

The state requires a town's Plan of Conservation and Development be updated every 10 years. New Milford's was last updated in 1997.

The Planning Commission didn't even start working on the update until less than two years ago. Because of the delay, state funding for some New Milford projects was in jeopardy. The town did get an extension, but the question, according to Gerard J. Monaghan, New Milford *First* community liaison, "is why the extension was necessary." Planning Commission minutes indicate Chairman Peter Eng delayed and stonewalled any effort to begin the update.

"This is unacceptable," Monaghan said. "The fact the commission delayed the update reveals a lack of interest, professionalism and, above all, planning." Monaghan, who has a master's degree in political science, specializing in state and local government, is seeking election to the Planning Commission. He served on the commission from 1995 through 2003, five of those years as chairman. He chaired the subcommittee that developed the 1997 update.

"In addition to the Planning Commission's foot dragging," Monaghan said, "it is reprehensible that the mayor did not take a leadership role in pushing the plan's update." While he acknowledges the mayor cannot force the issue, he said, "she is an ex-officio commission member and should have exerted the leadership to make the update happen."

With the economic downturn, the number of applications before the commission declined. "Rather than devoting extra time to working on the plan or reviewing the subdivision regulations," Monaghan said, "the commission canceled some of its meetings. That's the easy way out, but the commission should be *planning*." New Milford needs to have elected officials who want to do the work, and have the professional background to do it."

New Milford *First* was formed in 2005 to offer "an alternative to politics as usual," Monaghan said. In 2007, its mayoral candidate came in second and, overall, its candidates garnered approximately 40 percent of the vote."

For more information, visit www.NewMilfordFirst.org.