

PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED SIGN AMENDMENTS

Good evening, I'm Herb Vadney, Chairman of your Planning Board. Welcome to this PUBLIC HEARING of a Planning Board proposal to change the Town ordinance concerning signs.

Other members of the Board are: Collette Worsman, Bill Bayard, Roger Sorell & Bill Finer (absent), Lou Kahn, Pam Bliss and Ed Touhey, Alternate. We also have John Edgar and Mary Lee Harvey from the Planning Office.

Before we get started on the actual issue of signage, I want to explain the possible outcomes of tonight's meeting.

First: If, at this Public Hearing, information comes forth that convinces the Planning Board that its proposal is flawed and wrongheaded, the Board may vote to withdraw the proposal and ask the Selectmen to cancel the Special Town Meeting.

Second: If during tonight's meeting we hear information that suggests we should change the wording of the proposal, we will vote to do so. If we do vote to amend, state law requires that another public hearing be scheduled to debate the new wording. We have already prepared for a second public hearing should we need it. If no changes are made in the wording, that second meeting will be cancelled.

Third: If there are no changes to the wording, and the Planning Board comes out of this meeting with no proposed changes and decides to go forth to a vote of the Town, the Selectmen have already set the date to vote at a Special Town Meeting on July 31st.

I want to clarify one thing particularly for the newspapers that might be here, although State law refers to such a vote as a "town meeting" there is no real town meeting where the people gather together on that date to debate the issue. This is the public hearing for the issue and the debate will take place here tonight and on that day there will be a ballot vote only with no debate. The time to deliberate is here tonight. We need to hear the pros and cons of this proposal. We need your input. But, before we start debating, I'd like to give you a short bit of background information.

Some might be wondering why we're holding this meeting at all, or why we're holding it tonight, or why are we're asking for a special vote in the middle of the summer in July. Why is this vote such an emergency that it couldn't wait until the regular town meeting in March?

Let me explain a few of the details and please allow me a small amount of poetic license in shortening up some of the legal details. I could spend a couple of hours giving you the exact legal wording, and all of the associated Court cases that go with this and much more, but that wouldn't do any of us any good. So, I will shorten all of my comments to a pretty truncated summary. If you really want all the details, please ask. We have them here and will use them as necessary to answer your questions.

Here's the situation: Meredith's Sign Ordinance currently prohibits signs "which are animated, flashing or with intermittent illumination", **but**-with the **exception**, that we **DO** allow such signs if they give only the time and temperature. Until recently we felt that wording would let us manage signs fairly and reasonably. But in a recent Court ruling, that argument was rejected by saying, in effect, "If you are happy with time and temperature signs that flash or have intermittent illumination, then you have admitted basically that you don't really mind flashing signs, you mind what they say, so any restrictions you place on such signs that might carry another message are an infringement on free speech. So that's why, what we're really doing, the main change you'll see in the proposal is to pull out the words "excepting time and temperature", leaving those in basically makes the whole argument null and void. In other words, "We've been trying to control the CONTENT", on these flashing, illuminated sign boards and thereby restricting free speech. That ruling was against the City of Concord, but our wording is almost identical to that that was rejected by the Court. That ruling told us that our ordinance is no longer enforceable and will no longer stand up in court. So, if we want to prohibit flashing, intermittent animated signs basically we have to act quickly. To be honest all manner of such signs could appear in Town between now and next March if we do not take action to block them now. The fact that this meeting is being held and the fact that the Selectmen have voted to take this to a vote of the Town, if someone was to come in tomorrow or yesterday and ask for a permit, it would not be allowed because during this time it is blocked by state law. If we go forward and if the vote of the Town should deny what we're asking, then it would be open season on this type of sign. You can put them up pretty much at will. Now, you might also

ask, "Why do we care, why do we want to prohibit such signs? You could argue there are many such signs in surrounding towns, you run into them every day. Why are we so different? Well, Meredith's population has worked hard for many years to keep Meredith attractive and welcoming for one and all. It is much more than just the Planning Board working hard on this effort, the general citizenry and many business owners have also worked hard to keep Meredith in a natural setting, with clear views of the lakes and mountains, forests and fields, unencumbered with unnecessary signage, and yes, without signs "that are animated, or that flash or have intermittent illumination". To the eyes of many people, we already have quite a handsome collection of signs throughout the Town. Many of them hand-lettered, some on hand-carved wooden signs that help keep Meredith rustic and yet offer what you might say is effective information for residents and visitors to find their way around and find the businesses. Where did all that come from? Our Master Plan was developed in large part with help from the people, some of you and people like you, and the Master Plan clearly states the importance of protecting our approaches to Town, to maintaining a rural setting throughout the Town, and to have businesses and signage that contribute to such a pastoral setting. In addition, we have an Architectural Ordinance that aims to keep the Town, for want of a better description, neat and clean and with the character representative of a nice New Hampshire and New England town.

