88	110	0	844	9
36	2018-19	58	53	49	41	48	54	44	54	40	62	107	96	111	93	0	852	9

## RSD #6, CT Historical Enrollment

School District: RSD #6, CT Litchfield

Historical Enrollment in Grade Combinations									
Year	PK-6	K-5	K-6	K-8	5-8	6-8	7-8	7-12	9-12
2008-09	551	457	537	701	325	244	164	573	409
2009-10	523	435	512	680	324	245	168	559	391
2010-11	535	440	521	677	307	237	156	535	379
2011-12	502	425	495	655	316	230	160	544	384
2012-13	483	377	465	622	317	245	157	554	397
2013-14	468	354	427	580	306	226	153	558	405
2014-15	443	310	392	548	296	238	156	552	396
2015-16	399	289	342	486	250	197	144	571	427
2016-17	436	304	367	478	212	174	111	548	437
2017-18	396	289	323	435	203	146	112	521	409
2018-19	401	289	343	445	200	156	102	509	407

Historical Percentage Changes			
Year	K-12	Diff.	%
2008-09	1110	0	0.0%
2009-10	1071	-39	-3.5%
2010-11	1056	-15	-1.4%
2011-12	1039	-17	-1.6%
2012-13	1019	-20	-1.9%
2013-14	985	-34	-3.3%
2014-15	944	-41	-4.2%
2015-16	913	-31	-3.3%
2016-17	915	2	0.2%
2017-18	844	-71	-7.8%
2018-19	852	8	0.9%
Change		-258	-23.2%

## **The Goals for Affordable Housing**

More Affordable housing will allow us to provide places for the elderly to live.

Allow access for younger families to come to town and provide the school with more students to lower the cost per pupil 21000. Also it will allow for keeping teachers in jobs and create other jobs with more students in attendance.

This will also help with having younger people in the town to join commissions, volunteering for the Morris Fire Company, and providing the town with more qualified individuals for town positions.

This will also increase the tax base for the town and bring in more revenue.

The State of Connecticut Requires that of all dwelling units 10 percent need to be affordable housing. This is a problem for most towns in Connecticut as well as small towns like ours.

## **How can we achieve these goals?**

Allow for more inclusionary zoning and to relax certain regulations to make it more attractive to build in Morris.

Create another zone to identify places where this construction can occur and so it is less destructive to the environment. Also so that people maybe able to work and live in the area.

Try to create a public/private partnership. May also create jobs in town.

Help shape the architecturally and to maintain the rural character of the town by allowing Planning and Zoning Commission have a say in these and to work with the builders.

## **5. Morris Town Centers – Assemble a Plan Growing Morris’ Town Centers While Protecting the Rural Character**

Morris is a small town; however, there are several Town Centers. These are defined by the commercial and industrial district as well as the governmental and civic related buildings. For the most part, these are reflective of Morris’ rural character. Based on recent events, this is a critical aspect of the town, which its citizens want to maintain.

Morris has five separate areas that can be considered town centers each with their own unique qualities:

1. East Morris – At the intersection of Routes 109 and 63
2. Morris Town Center – Where Town Hall is at the intersection of 109 and 61
3. Lakeside – Where the Lakeside Post Office used to be
4. Lower Route 61 – This is in the Light Industrial zoning district
5. Bantam Lake Road – Predominantly on the west side of Route 209 from Palmer Road to the Litchfield border

East Morris is along the busiest road that passes through town. It has the most intensive development, with a gas station/convenience store, several other retail buildings and two restaurants. It is the zone that allows the most intensive commercial uses; however, it is also the most visible section of town. It also has the big white barn as the most obvious landmark in town.

Morris is the traditional center. It is where Town Hall and the Elementary School is. It is also zoned to have less intensive commercial development; however, it is where two properties have a self-storage use and a major national retailer recently opened shop. It also has a beautiful scenic view of the land to the northwest of the town center which is vulnerable to development on the northwest corner of the intersection of Routes 109 and 61.

Lakeside may be relatively forgotten to most people. With the loss of the Post Office the area has gentrified away from being a town center. Regardless, there are people who consider it a town center and the building that housed the Post Office is still there.

There is a Light Industrial zone along Route 61 just north of the Bethlehem Fairgrounds. This area already has several commercial uses. With the Special Exception nature of the zone, it should allow for better control of the uses.

Finally, what might be the most sensitive of the Town Centers would be the Lake Commercial District on Route 209. It also has the most potential of all the zones due to its proximity to Bantam Lake, which is the biggest attraction in town. With the increased summertime population due in large part to Bantam Lake, there is a captive market to attract to a Morris-based business in this corridor.

In all of these cases, there exists a great opportunity; however, there is a risk too. Unless care is taken in how these separate sections of town are developed, much of what makes Morris attractive to the outsider could be lost. Therefore, a plan to encourage development that is suitable to attracting people to a town like Morris is necessary.

The following are considerations toward reaching that goal:

1. Implement appropriate architectural standards for uses in each of the Town Centers
2. Promote the PDD as a way to develop a mixed-use approach for larger properties adjoining these Town Centers
3. Review the permitted uses in these zones to ensure that the vision for the appearance of the town is considered in how the permitted uses are implemented.

### 5a. Implement appropriate architectural standards for uses in each of the Town Centers

The Town Plan from 2009 considered what at the time was new legislation approved by the State to allow towns to create “village districts” around existing village centers. It permits retaining the traditional mix of uses in town centers under guidelines that sustain a rural New England village appearance. Regardless, this concept is well suited to assist Morris to maintain a New England village center

This was not executed due to reticence over the difficulties of having the necessary expertise. That doesn’t mean that this goal has to be set aside.

Alternatives to the Village Center approach must be researched. Another idea would be to develop an approach to this similar to what was done for Low Impact Sustainable Development with the LISD Manual that was recently implemented.

### 5b. Promote the PDD as a way to develop a mixed-use approach for larger properties adjoining these Town Centers

There are a number of large parcels of land that adjoin the various town centers. These properties would provide opportunities to expand these Town Centers with a mixed-use development to provide housing as well as commercial uses to support the residents of the development and the town. The Planned Development District (PDD) would be the vehicle by which such an application would be possible.

Shortly before the last town plan, the PDD section was modified to provide flexibility in how larger properties that adjoin the commercial districts can use the PDD. This led to the development of a property in a manner that provided a smooth transition between the commercial district and the adjoining residential zone. This should be expanded on to better define the objectives of the PDD uses that this is designed for.

There are a number of large properties that adjoin the commercial districts. It would be useful to have residential development coupled with commercial uses that support the residents in the development and the town of Morris. Additionally, this would be an effective way to allow some affordable housing, over-55 and retirement age housing like Eldridge.

There has even been discussions where Town of Morris Officials have suggested that the town's elementary school could be at risk if the state mandates regionalization. The Town Center Study from 200x contemplates a concept of how the school property could be transformed. While losing the elementary school is not desired (more on this in section X), these large properties around the Town Center can enhance the town if developed in an orderly manner.

### 5c. Review the permitted uses in the Town Centers to ensure that the vision for the appearance of the town is considered in how the permitted uses are implemented.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Other points to be considered as recommended by Ben Paletsky (ED Commission)

### **1. Recognize Agricultural-Tourism as a Derivative Form of Traditional Agriculture.**

Small and medium size farms will continue to struggle to remain viable under pressure from industrial agriculture and poor agricultural economics. By expanding our acceptance of new

agricultural practices, we encourage farms to generate revenue and maintain their existence as part of our rural community and heritage.

## **2. Explore the Purchase of Camp Columbia.**

Regional state attractions are managed in best interest of the state and not of our local community. Natural resources and architecturally significant properties that define our community and culture should be purchased as a pathway to preserve the cultural essence of our town. Resources under the town's control can then be released for bid via the Request-for-Proposal process so that they can be managed in a manner complimentary to our town's character and in best interest of the growth of our community.

