

# Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee Minority Report

Date February 5<sup>th</sup> 2007

Subject: Belfast City Council Charge to Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee vs.  
4-3 vote to remove last area from Committee's land review list.

Charge: Excerpt from the November 8<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Council minutes.

*“Councilor Roberts, seconded by Councilor Brewster, made a motion to send the Retail Review Committees Executive Summary to the Comprehensive Planning Committee to find an area for a retail store. This was unanimously voted 5-0”.*

The below signed Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee members respectfully submit the following minority report to the Committee at large and also at this time letting it be known that we will also be presenting this minority report to the Belfast City Council. This report will be presented to the City Council directly after this Committee's Majority Report presentation on this same subject tomorrow evening. This minority report is presented to the Committee as follows.

It has become apparent to us that the Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee's majority has been unwilling to move forward on this Belfast City Council charge as presented to our Committee. The reasons for this lack of movement are many and let it be noted that some if not many of these reasons are very credible and should not be overlooked in the overall future planning of this project. We are in hopes the following generated information will act only as a guide to the Belfast City Council as how they may move forward on this important issue while best representing the interests of the Belfast voter/resident on the larger retail store location charge.

During a recent workshop held between the Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee and the Belfast City Council the majority of Councilors asked that additional information be added into our Committee's answer(s) to the City Councils charge “to find an area for a retail store”. This Committee's minority find it important at this time to also include this “added information” Councilors asked for into our minority report. The City Council's original charge to our Committee was to pick an area for a retail store, not to review an area for future retail development planning issues. A comprehensive approach was taken by only a few Committee members addressing this issue at hand, this being the case we hope everyone realizes that not all the needs of future planning have been addressed on this issue and therefore included in this minority report generated for both the City Council's and public's review.

Answer to City Council's charge:

We recommend placing the Route 3 land area identified by Committee member Lawrence E. Greenleaf during the last Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting (January 25<sup>th</sup>) on the list to be considered by the Belfast City Council for a

future site of a larger retail store here in the City of Belfast. This area is further mentioned and described in detail later in this report.

The following three paragraphs are examples of past Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee's comments on this subject (retail locations outside the city proper). Let it be known that the present Comprehensive Planning Committee was only one (1) vote away from agreement on reviewing this same general area listed by other Comp Plan Committees below.

- ✓ 1995, Current City of Belfast Comprehensive Plan, first adopted by the Belfast City Council on 3/14/1995, Chapter 4 Land Use, Commercial and Industrial Use, page 6, third paragraph,  
“Table (below) 4-3 indicates that the majority (85 percent) of commercial lots in Belfast are located in the urban area. These lots are concentrated on Main Street and the streets immediately adjacent to Main Street. Commercial lots in the rural area are scattered, with the largest number being located on Belmont Avenue (Route 3).”
  
- ✓ 1999, Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee recommendations regarding how to manage commercial growth to Belfast City Council. Page 3, title “Route 3 Area”.  
“The Committee views Route 3 and the surrounding area as the best location in Belfast for larger scale commercial development. The Committee believes it is appropriate to increase the depth of the zone towards Route 137, but only if future commercial growth along Route 3 is confined to the area east of Crocker Road (followed by five-5 important recommendations).”
  
- ✓ 2005, Belfast Comprehensive Planning Committee Public presentation (By Nina Young on behalf of the Comp Plan Comm.) on Route 3 commercial. Pages 7 & 8, title “Route 3 Commercial Main Shopping Zone”.  
“The City, in January 2001, adopted the current standards that apply to the Route 3 zoning district and no significant changes are proposed to these standards. Note: Retail up to 75,000 sq ft per structure.”

Added General Planning Information on retail area selected by minority for a larger retail store location:

# 1: Compatibility with surrounding area development.

- ✓ This area's zoning allows retail growth and is identified as the Route 3 Commercial zoning district.
- ✓ This area is near present retail, commercial, services and office areas.

# 2: Adverse impact on residential development.

- ✓ There will be minimal impact to current local established residential development due to screening trees, wetland separation along with land separation (distance).
- ✓ There is not much residential development in this general area.

# 3: Impact on traffic.

- ✓ The Route 3 Highway is presently a major traffic artery.
- ✓ This Route 3 area is usable with minimum curb cuts.
- ✓ The selected retail area falls inside “Urban compact” line. Highway improvement costs associated with any future retail development in this area should be addressed (who pays). Normally developer pays?
- ✓ Larger retail development in this area will increase traffic volumes.
- ✓ Retail development in this area may include widening highway by adding turning lanes.
- ✓ Traffic flow corrections may need to be made to allow Crocker Road traffic a safe opportunity to merge onto Route 3.
- ✓ Pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths with signals should be incorporated into retail development design plan. City residents should have the chance to safely walk or bike to this retail store location if need be. The area generating the highest safety concerns at this time is the Route 1 overpass intersection(s).

# 4: Availability of public utilities, sewer and water.

- ✓ Both public water and sewer are available.
- ✓ Enhanced pumping system in area.

# 5: Natural soils, slopes, habitat and floodplains.

- ✓ This area contains a large percentage of developable land area per size.
- ✓ This area contains a minimal amount of wetlands.
- ✓ This area’s land and soil quality is above average in comparison with surrounding areas.
- ✓ This selected area would allow a future retail building to be set back from Route 3.
- ✓ Natural tree screening (line of trees) between possible retail store site and established Springbrook residential development.
- ✓ There is a wetland (storm runoff pond) area between purposed retail site and residential development. Should review the continued protection of this wetland to help keep the natural division between current residential and future retail development.
- ✓ This area has a gentle slope gradually rising from Route 3 back through property.
- ✓ This gentle slope would allow for good drainage of this proposed larger retail building site.

# 6: Size of parcel and availability.

- ✓ This area is listed for sale by Bracebridge Real Estate for Bank of America.
- ✓ 50+ acres with larger parcel formerly known as Les Hill property.

# 7: Compatibility with both zoning and shoreland.

- ✓ City Shoreland Zoning rules do not apply to this area.
- ✓ Contract zoning may be the best way to address building issues on a larger single retail development (approx. 100,000sq.ft.). This type of zoning (spot/area) for this one (1) building would allow negotiations of such things as store footprint, site layout along with the many other planning issues that go into planning a larger retail building.
- ✓ The City Council should address the 200,000sq.ft. retail building size zoning on the East side or face having two (2) large retail store building permits for larger retail buildings in the City's building permitting system at the same time.
- ✓ The City should look into reducing the 75,000sq.ft. City zoning cap on retail buildings.
- ✓ A new retail zoning district for this proposed new retail building could be adopted. Zoning language could require retail building to sell food, clothing and basic household items. Can the City zone this area for certain product sales like the ones asked for by the public during recent public hearings and also recommended by Retail Review Committee?

# 8: Other:

- ✓ Area expandable if needed in future.
- ✓ Minimum changes needed to current Belfast Comprehensive Plan.
- ✓ This general area is also identified in the present adopted Belfast Comprehensive Plan.

End of report.

Committee member, Paul C. Dean

Committee member, Lawrence E. Greenleaf

Committee member, Shelley Merrill