Now, most of you are probably aware that during the past month, we have already gotten one new intermittent illuminated message board type sign, and permits for at least two others have been submitted to the Code Enforcement Officer. Those were in before we had taken any action, before we were able to get scheduled on the things that were necessary. But also during that time, a number of people (citizens) have commented to the Town in letters, in phone calls, and stopping me on the street in several cases telling me basically that bright, electronic signs (even the ones with only one message a day) are destructive to Meredith's image as a small, New England town. Now, I need to get a little bit more complicated than I have already in describing our proposal. I've talked about the timeliness and the content issues. But, In addition to eliminating that exception on **time and temperature** signs, we need to clean-up the ordinance in a couple of places to clarify what qualifies as animated, flashing, intermittently illuminated signs and also to add a definition for electronic signs. This is one of the things our ordinance is silent on because when it was written, the idea of electronic signs hadn't come around. It now is a

fast moving technology so we need to get a definition of electronic signs in there if we want to ban them. So, that pretty well covers the legal portions of the animated electronic sign issue and how we are not allowed in any way to control content of the signs. There is a second issue that I would suggest for discussion tonight, which by itself is a substantial reason to consider prohibiting these animated, flashing signs and that second issue is Highway Safety. This is one of those things how much is enough and how dangerous is dangerous but in my opinion and I know the opinion of several of the Board members, these flashing signs near the road are distracting and I will be really blunt that some of the signs I have seen in other towns not too far from here probably do present a real traffic hazard. There are a number of signs throughout New Hampshire, some sit very close to the road, some are, in effect, basically large television screens. Why we need these beside the road is a mystery to me but that's what some of the business people would like to do to attract you to their businesses. Some of these signs project a very high intensity light that tends to be distracting in both daylight and at night. Some of these are still very illuminated and very bright in broad daylight. The quickly changing images and the quickly changing levels of illumination, particularly at night some of these will go from dark to light and stuff as you're coming along and it's kind of like having a strobe light beside the road so I find them distracting when negotiating busy highways, and in my opinion pose a serious safety issue. We have to recognize we are in large part a tourist community with many pedestrians crossing our streets, sometimes it seems crossing at random, but they are crossing our streets and do we really want to try dodging these tourists while being distracted by electronic signs? I think it's a question we have to seriously ask. This technology is moving very fast and prices for animated, illuminated signs are coming down. In my opinion, if we don't move quickly to protect our Town, it will be too late. It will be the old horse and the barn door kind of argument and indeed if we want to protect ourselves against the Las Vegas look, and from endangering life and limb of ourselves and our tourists, I think safety is something we have to look at. This boils down to what? The question that will be before you on the 31st of July is quite simple. Do you want flashing, intermittently illuminated, animated, and electronic signs in Meredith: Yes or No? We're going to turn to John Edgar to give us a very quick slide show on some of the facts around Town. Before we do, I would like to reiterate that the Planning Board has already voted to take this issue to the Selectmen, and the Selectmen have voted to schedule a Special Town Meeting for July 31st. That meeting will not be deliberative, it will

only be a vote, it will be done in this building, and the polls will be open from 7 to 7 just as it is in March the day before Town Meeting when we come and do our ballot vote. It will be a simple paper ballot vote, most likely I think there's still some discussion about this but it will most likely be a simple paper ballot that you mark with a pen or pencil because there's really only one mark to make. The wording will be a little different when the legal folks get ahold of it but in effect, the question will be "Do you want flashing, intermittently illuminated, and animated electronic signs in Meredith", Yes or No? Now I'll ask John to give us just a short briefing on some of the facts. Edgar – Director of Community Development for the Town of Meredith. My role here this evening as part of this presentation is just to provide a brief backdrop, a context if you will within which the question falls in terms of some of our planning work that we've been doing over the years. As Herb alluded to the Master Plan that was a multi-year effort and involved hundreds of folks in the community over a series of forums and a series of years that was concluded in the year of 2002 by a vote of the Planning Board to adopt it. A big part of that work involved the attempt to try to define community character. Everybody would say, let's protect community character but it's a very difficult thing to define so we went to a significant level to tease out of people what that character involves. Part of that effort, the Natural Resources Committee actually in tandem with my office hired a gentleman by the name of Tom Kokx to do a view shed analysis and this is the map of the finished product of that work. We inventoried 90 some odd viewpoints in the community that are all of those different dots, the yellows and the reds. The reds are those that were deemed as being highly significant, the areas within those dark lines were what were referred to as critical viewed area so we spent a lot of time on the Master Plan to identify what contributes to our community character, scenic views and scenic qualities was very significant and then we went to the level of basically a view shed analysis to further define that. This work was then also utilized as we developed a regulatory framework for cell towers and some of the most critical viewed areas, the areas in yellow, are areas where we want to discourage towers and smaller towers could be allowed in the purple and some large ones up in the blue area so the purpose statements in that ordinance, here again voted on at Town Meeting place an emphasis on the aesthetic qualities of the community. Chairman Vadney alluded to an Architectural Design Review Ordinance that we adopted about the same time. It was also adopted by the Town Meeting. There are very clear findings in terms of the public purposes and aesthetic objectives of the community. One of the criteria specifically deals