## **3. Create Pathways to Encourage Arts and Culture**

Investment in arts and culture have been proven mechanisms to drive economic development in rural regions.

- a. Enable supportive zoning regulations favorable to supporting arts and culture in agricultural and low-density populated areas

## **4. Encourage Open Space/Solar Renewable Energy Investment**

As a long-term plan to preserve open space, solar on farmland provides a means for open space to generate income and provides regular maintenance of the open space that is returnable to its original state after the lifespan of the solar project.

Red = new or updated

Green = remove or review and remove after discussion

## **GOAL # 3: Protect Water and Natural Resources**

Protect Morris's vital water resources - its wetlands, streams, ponds, aquifer areas and especially its public water supply watersheds, groundwater supplies and Bantam Lake, Conserve Morris's other valued natural resources, especially farmland. Ensure that the zoning lot area and subdivision requirements are sufficient to protect ground and drinking water supplies and to avoid the need for public sewers.

How much of Morris's land area should be protected? Depending on how you define "permanent", only 7% of Morris land area is considered truly "permanently protected". This is a very low percentage compared to other towns in the area, and argues for an aggressive program of land preservation. The answer to this question in Morris is complicated because large areas are owned by White Memorial Foundation and the City of Waterbury water supply system which are considered open space but do not meet the strict definition of *permanently protected land*.

## **WHITE MEMORIAL FOUNDATION.**

Morris's environment benefits greatly by the presence of the White Memorial Foundation which owns 2,068.574 (2017 was last purchase) acres in Morris per White Memorial records from 2020. The foundation has always carefully maintained its open land in a natural state. According to the Foundation President, White Memorial intends to continue to protect and preserve its holdings and where advantageous, add to the



Foundation's holdings. White Memorial is not a land trust and as a private foundation it can and has transferred land for development uses.

It is important to note that these transfers have provided needed land for important public purposes, such as the area headquarters of the Connecticut State Police. There is no suggestion or indication that the Foundation would transfer land for non-public development purposes and every reason to believe that it will continue to preserve the land it holds and perhaps even add to its open space holdings.

If White Memorial's land is considered permanently protected, almost 23% of Morris's land area would be in the "permanently protected" open space category. At this level instead of being at the low end, Morris's ranking in open space protection moves up to the mid range among all towns in the area.

#### **MORRIS LAND TRUST**

As of 2020, the Morris Land Trust owns 39 acres and has conservation easements on 132 acres, per President Ben Solnit.

#### **WATERBURY WATER COMPANY LAND:**

Land owned by the City of Waterbury around its water reservoirs in Morris totals 1,123 acres (Confirmed per Morris Land Records as of 2020. Like White Memorial but for different reasons it can be said that this land is not "permanently" protected.

Almost all Waterbury water company land in Morris is critical to maintaining the quality of the water in its water reservoirs. Accordingly under State Law, this land is classified as "Class 1 and 2" land and it can not be developed and must remain open as long as these reservoirs are in use for drinking water supplies.

The State Plan of Conservation and Development treats "Class 1 land as "Existing Open Space" and classifies Class 2 land as "Conservation Area"

The water company's land in Morris represents 8.8% of the Town's land area. If this water company land and White Memorial land are considered permanently protected, Morris has 31.5% of its land area classified permanently protected. At this level Morris is in the top tier of towns in this area in terms of permanently protected open space land.

High quality drinking water supplies will continue to become more valuable over time. The water in the Waterbury reservoirs serves not only the City of Waterbury but other communities near it that need drinking water and purchase it from the Waterbury system.

On this basis it is expected that the City of Waterbury reservoirs and its reservoir related land in Morris will continue to supply drinking water. However, recently there have been efforts in other communities to urge the legislature to permit construction type uses on water reservoir classified lands. The Town would be wise to monitor any proposed changes in the State's system for classification of protected land in drinking water reservoirs.

Even if we assume that both White Memorial land and the Waterbury water company land will remain as open space over the next 10 years, Morris would be wise to strive to protect and support all efforts to preserve land that helps fulfill the natural resource and rural character goals and objectives of the Town Plan.

Morris is endowed with many valuable natural resources. Establishing and maintaining a strong resource protection program for such an extensive array of resources is a tall task. Fortunately the **Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory** provides the information and suggestions needed to set priorities and recommendations in the Town Plan.

Tied into natural resource protection is the wish among townspeople to preserve the town's "Rural Character". What is rural character and how does a town preserve this quality?

When asked to define rural character residents tell us many different things - scenic farmlands, the small rural village center, the fact that homes are not close together and spread along scenic rural roadways, the views and the vistas both near and far along the roadways. All of these are important elements of the town vision of "Rural Character".

This goal covers a wide range of subjects and requires numerous specific objectives and recommendations. The most important is protection of drinking water supplies.

#### **OBJECTIVE: PUBLIC DRINKING WATER SUPPLIES**

On an ongoing basis, educate Morris citizens on the importance of Morris's drinking water resources and the care that homeowners must take to insure that these water supplies remain pristine (Conservation Commission and Land Trust). The Bantam Lake Protective Association currently strives to educate land owners on Bantam Lake as to best use practices to maintain and protect the health of the lake. Take the local land use regulatory and preservation actions in the next year needed to insure that in the long term these water resources will not be jeopardized. (Planning and Zoning Commission and Inland Wetlands Commission). The Inland Wetlands & Planning and Zoning commissions should work together with the Bantam Lake Protection Association & the Land Trust to disperse these best practices to all residents of Morris. Mailings regarding pesticide and herbicide use, proper hazardous materials disposal, etc. to Morris residents should be considered. Public forums with DEEP to advise on best practices in & around the watersheds should be considered.

It is important for Morris residents to understand just how critical Morris's water resources are to its citizens, present and future, and to hundreds of thousands of other Connecticut citizens and businesses.

All but a small area of south central Morris protects the water quality of several major existing and proposed public drinking water sources. The State Plan of Conservation and Development classifies these watershed lands and therefore almost all of Morris as a "Conservation Area". Under the State Plan, Conservation Areas are to be protected and regulated to preserve the quality of drinking water resources they serve. Connecticut's General Statutes require that Morris in its town plan and land use regulations take measures to protect the drinking water supplies.

There are three Waterbury water supply reservoirs with watershed land located in Eastern Morris - the Pitch Reservoir, Morris Reservoir and Wigwam Reservoir. These reservoirs serve Waterbury residents and businesses as well as other communities that purchase water from the Waterbury Systems.

In 1973 the State Plan classified the Shepaug River and its watershed as a proposed public drinking water supply. Most of western and central Morris is located in the Shepaug River watershed. According to the State Plan, water could be diverted from the Shepaug before it empties into the Housatonic River and piped to southwestern Connecticut to provide drinking water for its growing population. However, under current State

requirements this could not happen unless the sewage treatment plant discharge to the Bantam River in Litchfield was removed from the Shepaug watershed.

## **Action Recommendations**

### **1. Establish a Public Drinking Water Supply Overlay Zone**

Amend the Zoning Regulations to create a new overlay zone titled "Drinking Water Supply Overlay Zone". This zone should overlay all of the existing and proposed drinking water supply watersheds in Morris.

