

# Franklin development vote is a 'no brainer'

By Joyce Kelly/Daily News staff

Milford Daily News

November 23, 2008

FRANKLIN - Agreeing to establish an area in town for industrial development was called a "no-brainer" for Town Council when the decision came before them last Wednesday.

The council unanimously voted to opt into Chapter 43D and establish a priority development site on two parcels of town-owned land adjacent to Pond Street, in the office zoning district.

Chapter 43D, signed into Massachusetts law in 2006, guarantees local permitting decisions on priority development sites within 180 days, and increases the visibility of a community and the target development site.

There are a lot of vacancies in Franklin's two industrial parks, said Bryan Taberner, Franklin's director of planning and development. He said Town Council could designate each, or portions of them, as priority development sites.

"The key benefit to having priority development sites is, the state will help you market that site. They will actually put us on the map, even internationally. That's a huge benefit," Taberner said.

"I'm trying to fill those properties up, and that would (help) to do it, and the community is marketed. You're showing the world you're pro-development - to a point, you want businesses to come," Taberner said.

The Pond Street site was chosen because the town owns it, Nutting said, and because officials hope to sell it.

The move also enables Town Administrator Jeffrey D. Nutting and Council Chairman Christopher Feeley to apply for and accept municipal agreement grants up to \$60,000 to assist the town in developing the priority site, and evaluate and streamline the town's current development and review and permitting processes.

This further opens the door for the town to later apply for bigger grants, Nutting said.

There is no local match required, the state would give 100 percent, Taberner said.

With grant money from the state, Taberner said he would hire a consultant as "another set of eyes," essentially making the town more customer-friendly.

"The consultant would make the process a little more obvious to the developer - who to go to and what the requirements are," he said.

After accepting Chapter 43D, Franklin officials need to appoint a contact person to act as the primary municipal officer for all Chapter 43D-related issues connected with the priority sites, Taberner said.

Potential business owners or developers still need to go through the traditional permitting process, Nutting said. He said the designated go-to person will be a resource to the prospective developer, helping to point people in the right direction and make the process easier.

"It's meant to attract a business (for whom) time is money. And we'd get higher priority for grants. There's no downside to it," Nutting said.

Councilor Tom Doak said the process allows the developer to apply for permits from different boards simultaneously, something the council encourages.

"Everybody on the Economic Development Committee thinks this is a no-brainer. There is no downside," Doak said.