with signage in terms of its relationship to architecture and the Board decided to apply the Architectural Review process on a townwide basis recognizing that whether you're on Route 104, 3 or 25 or in the downtown, all parts of our community from an aesthetic point of view are important. This is a poor image of our zoning map and the simple purpose of it being in there is if you go back to our current ordinance in all those varying districts, the Chemung property on the left-hand side, that brighter green in the middle, Forestry/Rural, the lighter green, Residential, the dark on the right, Meredith Neck, all those zones have different references to the importance of open spaces, scenic qualities and even in the blue in the downtown and 3 north all the way down to the Laconia line, there's references to the importance of aesthetics relative to building, signage and the like. Several years ago just before we approved the Master Plan, we petitioned the State to be part of a designated Scenic Byway Route around Lake Winnepesaukee, the Route 3 corridor coming up from Weirs Beach into the village and then easterly out to Center Harbor is part of that Byway system as well as Route 106 and one of the responsibilities that we have under this program is to try to enhance the aesthetic qualities of those Byways and not make land use decisions that would detract from those scenic qualities. A more current initiative is the 3 and 25 improvements transportation study which is our next attempt at working with the State to address the needs of the community up from about the 104 intersection down into the Village and out to Center Harbor. Because of the environmental and aesthetic sensitivities of our community, we are employing what is referred to as a context sensitive solutions approach also known by its acronym CSS. It's a multi-group advisory committee and needless to say the problem statements, the vision statements and the screening criteria all have considerable elements relative to community aesthetics. We have various types of conservation land in the community and in the middle part of the picture shown, that's Longridge Farm, just above that is the Storer Memorial Forest. In Longridge Farm we acquired conservation easements a couple years ago. Out on 104 there's a piece, the Hatch easement. Up on 25, that's the Moulton Farm. I bring this to your attention that we've made serious public investments in these conservation properties, as well as many property owners donating their land towards permanent protection and in the instances I just mentioned, Longridge Farm, Moulton Farm, the Hatch easement, the scenic enjoyment by the public of those properties is one of the stated purposes. Also, as you come down High School hill as you overlook the Village, through the Planning Board process we negotiated a scenic view easement of the

Meredith Bay Village Condominium project, here again to try to help protect the aesthetics of that entry into the community. There have also been a lot of beautification efforts around the community. There have been committees working on landscaping and plantings. We recently won a National competition from America in Bloom. We have the business community in the Adopt-a-Spot Program so we have other aspects of beautification that are on-going that involve our business community. This is the one time and temperature sign that we have that was permitted through the ordinance that we now think to have an issue relative to that exception. If the proposal were to go through, this sign would be grandfathered. This is the more recent sign on Route 25 which was a switch out sign, there was a sign there before and it was upgraded. That would be grandfathered. We have a permit pending that has been approved that has not been built on the ground but the reader board component of this sign would be switched out for an electronic message reader board and those 3 basically would be grandfathered if the ordinance change goes through. One of the questions that we had at the staff level when we were examining this issue is whether or not there would be a likelihood of more and more signs coming on board between now and Town Meeting in March. We've looked around at various communities, this is not at all a comprehensive look but here are a few pictures of some existing electronic signs. Some signs are in Laconia, Weirs Beach, Gilford, Union Avenue, Belmont or Tilton near Route 140, east of the interchange and we have one up in Center Harbor. The point of those illustrations is simply to say that the signs are certainly becoming more and more popular in our neighboring communities and elsewhere and the likelihood that they would become more and more popular here is certainly a fair concern. We actually received another permit today for a sign that will be placed on hold pending the outcome of the zoning amendment. With that Mr. Chairman, I'll hand off copies of the supporting documents relative to that planning context. Vadney – You've heard the issue, you've seen some photos, now it's your turn to tell us what you like and don't like. Basically, the Planning Board I suppose in a way took a chance by standing up on this issue at this time but I think that had we not stood up on this issue, this still depends on how the Town votes, but had we not stood up on this and a year from now if there were 23, 53 or 153 of these signs around Town, you'd be looking for our heads and so I think we took a risk now to try and save you some trouble later. That's our position; we need to know your position. Rusty McLear – I want to go back to history for a moment. Back in the late 60's and early 70's a number of people, Planning

Board, Zoning Board and the townspeople, I think made a very, very difficult choice and voted not to have 104 zoned commercial and not to have most of Route 25 zoned commercial. It was very controversial and it was, at least in my opinion, exactly the right thing to do. It has made this Town different from most towns in that we don't have a major sprawl issue. I think that in what you are trying to do now will be looked at a number of years from now in exactly the same way. These signs are proliferating because they are very noticeable, unquestionably they are noticeable but again, in my opinion, their value is reduced by having 5 of them right next to each other and that will happen if they are granted. I am here representing myself and my opinion, I'm also representing my company and we do have a few signs and we don't want to and won't get to a point where our signs will be internally illuminated or flashing or moving. I also am as Chairman of the Greater Meredith Program and we had a board meeting last week, we had a quorum at the board meeting and there was a unanimous vote to support what you're doing here and at that meeting there were 11 people and 9 of them own businesses in Town. I'm also here as a spokesman for the Mill Falls Association which I believe represents 15 businesses and at their last meeting while there wasn't enough for a quorum, they voted to support this also so we have my own company, Mill Falls Association and the Greater Meredith Program saying that we believe this is the right thing to do and the basic reason for that is we believe Meredith is doing as well as it is doing and there's certainly room for it to do better, but it's doing this well because it's different. People come here because it doesn't look like a lot of other places and we all believe that we should strive to make sure that we keep that advantage. Roger Hogan – I'm a resident of Meredith and I would just like to agree with what Rusty had to say and in my mind not getting this amendment approved would fly in the face of numerous other initiatives already underway in the Town to preserve the character of our Town and that character is what really does draw the tourists and feeds our economy. As a resident, I like living in Meredith because it is a memorable place to live. I have lived places I don't even remember what they looked like because one town would blend into another, the signs would all look the same, Meredith is a unique waterfront, bay community and I think, frankly, what is being proposed here tonight and also in terms of what Rusty had said, it shows remarkable vision and I would strongly and wholeheartedly support the amendments being proposed here. David Hanson – Pinnacle Park Road – I think we would all agree we have something very special in this Town of Meredith and I think our Town leaders have really done a