The Waterbury water supply plan reported that in the five towns with land in its water supply watersheds, most have a 2 acre minimum lot size and as a result septic system failures have been minimal. Portions of the land in Morris in the Waterbury water supply watersheds are zoned for less than 1 acre (40,000 sq. ft.) and ***Morris is the only town of the 5 in the watersheds with a lot requirement as low as 40,000 sq. ft.***

#### ***RECOMMENDATION:***

***Review zoning map with soils map overlayed and re-zone areas that have poor soils for septic to 2-3 acre or larger lots, grandfathering in existing lots of less than 2 acres.***

Subdivisions with lots of 40,000 sq. ft without provisions that discount land that is not suitable for septic systems (inland wetlands, slopes and ledge) are much more likely over time to result in septic failures than a subdivision consisting of lots of 2 acres or more. ***The State Department of Environmental Protection long ago reported that in rural areas that rely on septic systems for sewage treatment in order to protect groundwater and surface water these towns should in residential zones require a minimum lot area of 2 acres not including wetlands and watercourses.***

### **2. Minimum Lot Size**

As recommended in the 1992 Morris Town Plan it is again recommended that within the Public Drinking Water Supply Overlay Zone that:

- The minimum lot size requirement should be 80,000 sq. ft., and
- The current lot area requirement which states:

"The area consisting of ponds, lakes, swamps or marshes shall not be used for compliance with more than 25% of the minimum lot requirements" should be revised to read:

"The area consisting of inland wetlands and watercourses as defined and regulated by the Morris Inland Wetland Commission shall not be used in the computation of the minimum lot area requirement."

(Note: the current regulation can not be effectively enforced because of the difficulty of determining what constitutes a "swamp or marsh".)

***If this amendment is adopted each landowner in the overlay zone with less than 2 acres (not including inland wetlands) will be "grandfathered" and will retain the permanent right to build or add to existing homes or out buildings based on the pre-existing zoning lot area requirements.***

### **3. Residential Best Management Practices**

Educate and encourage homeowners in the water supply watershed overlay zones, particularly near major inland wetland systems and stratified drift aquifer areas, to use residential best management practices that minimize the use of hazardous materials or generation of hazardous waste in the watershed.

### **4. Minimize Road Salt and Herbicide Use**

The Town of Morris should monitor and minimize the use of road salt and herbicides along the roads in the overlay zones and address potential for hazardous material spills resulting from vehicular accidents. The Morris Highway Department should investigate new methods to minimize the effects of winter road treatment on the environment. Good results have been reported using molasses or beet juice pulp added to salt mixtures to help them adhere to the road surface and reduce the amount of salt required for application.

**5. Amend the Zoning Regulation Site Plan and Subdivision Regulations to treat and control the negative impacts of storm water runoff to lakes, ponds, wetlands and groundwater, especially aquifer areas**

- a. Include in the Site Plan section under “Duties of the Commission” the requirement “to provide for the protection of “groundwater supplies, especially aquifer areas and surface water supplies”. A number of areas in Town have been identified as potential aquifers and areas with significant potential to provide groundwater for drinking water purposes. These areas are shown on Figure 4 Water Resources Map in the Natural Resources Inventory.
- b. Revise the Subdivision Regulations and add a new section to the Zoning Regulations on “Storm Water Drainage Control”. These regulations need to ensure that proper provision is made to control storm water runoff originating from development sites involving a disturbed area of more than one acre (other than single family residential development) or where ever specifically required in the Zoning Regulations.
- c. Require that Low Impact Development Standards (LISD) and methods be used to control, treat and minimize the negative impact of storm water runoff on surface and groundwater aquifer areas and wetlands, including the following:
  - ♦ to maintain or restore pre-development vegetation, to minimize the creation of steep slopes, to avoid use of culverts, storm water piping systems.
  - ♦ to favor use of vegetated swales, buffers, filter strips and level spreaders, bio-retention structures such as rain gardens, rain barrels, detention ponds, groundwater infiltration systems (curtain drains, dry wells, galleries, etc.)
  - ♦ to reduce impervious surface area on site and disconnect flows from multiple impervious surfaces and to favor use of permeable pavement choices.
  - ♦ The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider revising the regulations concerning fuel storage tanks for residences, businesses and other entities not covered by State regulations, so that underground fuel storage is prohibited.

***Objective: Bantam Lake***

*Bantam Lake is the State’s largest natural lake, a major regional and State recreational resource and a very important part of the Bantam community and its tax base. Protection of these values requires that Morris, in cooperation with Litchfield, the State and the local non profit organizations must continue to manage the lake to protect its water quality and protect the lake against invasive weeds.*

Citizens at the town plan forum ranked protection of Bantam Lake at the top of the list of natural resources that need to be protected in Morris.

Bantam Lake is recognized as an outstanding natural resource locally and at the State and Federal levels. The State legislature designated Bantam Lake as a Connecticut Heritage Lake: in recognition of its water and recreational values. Bantam Lake and the Bantam River many years ago was studied and qualified as a “recreational” river by the US Department of the Interior under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers program.

The 916 acre lake is the largest natural lake in Connecticut. It shares its shoreline and the responsibility to support its preservation of its water quality with Litchfield. However, most of the lake is in Morris (675 acres). While the lake is by far the Town's most important water feature it is shallow and prone to excessive algae growth that clouds the lake. In recent years, invasive aquatic weeds have appeared, posing a threat to lake recreational uses and property values. Microscopic plants (algae) and weed growth in a lake is fortified by excessive inflow of phosphorus - a natural nutrient that supports plant growth.

Excessive phosphorus in the lake is primarily the result of development and man's activity in the lake watershed (the area that drains rain water into the lake). Activities that increase nutrient output include agricultural uses, stormwater runoff from roads and other paved or impervious surfaces, lawn and garden fertilizers, faulty septic systems, washing in or near the lake, erosion into the lake, dumping leaves in or near a lake, and even duck, geese and other animal droppings.

Over the past thirty years Bantam Lake's appearance has improved as a result of lake restoration and management action by the two lake towns with assistance from the State and water related organizations. The installation of sewers on the west shore of the lake and the replacement of many faulty septic systems has had a very positive effect on lake water quality. Shallow portions of the lake were dredged removing much sediment and shallow water plant habitat.

Invasive plants now found in Bantam Lake and the Bantam River include Eurasian Milfoil, water chestnut and fanwort. These aggressively growing plants can overcome native plants and choke shorelines to depths of 20 feet!

Over the past three years a costly herbicide program has greatly helped reduce and control infestations of Eurasian Water Milfoil. In the summer of 2008 another program was instituted using hydro suction equipment to "vacuum" invasive fanwort plants out of the Bantam River. It is very difficult to fully eradicate these invasive plants and a long term and determined effort will be needed to ensure that these plants do not re-emerge to threaten the lake. A comprehensive lake management program is recommended.

## ***Action Recommendations***

### **1. Lake Management Plan and Program**

Protecting Bantam Lake's water quality and clarity will require that the lake towns, lake related non-profit organizations and lake residents work together to continue to build and support a long term lake management program. A great deal of what is needed for a comprehensive lake management program is already in place. The Bantam Lake Protective Association, the Lake Authority - doesn't exist anymore the White Memorial Foundation and other organizations are all contributing to the effort to improve conditions at Bantam Lake. The existing efforts need to be better coordinated, funded and other program elements added to sustain progress in restoring and maintaining water clarity at Bantam Lake.

This long term plan will need substantial financial support to insure the capacity to conduct:

- ♦ BLPA currently provides: An ongoing and coordinated educational program for shoreline landowners who need training in proper septic system management and use of "best water quality management practices on their property.

- ♦ BLPA currently provides: Professional monitoring of basic water quality parameters at least monthly during the spring, summer and fall. This is essential to track the progress in improving water quality and clarity and to focus future improvement projects.

♦BLPA currently provides: Lake and river shoreline surveys during the growing season for new invasive plants and to chart the movement of existing invasive plants.

♦ BLPA currently provides: A local “weed watchers” program to train lake land owners and lake users to identify invasive weeds, who to contact to verify the identification and proper methods of removing invasive plants.

