

Westmoreland Planning Board

April 11, 2026

Present: Planning Board: Lauren Bressett, Bruce Smith, Liana Capra, John Snowdon
Master Plan: John Harris, Alan Bell, Lisa Prince, April Ferguson

This was a town forum held by the Planning Board and Master Plan committee. The forum was live streamed and is posted on the town website.

The forum covered a summary of the Master Plan survey results including rating of town services, areas to preserve, general desires for character of the town, economic development, housing, and alternative energy. The draft development constraints map was shared.

A summary of discussion included:

- Timing for completion of the Master Plan and Constraints map

Conservation land:

- a question about logging along Crusher Road.
- concern about the County land future plans, the frontage along the Connecticut River, and whether it could be placed in a conservation easement
- a question about whether easement restrictions could be subject to change

Economic development:

- geographic limitations (power, brook, steep slopes) to expanded economic development along Rt 12
- mixed reaction to the question of increasing commercial development along Route 63 and Spofford Rd.
- Selectmen indicated that an economic development committee had been proposed in the past, but there was a lack of volunteers to serve on such a committee
- existing three-phase power only available along Spofford and Partridge Brook Roads to Maplewood and not along Rt 12

Housing:

- a question about town population and volunteer fire department size
- questions about capacity at the Westmoreland School, need for police department, fire department expansion
- a comment about costs for sending students to Keene High School
- Class VI and discontinued roads—the process for determining each was summarized
- discussion about expanding the size of ADUs and that would then be a two family dwelling
- possible expansion of zones allowing two family and whether acreage restrictions should be dropped
- interest expressed for both cottage court and conservation cluster housing options
- a question about senior housing in Chesterfield
- questions about lot size reductions/road frontage changes for cottage court and conservation cluster alternatives

Regarding alternative energy in town:

- agreement that periods of power loss have been reduced as a result of tree trimming

- strong support for residential solar arrays and commercial solar where power is used on site by the business/farm
- discussion around allowing a bit of excess capacity and limiting by a certain percent to address opposition to onsite residential or commercial oversizing in order to sell back power.
- strong opposition to commercial solar farms on open land or forest land designed to sell power to the grid
- concern about visuals of solar on hillsides and effectiveness of screening
- there was opposition to wind turbines and questions about sufficient wind on hilltops and size of turbine blades
- recognition that the alternative energy field is changing rapidly and usage will likely need regular adjustment

Participants indicated views via dot voting on some key questions regarding:

- Reducing lot frontage or lot size
- Expansion of small businesses along Rt 63
- Whether and where to allow cottage courts
- Whether and where to allow conservation cluster development
- Whether and where to allow a density bonus for affordable construction
- Concerns about solar energy
- Concerns about wind energy
- Ideas for expanding economic development

Summary provided by Bruce Smith, John Harris, John Snowdon.