tremendous job in guiding all the things that go on in preserving the Town as it is. You could describe the Town as being a pretty town, a unique town, a very special town and I think that if we don't get on top of the sign situation now, I think there is going to be a proliferation and once that happens, there's no going back. I just applaud you for the efforts you're putting in now and I wholeheartedly support you. I will tell you I was away for a while this winter and when I drove into Town and I saw the sign in front of Meredith Village Savings Bank and I've done business with them for a long time, but I was really distressed when I saw that, in fact, in the next couple of days I walked into the Bank and I expressed politely what I thought of the new sign. I really think the sign is nice but the electronic part, I don't think as I explained to them, I don't think that's in the character of Meredith Village Savings Bank and certainly not in the character of the Village of Meredith so I support you wholeheartedly and I look forward to passage. Ann Brienza – I was one of the members of the committee that John Edgar spoke about with the preservation. John was a great leader and we worked very hard to try to preserve what we have here and if you like the stars and you like to go out at night and see them, we have to support this amendment or ruling because we're going to lose that with all the proliferation, especially the neon signs which I'm tremendously opposed to and I think it is distracting and there are a lot of teenagers that are driving around and their eyes focus on electronics and we don't need 16 year olds with their eyes off the road. That's another factor, the safety issue is huge. Thank you very much for all the work you're doing for this and I support you wholeheartedly. Vadney – I mentioned in my opening remarks, I am fascinated by the brilliance and the illumination they get out of some of these signs, there are a couple and I won't name the town they are in, but you can see the things and you're about a mile and a half away and they stand out. They are like a night glow. Fred Hatch – I live on Pease Road. My wife was born here and I took her away for 40 years, she came back with me 20 years ago. We are very much enamored with the Town, we are very interested in preserving its rural character throughout the Town, not just downtown. In thinking that way, we donated an easement to the New England Forest Society which encompasses about ½ mile of frontage on 104, immediately across the road from Hatch Corner Brook prime wetland so that it provides a double duty so to speak. We also have almost that much frontage on Pease Road which is in the easement and is forested so this is our little contribution to first of all an entrance to Meredith from the west and secondly, to the general rural character that we'd like to maintain as much as possible. I guess I'd like to put on a

couple of other hats, one is I'm Chairman of the Transportation Advisory Committee for Meredith and involved in the 3 and 25 project that John described. That is a safety issue and unlike the comment about teenagers which I think is quite valid, I can also represent the elderly driver who's faculties may be slowing down a bit and I consider the signs a real distraction. Taking the Meredith Village Bank sign as an example, I find it a particular distraction because it's in a dangerous place. It really is right where you come around that corner if you're westbound, coming around the corner you have to decide which lane you're going to get into and beware of people behind you coming out of Pleasant Street who will be in the left lane where you might want to go and so it's a tricky place and if you're reaction times aren't good or you're distracted by the sign, this is no place to be paying attention to something just because it's pretty or unusual. A question I would raise because of Herb's description that I think the distraction can apply to a steady illuminated sign which you know is going to change from day-to-day or hour-to-hour not flashing, not intermittent in the immediate sense, but still one if you're familiar with it you'll be wanting to know what it's going to say today or did it say this morning and this afternoon, that's another form of distraction and it might lead to changing the ordinance just slightly to control that, I don't know. Vadney – That is a good point and I eluded in my remarks to the one message a day. That actually is a result of Bill Edney making a judgment call on how to interpret the current code. I agree with you just the fact that it's illuminated is a little bit ugly and a bit distracting. That part we didn't have the ordinance to control, Bill did the best he could by making it a one time a day change. It's certainly not a perfect solution but that's something that will be handled in some ways through this. That particular sign is grandfathered, what we can do with that one is very limited. You actually have more power over that than we do. There's not much we can do with that particular one because of the rules. Marty Heinz – I have been a resident of Meredith for 16 years. Actually, what we're doing here is not doing anything new. You're just protecting what the Court has decided was not a right move and since most people in this room have supported the Town and its progress in what they've been trying to do over the years, I think we should continue that avenue because once signs proliferate, they won't be looking at the Town, they will be looking at the signs and I agree with you 100%. Vadney – Marty makes a very good point, we did have the protection of our ordinance as I mentioned, it has been overcome by that lawsuit and the Court ruling and what we're trying to do is an immediate stop-gap measure and get a new ordinance put into place so

that we would continue with some of that protection. What we are giving up is the right to that exception on time and temperature. Jack Dever – I'm a resident of the Town of Meredith and I'd like to tell you that I certainly support this amendment and I'd also like to tell you about something you haven't seen yet that I have. I'm presently working down in Pembroke and Barlow Sign Company who is one of the major sign manufacturers or companies in the State of New Hampshire now has a portable LED sign. It has two 4 x 8 panels that you can see from 7/10 of a mile away because I measured it today. They had one set up down near the racetrack and it's very, very distracting and if this ordinance isn't passed, they can come to Town because we do allow temporary signs and we do allow reader boards so I would caution you that it's not just what's going to be there every day, it's one that is going to come and go too. Donald McFarlane, Chair of the Conservation Commission - John Edgar showed a slide showing some of the conservation areas that we have in the Town both by easement and that we own ourselves. I just wanted to point out that much of that land was funded through grants that we were able to receive in part because of the scenic nature of the terrain and the scenic nature of the Town and I think if we were to lose that edge, any possible grants that we have in the future would be harder to come by so I think it's important that we preserve what we have. Phil McGowan, Loon Road, Meredith – I'm a great friend of the small business owner. When I realized what was going on with this, I decided I would go to Town Hall and see what this was all about and I was absolutely flabbergasted to find out that there was only one written complaint and two verbal complaints on file with the Town of Meredith and that these 3 complaints out of 5,700 property owners had enough weight behind them that our Selectmen have decided to call a Special Town Meeting. I don't have any problem with any of the signs in Meredith. If I do have an objection, as I told John Edgar today, I have a problem with the people that make their homemade signs and stick them out in front of their businesses probably without a permit and I don't think they have any class to them at all. I don't think you're going to see a proliferation of these types of signs in Meredith, I don't think our business district warrants those type of signs along the Route 3 corridor or the Route 3 corridor north or the Route 25 corridor, the businesses are fairly concentrated. I think the Meredith Village Savings sign is in keeping with the character of the Town and I also am concerned that we are taking action against the small business owner, entrepreneur that comes in here and wants to open up maybe where Rite-Aid Pharmacy was, we're going to start to regulate his sign. The shopping center on Route 25 that's been vacant for a long