♦ BLPA currently provides: An educational program for boaters who need to be certain that their boats, motors and trailers are clean of all plants before entering the lake. Even a small segment of a live invasive plant has the potential to root and begin an infestation in the lake.

This is not happening (per my conversation with Connie) but was in the last POCAD:

A boat inspection and educational program at the State park boat launch and at other boat launches on the lake. Once boats are inspected and if new weeds are present, prevent boaters from launching their boats and they will soon learn they must come to Bantam Lake with a clean boat, trailer and motor.

♦ BLPA currently provides: A “Rapid Response” program to permit lake managers to act quickly if another invasive weed is identified or a new site of Fanwort or E. Milfoil is discovered in Bantam Lake or the Bantam River. The investment in a modest “Rapid Response” fund will save money compared to the more expensive cost to remove a well established invasive plant.

## **2. Expore Creating a Bantam Lake Watershed Zone Waterfront Overlay District**

Most of the area of the Bantam Lake Watershed is in Litchfield. But the extensive lake shoreline area in Morris is the lake’s “epidermis”. How near the lake land is developed and managed are most critical to the health of the lake.

A Bantam Lake Waterfront Overlay District Zone can include provisions that will help protect the lake shore area from excessive untreated stormwater runoff and erosion. It can encourage better management of the lake shoreline and preservation of native vegetation and other measures that will help protect against excessive nutrient loading that feed algae and weed growth.

## **3. Impervious Surfaces and Storm Water Management**

Perhaps the single greatest impact on Bantam Lake’s water quality is untreated stormwater runoff. It has been demonstrated that where more than 10 % of a lake watershed is covered with impervious surfaces, there will be negative impacts on the lake’s water quality. Watersheds with 30% or more impervious surfaces typically experience significant water degradation.

It is recommended that on a lot in the lake watershed with a total impervious surface greater than 10%, proposals for additional impervious surface should require a Storm Water Management Plan (same as required in Public Water Supply Overlay Zones).

## **4. Low Impact Development Techniques**

### **REFERENCE THE LISD - Low Impact Sustainable Development**

In the Bantam Lake Watershed, the zoning regulations should require that wherever possible, low impact development should be used to handle and treat storm water runoff. This includes, vegetative swales, buffers, filter strips and level spreaders, bio retention structures such as rain gardens, rain barrels, detention ponds, groundwater infiltration systems (curtain drains, dry wells, galleries, etc.)

## **5. Inland Wetlands Commission - Lake Education and Regulation**

The Morris Inlands Wetlands and Conservation Commission should educate waterfront property owners to discourage excessively cultivated landscapes on Bantam Lake and in the shoreline areas of all rivers, brooks, lakes and ponds:

- a. Wetlands and regulated buffer areas are off limits for use of fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides.
- b. Farmers in the Bantam Lake and Water Supply Watershed Overlay Zones should use agricultural Best Management Practices to limit impacts on watercourses.
- c. Access of livestock to wetlands and watercourses must be strictly limited,

### ***Objective: Farming and Farmers***

Rank the existing working farmland in Morris in a priority for preservation and focus on protection of major areas of viable farmland. Over the next 19 years, add at least 800 acres of protected farmland to the 300 already protected.

Morris is endowed with a very high percentage of prime farmland soils with 4,230 acres or 35.3% of the town's land area. Altogether the prime farmland in Morris and other non prime farmland in active farm use, total over 5000 acres of Morris land. This is almost 42% of the town's land area and is more than most towns in northwest Connecticut. But only approximately 300 acres of working farmland in Morris is permanently protected.

Farmland and farming are one of the most cherished land features and elements of the Morris Landscape. When citizens talk about protecting "open space" it is generally the open farm fields seen from town roads that they are holding in mind.

Farming has historically been at the core of Morris's town life. While this is much less so today, the fact remains that there is still a great deal of working farmland in the town. According to the assessor, there are 1,964 acres under a 490 classification in Morris. (I have emailed the assessor to get an updated number) Much of that land is active farmland. The Greenprint land survey, which is not limited to 490 classified lands, found that all the land maintained in open fields and active farmlands totals 2,797 acres.

The State Plan of Conservation and Development classifies prime farm soils as a "Conservation Area" and recommends protection of this resource. Morris is located in the heart of one of the six areas identified in the State Plan as an "Important Agricultural Area".

Protecting farmland and adopting measures that will encourage local farming is good for the town in many ways - it protects open space, preserves "rural character" and supports the local economy. It is a combination of these factors that pushes preservation of farming and farmers up the priority scale.

### ***Action Recommendations:***

#### **1. The Right to Farm Ordinance**

The Town should adopt a local right to farm ordinance, a policy statement noting public interest and concern for the preservation of working farms and prime and important agricultural soils and support for large and small scale farm enterprises.

## **2. Rank Key Farmlands**

The Board of Selectmen, Morris Land Trust and Planning and Zoning Commission should work with other town commissions to rank the most important farmlands to protect Morris with a focus on protecting active working farms and farmland.

## **3. Assist Farmland Owners**

These same groups should assist farmland owners with applications to the Connecticut Farmland Preservation Program, State Open Space grant program, USDA Farm and Ranch Act grant program. The Land Trust should make preservation of productive and scenic farmlands a priority for preservation by purchase and donations of farmland, bargain sale purchase, purchase of agricultural conservation restrictions and other available preservation techniques.

## **4. Committee to Preserve Farmers and Farmland**

Town officials should consider establishing a panel of farmers and other interested Morris Citizens to: develop strategies for retention of agricultural lands by forming associations with State and Federal farm agencies; seek funding for farm operations; become better educated about new farm techniques and farm product development; provide guidance on financial and estate planning to ensure long term continuation of farming operations and lobby for the protection of farming rights.

## **5. Review Land Use Regulations**

The Planning and Zoning Commission should review all land use regulation relating to farm use and make any changes that improve the opportunity for a farmer to market locally grown produce on the farm and to conduct other farm related enterprises that will assist in sustaining the economic viability of farming in Morris.

## **6. Continue 490 Farmland**

The Town should continue tax relief for agricultural lands under Public Act 490.

## **7. Farmland and Open Space in Subdivisions**

The Planning and Zoning Commission should amend the Subdivision Regulation requirements for open space to emphasize protection of working farmland and prime and important farm soils and to require setbacks adjoining working farmland.

## **8. Land Use Incentives to Save Farmland**

The Planning and Zoning Commission should provide incentives in the Zoning regulations that will encourage the protection of open farm fields and prime farm soils. One option is to require clustering subdivision designs in key farming areas of the town, and to provide a density benefit for subdivision designs that save key farm and open space areas.



## 9. Land Use Policy

The Planning and Zoning Commission should encourage municipal development policies and facilitate plans that direct development away from key agricultural areas and that lessen developmental pressures on such areas.

### ***Objective: Wetlands and Streambeds***

Marshes, swamps, bogs and areas of standing water are obviously wetlands. But in Connecticut the inland wetland State law defines wetlands by soil type which is a broader definition such that State classified inland wetlands do not appear as such to the untrained eye. Soils that are saturated with water at or near the surface for two or more months of the year are considered inland wetlands in Connecticut. Morris has 2,140 acres of soils (17 % of total Morris acreage) classified as wetlands type soils.

The Morris Conservation and Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission are charged with protecting the town's inland wetlands. This commission must adhere to the model requirements for wetland protection set forth by the State of Connecticut.

Wetlands perform many valuable functions and all wetlands should be monitored and protected. They act as a natural catch basin in which water is captured, filtered, purified and slowly released. Wetlands mitigate downstream flooding by holding stormwater runoff. They improve water quality through nutrient cycling and entrapment/filtering of pollutants and sediment. Wetlands are a natural habitat for many types of valuable flora and fauna.

