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Town set to reject marina expansion

By **ED PIOLLA**
 Monitor staff

Meredith

MEREDITH - The town's planning board is set to reject a proposal to expand Shep Brown's Boat Basin. Board members took a straw vote yesterday in which they unanimously opposed the plan to add two outdoor storage buildings. Board members directed the town's attorney to draw up a motion denying the application, and the board is expected to officially reject the proposal at its next meeting.

"Unless lightning strikes" is how Attorney Jed Callen of Concord characterized the chances that the board would suddenly change its mind and approve the plan. Callen represents about 150 residents and property owners on Meredith Neck who have banded together against the expansion.

It was the third public hearing on the proposal. Many residents feared that allowing two boat storage buildings to be built would increase traffic and congestion in an area already clogged with cars.

William Littlefield Jr., who owns the marina, had argued through his attorney that the storage buildings, which would house about 100 boats, would not increase traffic. The buildings would actually reduce wintertime visual blight at his business, he said. Shrink-wrapped boats are stored outside at the marina, and Littlefield said he would move those boats, as well as others from an off-site location, into the new buildings.

However, Callen argued repeatedly that such a pledge by Littlefield was not enforceable by law and nothing would prevent Littlefield from filling up the new buildings as well as keeping shrink-wrapped boats on the



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property, too.

Littlefield's attorney, Robert Varney, did not return a phone call yesterday.

Other residents claimed car traffic, from both marina customers and guests of those customers, was already too much. A public boat launch next to the marina is used consistently in the summer season.

"What was proposed here was simply too much," said John MacIntosh of Concord, who spends his summers on nearby Bear Island. "It was too much for that area of the shoreline, which is already very intensely populated with boats, cars, buildings and the like."

Besides traffic in the area, many residents were upset that Lake Winnepesaukee has become infested with loud, fast motor boats in recent years. Residents were concerned that Shep Brown's was set to become a larger, "preferred" dealer of motorboats if the expansion plans were approved.

Littlefield began selling large powerboats at Shep Brown's soon after he purchased the marina in November 2002. He claimed those powerboats make up a tiny percentage of his sales and just a few are stored at Shep's.

Yesterday, the planning board acknowledged that the residential neighborhood surrounding Shep's is already very congested.

Stopping the expansion plans was a major victory for residents and property owners.

"Shep Brown's is a neighborhood marina, and it's needed by Meredith residents and property owners," said Warren Clark, who has owned property a half-mile away since 1992.

"It's current activity level suits its residential location . . ." Clark said. "We're gratified the planning board seems to agree with us on this issue."

(The planning board's next meeting has not been scheduled yet.)

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