period of time, we're going to have controls over their signs. We need to help these people, we need to help these people survive and stay in business not be doing whatever we can to put them out of business. Again, if we had 10% of the property owners in Town speaking out against these signs and there were 570 people that were upset about that, then I think you have to pay attention to it, but 3 people out of 5,700 and that's all there was in writing. I understand that the Planning Board doesn't like it; I understand the Community Development Director doesn't like it but let's not tie the hands of the small business owner. I don't think there's anything offensive about that time and temperature sign up in front of the Meredith Car Wash, in fact, I applaud them. They took a building that was in very poor condition, they spent a lot of money on it, spent a lot of money on the equipment and they've got a sign out there. They need a sign out there to attract people to go in and get their cars washed so they can stay in business. I don't blame the boat place down on Route 3; I don't blame Kevin Keenan for applying for a sign like that. I think he needs that type of sign. As you go down over that hill, most people are going above the speed limit; he needs something there that's going to draw attention to the fact that he's a boat dealer. Maybe a lot of people in Town wouldn't like that sign and they'd just as soon everybody drove by and didn't buy a boat but that's not why Kevin Keenan has the investment that he has in that piece of property. I owned a small business, I was in the automobile business. I know what it's like to have to have signage to get people to come in your door and look at your product so I'm really amazed that 3 written complaints have brought this kind of attention to this ordinance. Joan Ekstrom, Meredith – I kind of think of electronic signs as warning signs on the road, slow, detour or whatever and this is to our benefit and it helps us but I think if there was going to be an electronic sign, it should be huge and it should say that we advocate that our Town is beautiful, carefully planned, everything is lovely, peaceful and quiet and we need to keep it that way. One has only to picture coming down over the hill coming into Meredith and flash, lakeside home for sale, a little further, flash – sale on automobiles, nice sale on used cars, little further, flash – toothpaste and toilet tissue on sale today, I think we need to keep it more calm, more peaceful the way it has always been. Bob Flanders, Meredith – There's a great discrepancy in Phil's representation that there's only been 3 complaints, maybe there are only 3 written ones at Town Hall but I think every member of the Board of Selectmen has received multiple calls complaining about this and members of the Planning Board have been stopped on the street, the comments range from "what the heck are you

doing to our Town". Is it necessary to advertise for a business, sure? Let me just tell you about an incident that happened a few years ago. A gentleman wanted to come to Meredith with a business and I was on the Planning Board and he was complaining about the process and the Architectural Design Review and so forth. He was someone I had known for quite awhile and we were having a discussion and the comment was made, I don't have to do this if I go to Tilton, I don't have to do it if I go to Belmont and he named a number of communities and I said, well, if you want to have a business and you don't want to go through the process then maybe one of those towns is where you should go and his response was I don't want to be in those towns. I said, why not? He said, they don't draw the number of people, they don't have the quality of customers that we have here in Meredith and then he stopped for a minute and I could see the light bulb go on between his ears and he dropped his objections, he went through the process, his business has been open for a number of years and it has been very successful. That's what we have here in Meredith. That's been very carefully guarded by a lot of people for a long time right from the first Master Plan and if we don't successfully pass this ordinance, we're going to kiss all that progress or at least a huge portion of it goodbye. A simple thing like today, I had to order a part for my lawnmower and I ended up talking to a guy at a distributorship in Connecticut and he's taking my name and address and when I told him Meredith, New Hampshire, he said that's a beautiful place and we spent 10 minutes talking about Meredith. He was very familiar with it and the character of it and what a nice town it was and how quaint it was and what a nice New England village it was. That same conversation won't take place 2 or 3 years from now if somebody comes through Town and we don't enact this sign ordinance. I very strongly support this. Kim Sperry, Meredith – I agree with all that's been said, I am definitely in favor of this. I do agree also that the character of the Town as it is now and what we've worked so hard to preserve is what is driving business to the community. I work for a regional tourism marketing group and have looked at a lot of the studies that the State has put together and the #1 reason people come to New Hampshire is that New England village and I think we do that better than most in New Hampshire and we need to preserve that so I think we need to put this amendment through. Vadney – I might add one thing here and if we were not to go forward with this vote in July, we would definitely go forward with this vote in March. I suspect it would be an automatic; there would be little chance that it wouldn't pass in March. What we are really arguing about is not whether we want to do this, it's whether we want to do it in July or in