### ***Action Recommendations***

#### **1. Wetlands and Streambelts**

The 1992 town plan defined a streambelt as a "continuous corridor of land along a perennial stream consisting of soils which if developed, could have an adverse impact on stream water quality." Stream Belts are composed primarily of inland wetland soils. Other soils included in a streambelt are highly erosive, shallow to bedrock, or soils with other severe development limitations. Stream Belts are important because they provide a natural corridor for animal movement. These corridors are wonderful linked lands for hiking and nature observation.

The following streambelts should have the highest priority for protection:

- ◆ Bantam Lake and Whittlesey Brook stream belt flowing into Bantam Lake at its southern tip.
- ◆ Bantam River and its feeder stream which rises in the area of Camp Columbia and includes Jones Pond.
- ◆ All stream belts within the City of Waterbury watershed area, including Pitch Brook, Slab Meadow Brook and East Morris Brook.

♦ Stream belt and associated wetlands that run south from Morris center in the upper reach of the watershed serving the Bronson Lockwood Reservoir which is located in Bethlehem.

## **2. Review and Revise the Inland Wetland Regulated Upland Review Buffer Area**

The Inland Wetlands Commission has the authority to regulate development of land adjacent to inland wetlands and watercourses where it determines that any activity may potentially harm the inland wetland or watercourse. These adjacent “upland” review buffer areas help protect the wetland or watercourse.

Based on review of the Morris Streambelt Map, The Inland Wetlands Commission should identify, regulate and enforce the protection of upland review areas especially within the above priority streambelts.

The depth of the upland review area for priority stream belts should be reviewed and where appropriate, increased. The review area should be not less than 50 feet and in some cases could be much more - up to 200 feet depending on the characteristics of the land adjacent to the watercourse. For example, if the adjacent upland review area is steep and rocky, the depth of the review area should be greater.

### ***Objective: Wildlife Resources***

Around the globe, rare and vulnerable plants and animals and the natural communities in which they are sustained are disappearing. Morris needs to do its part to preserve important habitats and manage development to avoid doing harm to sensitive wildlife resources. The Town is indeed fortunate to have so much of its land under the care of the White Memorial Foundation. The foundation property includes “Important Bird Areas” designated by Audubon.

Important wildlife areas in Morris include any flora or fauna habitat identified by the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection as Endangered, Threatened or Species of Special Concern.

Valuable habitat areas are often in natural areas with a diversity of vegetation and terrain including wetlands, areas of ledge, boulders and ridges, old-growth or mature forest or a mix of evergreen and deciduous trees.

### ***Action Recommendations***

#### **1. Maintain Records**

The Conservation and Inland Wetlands and Planning and Zoning Commission should maintain up to date records of DEEP Designated Endangered, Threatened or Of Special Concern Species within Morris. See the Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory, section entitled Flora, Fauna, and Critical Habitats Inventory, pages 30 - 33

#### **2. Subdivision Checklist**

The Planning and Zoning Commission should establish a checklist for the review of subdivision applications. One of those checklists should be to consult the DEEP list of unique and fragile features. The DEEP should be contacted where there is any question that a proposed development could have an effect on one of those sites. When considering subdivision applications, land use commissions should refer to the Natural and Cultural

Resources Inventory. Figure 9 is wrong, it is Figure 10 and "Critical Habitats of Morris". If development is proposed in or bordering on one of these seven areas (is wrong), (the map shows 5 areas within the Town of Morris boundaries, one in Bethlehem and one in Watertown), the Commission should request DEEP review.

### **3. Identify Wildlife Corridors**

Wildlife corridors in Morris and crossing into adjacent towns, should be located, described, protected and mapped by the Conservation Commission with the assistance of the DEEP and other conservation organizations. The subdivision regulation open space section should be amended to include among the purposes for open space - protection of unique and fragile areas, important habitats and wildlife corridors".

### **4. Connected Open Spaces**

The Morris Land Trust, other conservation groups and the Town of Morris should focus on protecting by acquisition, easement or other action, lands that link existing open spaces to provide continuous wildlife corridors and habitats.

#### ***Objective: Greenways***

**The Conservation Commission and the Land Trust should seize every opportunity to create links that extend and improve trail systems, and connections between existing open space to create corridors of green spaces to benefit wildlife and for passive recreational uses.**

Greenways are lineal corridors of open space designed to provide opportunities for public passive recreation including walking, hiking, biking and nature observation. Greenways are being developed throughout Connecticut to enhance quality of life, protect open space and provide natural recreational experiences for residents young and old. Major hiking trails in Morris include the blue-blazed Mattatuck Trail, formal trails on White Memorial Foundation land and informal trails on City of Waterbury reservoir property.

#### ***Action Recommendations***

##### **1. Morris Rails to Trails**

An abandoned railroad line runs through Northwestern Morris, along the Bantam River and near Mount Tom, for about 2 miles. Communities throughout the country have converted abandoned rail lines into wonderful greenway walking, hiking, biking and horseback riding corridors. This old railroad line, sometimes called the Shepaug Valley rail bed is now mostly privately owned which would make converting it into a public trail difficult. However, the rail line is on flat land and continues into Washington to the west and Litchfield to the east/north. Perhaps Morris and its neighboring communities working together and with permission from property owners could create a recreation trail on at least parts of this old rail bed.

##### **2. Greenway Opportunities**

The Town should identify relatively flat corridors to establish paved or gravel greenways in locations that would be attractive to senior citizens, families with young children, bicyclists, in-line skaters and others. In recent years, grant funds have been available to assist with the cost of acquiring and developing greenway trails and the Town would be wise to identify suitable locations in anticipation of grant funds.

##### **3. Hiking Trail Improvements at Camp Columbia**

Town Officials should encourage the State to create hiking trails on the former Camp Columbia property in south-central Morris.

#### **4. Connecting the Open Spaces**

Morris has a wealth of privately and publicly owned open space, and looking at the location of these open spaces it is not hard to imagine acquiring land to connect these spaces for passive recreation and/or wildlife corridors.

A priority for open space protection in Morris should be to protect connecting corridors between existing open space including: White Memorial Foundation, City of Waterbury reservoir lands and State holdings - Camp Columbia and Mount Tom State Park, the farms owned by Woodbury/Southbury Rod and Gun Club and Aurell Family where the development rights have been purchased by the State.

#### **5. Inter-Town Greenway Connections**

The Town should also be open to the opportunity to work with neighboring towns and the State to connect open space and recreational trails in Morris with open spaces in other towns. Possibilities for extension and connections of existing open space near the Morris town border include: White Memorial Foundation land, Topsmead State Forest, Mount Tom State Park, in Litchfield; Steep Rock Association land in Washington, and Black Rock State Park in Watertown.

#### **6. Open Space in Subdivision**

The subdivision regulations permit the Planning and Zoning Commission to require up to 15% of the subdivision land area to be set aside as open space. *This section should be revised to:*

- ◆ Specify the most important areas of the town for open space protection as recommended in the town plan and as determined by the Commission.

- ◆ to expand on the options for preservation of open space

- ◆ to stress the importance of creating connected corridors of open space and to include the option for a fee in lieu of open space as authorized by the Connecticut General Statutes.

### **GOAL # 4 RURAL CHARACTER**

Preservation of Morris's rural character has been a basic part of every Morris Town Plan. Morris citizens cherish the rural landscape and its small town sense of place. This goal and its objectives seek to highlight the key features of Morris's rural character and offer recommendations to retain these assets and values.

The key physical elements of Morris's rural character are the views and vistas of open farmland, water bodies, ridgelines and historic centers especially as seen from the Town's scenic roads. These rural features characterize and are found throughout Morris, and while it may not be possible to protect all of these areas, the plan should identify and focus on the protection of the key rural features.