March and the reason we've chosen to take this somewhat more risky approach and do it in the summertime is that we really were afraid that if we left it open for another 9 or 10 months now that the Bank sign has gone up and a couple more are underway, there could be a quick rush, some by people who probably don't really want any of these signs but figure they had better get their application in before they outlaw the things and we could see a rush on them between now and next spring. From that standpoint, I would argue this is not a question of if, it's a question of when, and we think time is more critical because without it, this could move very rapidly against what most of you folks have spoken to. Peter Foster – 9 Mass Avenue – I would just like to commend the Board on bringing this to the forefront so quickly. Just the other day I saw this in the newspaper and was shocked to see that the Town was moving on this and it's really great because I had the privilege to move to Meredith about 4 ½ years ago for work, not many people get to move to Meredith for work and prior to that I was living on the Seacoast and commuting over an hour a day up Route 11 and watched the proliferation of the signs on Route 11 which is a scenic road all in all, but it's unbelievably distracting. Everybody's aware of that and we don't need it here. In addition to that, the acceleration of things like this, I travel up and down the eastern seaboard for work and I just watched zoning change in a county in Virginia where they are trying to down zone and the board of supervisors spent 10 months or 15 months dragging their feet on getting the zoning changed and that accelerated the growth in this county exponentially and now they have all these huge developments which people were trying to get away from but growth was accelerated because they took so long to make this decision and if we miss this opportunity, then we might get a false acceleration of signs like these in Town. It may be a business is just on the fence saying, I might have one but all of a sudden we have this opportunity to get one in and let's jam it in before March so I commend the Board on this and I hope that all the people in Town get out and vote for it because it's really obnoxious and will take away from the character of the Town. Annie Paquette, Paquette Signs – I guess I'm the guy who started all this. I've prided myself for 37 years in building custom signs for clients throughout the area and always strive to build a sign that fits the property, fits the business and the customer's desires, what does the customer want. Trying to keep up with the technology and the technology, Herb, as you stated earlier is changing dramatically. It's changing so fast that if we buy a new TV, in six months the TV is outdated. I think about what the talk has been about the safety issues about these signs and the traffic hazard and all of this. It has not

been proved in Court anywhere in the United States that these signs are a traffic hazard and I found it interesting to read in the paper last week that the ordinance was going to be rewritten but it would allow only construction site traffic signs for safety like what we see up by McDonald's where the loop-de-loop is being built so I think it's kind of an ironic contradiction. In one town maybe these types of signs are considered to be a traffic safety hazard, but in someone else's eyes, they could be considered something that would navigate the traffic and give everybody the forewarning up front that there's caution up ahead. It's a new technology and sometimes we're really afraid of new technology. Everyone here in the room I'm willing to bet has a cell phone and probably too many TV remotes and flat screens to understand how to operate and everybody's got a computer these days. It's the day of the computer. These signs are getting flashy, they really are getting flashy and when I was requested to give the Bank downtown a proposal for a sign with a design and a quote, they said they were going to get prices from somebody else. There are a lot of other companies that are coming into the area with really hard, fast, very aggressive salesmanship. I don't really drive these things down anybody's throat, if they don't want them I don't push it on them because I have a small company and I'm busy and I am concerned about it but I felt if I didn't get on board with this, somebody else would be. In that I've tried to design a sign down at the Bank just for the record and it was recognized here earlier that there was an existing sign there that I built and it wasn't a very good looking sign, I'll admit that I built that sign 12 or 14 years ago and we put that sign in and we've done signs for Meredith Village Savings Bank at some of their other 7 or 8 locations around the region and I always felt that the sign in Meredith at the main office, the flagship of all the banks, was the sign that was really not the nicest so when I came up with an idea of putting the sign in the same location on the same post actually reducing the square foot area that was on the pre-existing sign to a smaller sign, a carved sign, gold leaf, a smalted background if you're familiar with that textured sand and a scallop top and then incorporating not a full color and the Bank told me, we don't want to go full blown, we're not going to go crazy with all kinds of graphics and things, we just want an amber lit sign that would go along with the gold leaf on the sign, low to the ground, we don't want it high, we just want to identify our entrance and take out the old sign and replace it so that's what we've done. I'm torn sometimes between the old school of the carved signs and the brand new technology and as a craftsman always striving to build something a little better, a little newer and have another challenge and when the customer comes to me and they want that, that's what I

need. The profit margins on these, if I was the manufacturer of the electronic equipment, that's where the money is. If I have a sign that's worth \$40,000.00 or \$50,000.00, probably 70% of that is the electronics. They are not cheap. I think some of this would govern itself. Years ago when the first time and temperature came in down here on Route 25, it was for the First Bank & Trust and to me it made the Town look somewhat credible. It really made it look like we've got a real financial institution. We've always had a small town, I've lived here my whole life but this made it look successful or something. It really was beautiful and everybody looked at that sign, they used it as the ice-out time contest and it's like a public service thing to have a time and temperature sign. Someone is reading that sign every day. I look at the new technology where we have reader boards all over Town and I've done a fair amount of those as well as other sign companies but if you only could pay someone to stand out on a step ladder for an 8-hour day or stand out there with a telescoping suction cup on a pole with a 3-ring binder full of messages and you tell this kid, Joe, I want you out here all day long changing these messages as fast as you can change them, that's legal, he could take the letters down, put them up, go to the other side, change the message and that's legal. I look at this whole thing with the new technology where folks can operate these signs from within their office with a radio remote and I know businesses that don't want to send their girls out in a snowstorm to change the message. By the time we go out to change the message, the event is half over and two days later the events over and we haven't changed it for the next event yet. It's a time thing, we've got a lot of things we want to get out there for a message so I look at it as almost like when the guy sends his wife up on the roof to move the TV antenna and he's down there deciding which station he wants to watch. Everybody has taken their TV antennas down off the roof and I heard John Edgar talking about the cell phone tower districts where certain ones could be located. If you went out today and you saw a beautiful mountaintop and a week later you saw they were cutting some trees and up goes the cell phone tower. Maybe you hadn't been getting any service there in that zone. Now all of a sudden a year later the trees are grown in and you've got cell phone service and it's kind of blended in with the scenery. I do commend the Board and the guys in the Planning Department, you've done a wonderful job with everything you're doing and I think that you've got a handle on it. I'm kind of caught between both things here, I've got my craft, I've got my customers and I've got whether I want to be a hero or bad guy in the Town and I really feel that the sign at the Bank, I was proud when it went up but it's just something