#### ***Objective: Scenic Roads***

Almost all roads in Morris are scenic, but some have outstanding scenic characteristics and are especially deserving of protection. Citizens and Town officials should aim to gain approval of at least 10 miles of scenic roads in Morris over the next ten years.

The subcommittee for Land Use and Open Space Preservation identified the Town and State roads it considered that best represent its rural character (see page 45 of the Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory for the complete list). For selection of Town roads the subcommittee followed the scenic road criteria as set forth in Section 7-149a of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS). It provides that local highways or portions of the highways may be designated by municipal ordinance as scenic roads, providing owners of a majority of lot frontage abutting the highway or portion of the highway agree to the designation. To be designated as a scenic road, a road or portion of the road must be free of intensive commercial development and intensive vehicular traffic and must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- ◆ It is unpaved
- ◆ It is bordered by mature trees or stone walls
- ◆ The traveled portion is no more than twenty feet in width
- ◆ It offers scenic views
- ◆ It blends naturally into the surrounding terrain
- ◆ It parallels or crosses over brooks, streams, lakes or ponds

## ***Action Recommendations***

### **1. Town Scenic Road Ordinance**

The Board of Selectmen should initiate a Town Meeting to present to the citizens of Morris, a Scenic Road Ordinance, which if adopted, would enable property owners who live along a scenic road segment to petition for scenic road designation.

It is recommended that landowners on these Town scenic roads consider petitioning for designation of these Town roads and road segments as Town scenic roads.

### **2. Town Roads with Scenic Road Qualifications**

#### **A. PAVED TOWN ROADS:**

**ALAIN WHITE ROAD** from Morris/Litchfield Town Line, bisecting White Memorial Foundation forested land; past stone walls, two man made ponds, two 18th century homes and two 19th century homes to Route 61. **ANDERSON ROAD** bisecting Anderson Farms past pastures, a 19th century home and view of ridgeline. **BENTON ROAD** from Morris/Bethlehem Town Line, past Anderson Farm (Woodbury/Southbury Rod and Gun Club Property), eastern vistas, 18th century home, 19th century home and stone walls to the intersection of Higbie Road. **HIGBEE ROAD** from the intersection of Benton Road past three 19th century homes, meadows, ponds, eastern vistas, ridgeline, stone walls and old school house to Route 109. **BENTON ROAD** from Higbie Road intersection, west past cornfield, 18th century home, and old Center School house to Route 109. **KENYON ROAD** past stone walls, Camp Washington, Keilty Farm, 18th century home and two 19th century homes. **JOHN WEIK ROAD** from Route 109 with a view across Jones Pond, past Lakeville Cemetery and site of an old mill, and two 19th century homes to Todd Hill Road. **WEST MORRIS ROAD** from Morris/Litchfield Town Line to Route 109, past 19th century home, across the Bantam River, stone walls, distant views to the east, Stone/Brown Farm, Doyle Farm, Winsome Farm, cows at pasture, old barns, three 18th century homes

and six 19th century homes. **SMOKEY HOLLOW ROAD** tree lined to view of Bantam River and of 19th century Burgess home (site of 1877 Burgess General Store, Post Office and Telegraph Station), past site of Shepaug Railroad Tracks to Morris/Washington Town Line, ponds and stone walls. **CURTISS HILL ROAD** from West Morris Rd. to Burgess Rd, undeveloped rural road, tree lined, view of meadow and pond. **STODDARD ROAD**, tree lined south of Benedict Rd., with a view northwest of distant mountains, bordering Aurell Farm, past 18th century home and two 19th century homes. **BENEDICT ROAD** past 19th century farmhouse, barns and fields. **LOOKING GLASS HILL ROAD**, tree lined and scenic from Morris/Litchfield Town Line west of Bantam River past 18th century home to about one-half mile before intersection with Route 202.

## **B. Dirt/Gravel Town Roads**

**COE ROAD** past ponds and woods. **EVERGREEN PASSWAY** through the woods. **MUNGER LANE** through the woods. **ESTHERS LANE** through woods and past an 18th century home, White Flower Farm property and White Flower Pond.

A map and photos of these roads are provided in the Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory.

## **3. State Roads with Scenic Road Qualifications**

State roads may also be designated as “scenic” by the State Department of Transportation. The criteria for state road scenic designation are (as defined in Connecticut Public Act. No. 87-280) “any state highway or portion thereof that (1) passes through agricultural land or abuts land on which is located an historic building or structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places or the State Register of Historic Places, complied pursuant to CGS Section 10-321 or (2) affords vistas of marshes, shoreline, forests with mature trees or notable geologic or other natural features”.

Any municipality may submit a request to the Commission, Department of Transportation, for designation of a state highway as a scenic road. The proposed scenic road must be a minimum of 1 mile in length. Any development along the proposed scenic road must be compatible with its surroundings and must not detract from the scenic, natural character and visual quality of the highway area.

The following State road and road segments are recommended for State Scenic Road designation. It is recommended that the Conservation Commission or some other interested Town board prepare a proposal to the State for designation of these roads as State Scenic Roads.

**ROUTE 109** from Morris/Washington Town Line past Coe Farm, old Lakeside Post Office (Advent Chapel), Jones (Throop's/Mill) Pond, Lakeside (Footville) Cemetery, Camp Columbia State Park, forested areas, vistas toward Bantam Lake, corn stands, Morris Town Center, Post Office, Town Hall, Town Green, Congregational Church, James Morris Elementary School, Farband and Morris Cemeteries, barn at intersection of Route 63 and beginning again about one half mile past the intersection at Hickory Hurst Farm, Jet's Meadow Farm need to get new name and insert, no longer Jet's Meadow Farm, original site of Mill Schoolhouse, eleven 18th century homes, twelve 19th century homes, Sunnicroft Farm, entrance to Mattatuck Trail and view of Pitch Reservoir to the Morris/Litchfield Town Line.

**ROUTE 63** from Morris/Watertown Town Line past a barn and views of pastures to the intersection of Route 109, and beginning again about one half mile past the intersection where there is an 18th century home, vistas to the west, stone walls, White Flower Farm, man made ponds, forested White Memorial Foundation land to the Morris/Litchfield Town Line.

**ROUTE 61** from Route 63, bordered by White Memorial Foundation forested property, past two 19th century homes and Far Meadow Farms horse farm to Route 109 in Morris center.

**ROUTE 209** only where it borders the South Bay of Bantam Lake and passes two 18th century homes.

#### **4. Subdivision Regulations - Open Space Scenic Roads**

The Planning and Zoning Commission should amend the open space section of the subdivision regulations to place a priority on protection of open space along the frontage of Town and State designated roads.

#### **5. Private Road Subdivisions**

Many towns in the region have a provision in their land use regulations to permit a small subdivision (4 to 6 lots) to be served by a private road and allow the private road to be narrower than a town road and in some cases to be a gravel surface. Usually this permission is conditioned on a subdivision design that preserves valued scenic features or roadside views. The regulation must include safeguards that will keep the road privately maintained and not the responsibility of the Town. This type of subdivision design fits the rural character of Morris and should be considered.

#### **6. Setbacks on Major Town and State Scenic Roads**

Currently a house must setback from a road by a minimum of 50 feet from the road right-of-way. Typically town road right-of-ways are 50 to 66 feet in width but often the road itself is not in the center of the right-of-way. In order to maintain a consistent minimum green space buffer along main Town roads and State highways the land use regulation could be amended to require that a house must setback 50 feet from the road right-of-way or 75 feet from the road pavement, whichever is greater.