that.. the Town voters are going to make the decision apparently. Unfortunately, too I'll say this, there are a lot of people that have come to me and they are interested in these types of signs. I don't know where these folks are. You folks set the schedule and you give them a platform where they can come and speak and then nobody shows up. The people that show up, they are the ones who voice their opinion, but I guess we'll see how it works out. Vadney – To be honest, I'm quite surprised tonight, I expected there would be a number of businesses clamoring for these signs and why they didn't show I don't know, it's certainly a public hearing well advertised. I actually had hoped to see more of them so we could get a somewhat more rounded, broader perspective. Paul Eldridge – I just came to make a brief statement that I support this ordinance, I think it's an aesthetic issue that we've been able to, what comes to mind is the aesthetics part of the ordinance, the Architectural Design Review and that is sort of an example of how we can help control the aesthetics in the Town in the Village and maintain the character and we're all here to maintain so I just wanted to speak in favor of the ordinance. Vadney – To be honest, I've always liked being a numbers cruncher myself, I've always liked the time and temperature ones, I'm sad to see them go although we do have a couple grandfathered but that is one of those odd things that most of them wouldn't have thought of that as a content, time and temperature, there's nothing particularly political or whatever with it, but in the strictest of definitions, that is a type of content so if you're willing to allow that, you have to allow all flashing and animated signs. Basically, those have to go and I consider that kind of a downer but that's the way the law was interpreted. Jeanie Forrester, resident of Meredith and Director of the Greater Meredith Program - I applaud the Planning Board on this effort and support it wholeheartedly. Our Board members are primarily small business owners and as Rusty mentioned earlier, we did have a Board meeting and everyone that was at that Board meeting supported this wholeheartedly so we are in favor of this and I don't believe that this will hurt small business by not being able to have flashy signs. One of the things that this gentleman said that concerns me as he said Meredith Village Savings Bank came to us and didn't want anything flashy so he did this nice little sign. What's to say the next person that comes along is not going to want this huge flashy sign? We don't want that in Meredith. Meredith is a beautiful community; we want to keep the community character that we have. Vadney – I would agree that the sign at Meredith Village Savings Bank is bigger and more noticeable than the other one, of course, that's what signs are for, not wildly obnoxious. If we never received

one any worse than that, there probably wouldn't be an egregious argument over this. The real problem is when I look around at some of the surrounding towns and I think all the Board members agree with this, you can see some that look like they didn't hire Mr. Paquette to say can you do us a nice tasteful sign that will have a little electronics so we don't have to go out in the cold, some of them I think said, can you give us the biggest, ugliest eye attracting thing that will make people mad but they won't forget us which is one of the goals of some advertising too. I will remind you of one thing if you're thinking of leaving, I wanted to remind you that it's wonderful you came to this meeting, it's more important that you come to the vote and vote your heart on Tuesday, July 31, 2007. Come to this building 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., cast your vote and bring your friends. Thank you very much. Bliss – I have two things. First of all, it's come up a lot about small businesses and as Planning Board members, we are here for the businesses, they are important, but we are also here for the residents and I think that sometimes kind of gets outweighed. I don't own a business but I am a resident and I don't want to see all those flashing signs so I think that needs to come into play. My other question is one that Jack Dever brought up, is this ordinance going to cover the use of the Temporary Signs? Vadney – This would prohibit as I would understand it all of these electronic signs so if somebody came in with a portable, temporary electronic sign, it would be null and void. Those are two different things that stand by themselves but they are both enforceable together. Is that right, John? Edgar – That would be my understanding. Vadney – On the comment of small business, actually we frequently get criticized for being too business friendly. We do try and strike a balance. One of the thoughts that I've actually had on this, these signs are getting cheaper but they are not free by any stretch of the imagination and to a degree, we have a bunch of small businesses in Town. We're not dealing with the chain stores, the large national chains. One of the things I was slightly afraid of here was that a few of these signs would go up and it would start a tit for tat type of escalation and it would force some of the small business owners who really can't afford such a sign to say if I'm going to stay in business now, I need to put \$14,000.00 out or whatever for a sign. I think it could be argued that this protects small businesses as much as it hurts them as long as we enforce this townwide, let us be known for something other than flashy signs. That's kind of the Board's position. Bayard – Just to expand a little bit on what Herb was saying. My economics background brings up a common problem and it is if somebody starts putting a flashy sign up or two, your sign becomes less noticeable so it's difficult not to put up