#### **7. Blight Issues**

Residents at the public forum and local officials have registered concern that “blight” related issues are negatively impacting property values and residential neighborhoods. Outside storage of junk is a primary concern as are highly deteriorated buildings in view from the road.

These problems can be addressed in town ordinances. An ordinance can be drafted to specifically regulate and prevent the accumulation of junk cars and related materials in residential zones. Also an ordinance can be created setting forth steps that define and require improvements to buildings that have long deteriorated in the soundness of structure and appearance.

#### ***Objective: Protect Steep Slopes and Ridgelines***

Land use regulations should encourage careful development and management of land with steep slopes and the highest ridgelines to avoid excessive erosion and sedimentation and the negative visual and wildlife impacts associated with excessive vegetation clearing.

The high areas on the near horizon viewed from the State roads and major Town roads are local ridgelines, most of which are either forested or open and free of development. Homes placed on large cleared open land

on the ridgeline peaks if not carefully placed in the landscape, are visible from great distances and detract from the Town's rural character.

Some ridgelines in town have been built on over the years, but most of these blend into the surrounding treed landscape and remain in harmony with surrounding scenic quality. But significant development leading up to or on ridgelines on slopes over 20% requires extensive clearing. A new road or driveway constructed into a hillside requires a wide clearing and excavation to create a safe grade and turning radius. Steep slope development greatly increases the risk of erosion and sedimentation and requires systems to insure that storm water will not wash out the driveway and result in sedimentation of wetlands and water bodies.

### ***Action Recommendations***

#### **1. Subdivision Regulation General Standards**

Planning and Zoning Subdivision Regulation 6.1 should be revised to read "In order to serve the purposes of subdivision regulations as set forth in Chapter 126 of the General Statutes, especially to insure proper provision for protection of irreplaceable resources, unique and fragile features of value to the Town of Morris, and the State of Connecticut, applicants are required to design subdivisions to avoid development of land for the house sites, septic fields, driveways, streets or other development improvements on the land defined below and to protect these lands from harmful effects".

#### **2. Slopes Over 20%**

The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider changing the wording in Subdivision Regulations, section 6.1.5 to restrict development on "Land with a slope of 20% or greater".

(NOTE: The Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory Map Figure - this is wrong, I checked it is really table 5 Table 5 town of Morris Soils "Slopes" describes the degree of slopes for particular soil types throughout Morris.)

#### **3. Regulation of Development on Ridgelines**

Before considering any regulation of development on ridgelines for visual or aesthetic purposes, the Planning and Zoning Commission should conduct a comprehensive review and analysis of existing ridgelines. This study should first precisely define what constitutes a "ridgeline" in Morris. It needs to identify ridgelines with the highest priority for protection and clearly define the need and benefits of such protection. With this information and documentation, the Planning and Zoning Commission can consider options for land use regulations.

#### ***Objective: Bantam Lake and Bantam River***

Protect important segments of scenic views of the Lake from the surrounding roads and manage the development of private docks and floats to balance the rights of private shore land owners and the safety and enjoyment of public recreational uses of the lake.

The views and vistas of Bantam Lake as seen from surrounding public roads are important local and state visual assets worthy of protection. Bantam Lake is the State's largest natural lake in surface area. The growth of boating traffic introduces the risk of increased recreational conflicts between boaters, swimmers, fishing and sailing. These issues can only be addressed by balancing the rights of lake landowners and the goal of preserving the public scenic and recreational values the lake provides.



## ***Action Recommendations***

### **1. Fence Height Limits and Lake Views**

The Planning and Zoning Commission in cooperation with the Bantam Lake Protective Association, and the Deer Island Association, should consider amending the Zoning Regulation to set a reasonable fence, berm or visual barrier limit along the public road frontage on the lake shore to protect against blocking road side views of the lake while providing for landowner need for safety and privacy.

### **2. Docks and Floats**

Recently a dock regulation has been addressed under the Inland Wetland Regulations, but these rules are limited to the impact of docks on the ecology of the water body.

The Planning and Zoning Commission in cooperation with the Bantam Lake Protective Association and the Bantam Lake Authority - doesn't exist anymore - and the Deer Island Association, should consider establishing total length and surface area limits and a dock numbering and registration system. These rules need to balance the property rights of lake land owners for adequate and safe boat docking and access to the lake. This right must not however compromise public recreational safety, protection of the lake's ecology and visual quality. Other lake communities have established a town ordinance or zoning regulations with limitations on dock size and length. These rules have focused on protecting against the proliferation of excessively large or long docks that interfere with safe boating, cause unnecessary disturbance to the lake shore and lake bottom and disturb the visual quality of the lake.

### **3. Shepaug Bantam River Commission**

Morris should refer to and support the recommendations of the "Shepaug-Bantam River Protection Commission Management Plan Executive Summary" including the recommendation for towns along the Bantam River to "explore the potential for recreational access to the Bantam River.

I found this online, should we add?

[https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap\\_477d.htm](https://www.cga.ct.gov/current/pub/chap_477d.htm)

#### **Chapter 477d - River Protection**

**Sec. 25-102ww. Applications affecting Shepaug River and Bantam River.** The Shepaug Bantam River Protection Commission shall review and comment on all applications affecting the Shepaug River or the Bantam River, or both, which are received by the inland wetlands agencies of the towns of Litchfield, Morris, Roxbury, Warren and Washington.

### **4. Lighting and Dark Sky**

At the Town Plan forum, especially as it related to the protection of Bantam Lake, there was support expressed in protecting against outdoor lighting that floods neighboring properties and obscures the night time views of the stars and constellations. Excessive and poorly placed and designed outdoor lighting on a property can also create unwelcome glare and intrude on the privacy of neighbors.

It is recommended that neighborhood associations on Bantam Lake, the Bantam Lake Protective Association and others provide educational materials and encourage residents to create lighting plans for their property that do not disturb neighbors. Down Lighting and careful selection of lighting fixtures and locations allows for needed safe lighting on a property while avoiding the “wash over” effect on neighbors.

The Morris Zoning Regulations have no standards or requirements for lighting. It is recommended that the regulation be amended under the Site Plan section to include standards for lighting for business, industrial and special exception uses. Lighting fixtures should be full cutoff or fully shielded types that cast no light above the horizontal plane and of a source that cannot be seen by someone standing to the side.

Resources for the Planning and Zoning Commission can be found at <https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/public-policy/policy-makers/>

The Planning and Zoning Commission should consider adopting the Model Lighting Ordinance created by the joint project between the International Dark Sky Association and Illumination Engineering Society.

### ***Objective: Cultural and Archaeological Resources***

Morris has over eighty homes dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as numerous historic landmarks and archaeological sites. These structures are an important part of the Town’s rural character and should be wherever possible, preserved and protected.

Much of the early homes have been well maintained and reflect a variety of architectural styles. These homes and other cultural resources in their rural settings, especially in the village center, are an important part of Morris’s sense of place. Morris citizens expressed a strong sentiment for preserving these historic resources.

Buildings and structures considered historic are those that are over 50 years old including derelict barns, agricultural outbuildings, dams and bridges, fieldstone walls and boundary markers, rural roads bounded by fieldstone walls, and/or mature trees; marked and unmarked cemeteries and burial grounds; buildings or sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places and/or Connecticut’s State Register of Historic Places; historic archaeological sites including fieldstone foundations, root cellars, cow pens, mill sites and factory ruins, breached dams, abandoned roads and cart ways; and prehistoric archaeological sites.

### ***Action Recommendations***

#### **1. Site Plan and Architectural Requirements**

Zoning Regulations for commercial Buildings and other non-residential structures proposed in view from Town roads, especially in the village centers, should encourage buildings of a size, scale and style compatible with the Town’s rural New England character.

#### **2. Subdivision and Site Plans**

Requirements for information on subdivision plans and site plans should include identifying archaeological, historic or cultural resources within the property to be subdivided. Applicants should be required to show sites and structures documented in the Natural and Cultural Resources Inventory report, (maps figures 11, 12 and 13 and tables 10 and 11 on pages 39 - 41) or other authoritative sources. Subdivision and site plan designs should show how the resources have been considered and wherever possible preserved.

### 3. Archaeological Resources

Where a site proposed for development has a documented potential for features or artifacts of archaeological significance, the regulations should provide that the State Archaeologist can perform an on-site archaeological assessment of the impact of the proposed development.

#### ***Objective: Population Density***

To retain a population density that is characteristic of a rural community, avoids “suburbanization” of Morris and protects ground and surface water quality.

In addition to protection of important rural features through conservation and preservation actions, the goal of preserving Morris’s rural character also must address the question of future density of housing and population in Morris. The key factor influencing population density is the Zoning Regulation requirements for minimum lot size. This has been an issue of considerable debate in town. ***At the drafting of this updated POCAD, it is still an issue of considerable debate in Town.***

To address this issue, the Planning and Zoning Commission commissioned a detailed study of the potential future “build out” of the Town, based on the existing zoning regulations. This study prepared by the planning firm of HMA looked at the existing zoning requirements and projected what the density of housing would be if the entire town were “built out” according to the existing lot size and other alternative lot sizes.

This entire section needs updated numbers and lots of input from the public meeting. This information is all copied from the old Pocad

#### **Additional Housing Development Projected Under Existing Zoning**

Existing Residential Zone	Vacant Acres of “Buildable” Land	Potential Additional New Dwellings
R - 160 (@4 acres)	14	2
R - 80 (@2 acres)	640	258
R - 60 (@1.5 acres)	1745	1003
R - 40 (@1 acre)	219	187
Lake Residential	2	0

Deer Island District	0.2	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>2,620.2 acres</b>	<b>1,444 units</b>

Several factors are worth noting in review of this projection.

1. First and foremost in determining a future “build-out” lot, HMA first removed all inland wetlands and watercourses, all slopes greater than 15% and areas with bedrock at or near the surface.

So the projection of new lots under the existing lot area requirements and for different zoning scenarios each projected “build-out” lot must meet the minimum lot requirement (40, 000 or 60,000 square feet, 2, 3 or 5 acre) with good or “buildable” land, this is land that is not wetlands, watercourses, slopes over 15% or bedrock.

It should be noted that existing zoning allows slopes of any steepness to be included in determining minimum lot size. The Morris Zoning Regulations now state that “ponds, lakes, swamps or marshes shall not be used for compliance with more than 25% of the minimum lot area requirement”. This means that most inland wetland soils can count as part of the minimum lot requirement under current regulations. On this basis the actual potential for new lots in Morris under thge current regulations is higher than the HMA study projection of 1,444 lots.

Also in calculating future build-out lots, HMA deducted 10% for the interior roads in a new subdivision. Finally, HMA did not calculate development potential for all of the land owned by the White Memorial Foundation land and permanently protected land such as Camp Columbia.

2. HMA projected only 2 new dwellings in the R - 160 zone because this land is primarily land owned by the White Memorial Foundation and it was assumed that this land would not be developed for housing.
3. The R - 80 zone comprises a much smaller land area than the R - 60 zone land area. It is mostly located in the northwest corner of the Town, where there is a high percentage of land with slopes over 15% and inland wetlands. The projection of new lots in this zone is 258 housing units.
4. The R - 60 zone is the largest zone in total area and in terms of “buildable” vacant land (1,745 acres). Thus the projection of new lots and dwellings in this zone produces by far the greatest number of housing units - 1003. All other zoning districts taken together produce only 441 housing units.
5. The R-40 zone produces 187 new housing units from 219 buildable acres. This is by far the highest concentration rate (vacant land to units produced) at 85%.

**COMPARE THIS TO PROJECTED HOUSING AND POPULATION AT “BUILDOUT” UNDER DIFFERENT ZONING SCENARIOS:**

### **Housing Buildout**

Build-out under existing zoning produced a total of 1,444 new dwelling units. HMA also compared this to alternative lot requirements with the following results:

Entire town re-zoned to 2 acre lots - a total of 1,081 new dwellings could be built  
 Entire town re-zoned to 3 acre lots - a total of 699 new dwellings could be built  
 Entire town re-zoned to 5 acre lots - a total of 353 new dwellings could be built

### **Population at Build-Out**

What would be the additional and projected total population under each of these scenarios? For this projection we assume that each housing unit will have a family at the same average family size as reported for Morris in the 2000 US Census (2.52 persons per household). This information should be updated once the data from the 2020 census becomes available.

2 Acre Zoning	Additional Population - 2,274	Total Population - 5,924
3 Acre Zoning	Additional Population - 1,761	Total Population - 4,961
5 Acre Zoning	Additional Population - 890	Total Population - 4,090

### **At What Total Population and Housing Density Will Morris Lose Its Rural Character and Scenic Quality?**

Morris unquestionably will be most changed under a build out based on the existing lot area requirements. This would more than double the Town's population. If the R - 40 zone is fully built-out under the current zoning requirements, when septic systems fail (they do not last forever), many lots will NOT have the space to permit construction of a replacement system. If this happens and Morris is forced to extend sewer lines to these areas, this will likely lead to a dramatic change to the rural character of the Town.

Of the various lot size scenarios, the most reasonable is to change the current R - 60 zone and R - 40 zone to R - 80. This along with the requirement that the minimum lot area can not include inland wetlands, watercourses and steep slopes would produce a projected future "build - out" population of just under 6000. This is not quite double (1.8 times) the current population and if absorbed gradually under sound zoning and subdivision requirements, it will protect against the threat of sewers and retain the Town's Rural appearance.

### ***Action Recommendation***

- 1. Establish an 80,000 square foot Minimum Lot Size in Morris with the requirement that the minimum lot area can not include inland wetlands, watercourses and steep slopes.**

This appears to be the best option for Morris for a host of reasons. It will:

- ◆ Ensure all new lots will have sufficient area for long term septic system sewer disposal
- ◆ Eliminate the R - 40 (40,000 square feet) lot size zoning in the existing drinking water supply areas which is consistent with State recommendations that show this is too small a lot size to ensure protection of water quality at build-out.
- ◆ Increase the R - 60 (60,000 square feet) minimum lot size area by only 20,000 square feet and bring this very large central area of Town up to a safe minimum for both water quality protections and to preserve rural character.
- ◆ Provide for a variety of lot sizes based on soil type and terrain because areas with substantial inland wetlands or steep slopes will produce lots of varying sizes.

♦ By eliminating steep slopes from the calculation of minimum lot size, each lot will be more likely to have sufficient low or moderate sloped land for driveways, house and septic sites. This will help avoid construction on steep erosion prone sites, reduce regarding regrading of land and the excessive removal of trees and native vegetation required to develop on steep slopes.

## **2. Protect Existing Residential Lot Owners**

In making a change to R - 80 existing lot owners in the R - 60 and R - 40 zones must be protected. The Zoning Regulations must state that under the law all existing lots of less than 80, 000 square feet are “grandfathered” and protected and can be built out under existing R - 60 or R - 40 lot size regulations.

Many Morris landowners indicate that they have long planned on creating another lot for a child, for college costs or retirement based on existing zoning requirements. It is recommended that the Planning and Zoning Commission also consider preserving this option. In making changes to the new minimum R - 80 zone the Commission can expressly permit each existing lot owner in the R - 60 and R - 40 zones to create one additional lot under R - 40 or R - 60 lot size requirements. This option if enacted will not compromise the goal of protecting water quality or rural character.