something that's perhaps not equally as flashy, some people would want to put something and more, others would have some incentive perhaps to put a sign in that's a little more flashy than they normally would. I think right now our signs in Town while they do tell you what the business is and where it's located and all are really not intrusive. I don't find many of the signs that just sort of stick in my craw so to speak, some I like better than others but in general, I think they are pretty good. I do think though that signs that are flashing are for safety reasons and you do kind of look at those and those are important because it's a safety issue, that's why its flashing and if you have flashing signs, you don't have to be a teenager to look at them so I do have to agree with those points. Kahn – I just wanted to sort of expound a little bit on the safety issue. It seems to me we've got sort of two kinds of highway issues, one is the kind that Dr. Hatch described and that is where you've got traffic moving from lane-to-lane and it's moving fast and it's very close in the center of the Town or its bumper to bumper in the center of town. The other highway issue you have is on the roads coming into the Town where on Route 104, for example, you have a number of billboards and it seems to me that there's sort of less of the safety issue there unless the sign is sufficiently attention grabbing to cause you to go across the centerline and then you've got your typical New Hampshire head-on collision, but the thing that concerns me more is in the Town itself, particularly in the summer, when you've got traffic crawling down the hill from 104 to the intersection with 25 and I've seen this happen, it happened to me in New York City on the west side highway, all the guy did was look away for a second and he went right into my rear-end. That can happen if there's any distraction whatsoever when you have bumper-to-bumper traffic coming down the hill on a Friday afternoon or going back up the hill on a Sunday afternoon. I was concerned about this when the real estate office went in, I was trying to get the guy to limit the number of signs he was going to put on the building because I was afraid the drivers would be trying to read his real estate offerings and they would be rear-ending each other. I think that's my view with respect to the signs in Town, you don't want distracting signs with the traffic issues that we have on Route 3, Route 25 or even on Main Street on a Saturday morning in the summer when traffic is backed up from the lights all the way down past Waukegan Street so that's the safety thing. I just wanted to get on one other thing and that is Mr. Paquette said that the Meredith Village Savings Bank asked him for an amber sign. Compared to some of the red signs that I've seen, I think the amber sign is actually a nicer sign. The problem is just like with the time and temperature; we will not have the right to say

OK you can have an electronic sign as long as it's amber. That's almost a content issue and I think that we either rule them out or we let them all go whatever color they are, however bright they are, I don't think we have a choice but I do think that the amber sign is not as glaring as the 6 red ones that went up in Moultonboro just in the last several months. Vadney – The signs in Town and I congratulate Mr. Paquette for a number of these signs, I've paid more attention to the signage than usual with this hearing coming up and this issue and there are some extremely handsome signs that I think seem to be doing the job. I've tried to envision if we do not go to a ban on these signs where it could go and one that particularly caught my eye a couple of days ago as I was sitting at the lights headed up to this building is when you pull up to the light and you look to the left, you see the old True's Clothing Store and it's now a Bootleggers or something like that and they have a sign which is a relatively nice looking sign that just spells out their name and the sign is probably is 15-20 feet long or something like that and I said to myself, what if they made that in red LED's so that's the kind of thing we're looking at. Touhey – I really would like to commend those folks from the community that took the time out today to come and speak with us. I did take a few minutes this afternoon to look at the Community Plan. I think that all of you perhaps had looked at the Community Plan earlier today and took quotes out of it. You certainly spoke for what is in our carefully planned Community Plan for the community of Meredith and this is what your Planning Board members are earnestly trying to protect and with the help of the citizenry of Meredith on the 31st of July we'll succeed. I think you've covered the base quite well. The other comment I wish to make and I'm certainly not going to speak as articulately as Mr. Hatch, I want to particularly commend him, he certainly articulated some very important positions. I am fortunate enough to have a boat on Lake Winnepesaukee and on occasion we'll come over into Meredith Bay and we'll also go over into Weirs Bay. You know Weirs Bay just by the skyline, just by the lights, the reflection of the lights. You come into Meredith Bay, it's still a quaint village and remember all those lights that are on land reflect on the water so the people who are out on Meredith Neck on Pinnacle Park Road and others looking across the Bay, any of these signs that are too extreme are reflected doubly in the water and in that same view that a boater gets in coming into Meredith. Vadney – I would like to point out that we do have some letters as Mr. McGowan had pointed out. One of the ladies, Kim Sperry, is here tonight and spoke to her issues, that was the first letter we got back on the last day of March. We also have a letter from the Crosspoint Company, Mr. Hueber, that is the

group that has purchased the old October Farm complex and they have spoken in this letter to supporting and saying they are interested in the Town because of the quaintness and they are willing to respect it and hope that we are successful. We have another letter from Tom Kokx who is the fellow who did our ridgeline assessment and viewpoint assessment some years ago and he spoke supporting us and relating it to his work as far as view sheds go. The number of verbal comments we've received, people on the street, we certainly don't record those, they have been numerous, I know I've had some relayed to me by Selectmen who had calls to them so that's the issue, I don't want to belabor that but those are on the record. You've heard it, the only point now is for the Board to take a vote. Worsman – I wanted to thank this Board for its real hard work, the Planning Department that helped to put this together and all of the Departments that work so hard to keep Meredith the community that it is, Greater Meredith Program, the Conservation Commission, those who worked on our Community Plan, there are a lot of people who work very hard to keep this community aesthetically pleasing, a pleasant place to live and a pleasant place to raise our children so I commend this Board and I thank every member of this Board who sits here bi-weekly working very hard to help this Town grow in a reasonably controlled, aesthetically pleasing manner so thank you to all of you. Vadney – The only thing left I think is to get the Board to decide if we should go forward, I would take a motion as to how you want to proceed at this point.

Bliss moved, Kahn seconded, MR. CHAIRMAN, I MOVE THAT WE CONTINUE WITH WHAT WE'VE STARTED AND SEND THIS TO TOWN MEETING ON JULY 31ST, 2007. Voted unanimously.

Vadney – The motion has carried, this will go forward to the Special Town Meeting on July 31st, 2007. Thank you all for coming. More importantly, please vote on July 31st.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Lee Harvey
Administrative Assistant

The minutes were reviewed and approved at a regular meeting of the Planning Board held on _____.

William Bayard, Secretary