

Karen M. Cullen, AICP



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Summary of Qualifications

Highly motivated, creative planner with over 25 years of experience with a track record of successful projects incorporating multiple elements of planning. Demonstrated competence in analyzing problems, developing and simplifying procedures, and finding innovative solutions. Proven ability to write plans, bylaws, and regulations that are sensible and understandable to all stakeholders. Proficient at managing multiple complex projects and communicating effectively with all audiences in both written and verbal format. In addition to typical office software products, utilizes GIS to effectively communicate concepts and facts through mapping.

Selected Accomplishments

- ◆ Providing consulting services for the creation of Incentive Housing Zone overlay districts for several towns in Connecticut: Wallingford, Simsbury, Cornwall, Salisbury, Sharon, Goshen, Falls Village, Ellington, New London, and Portland (work is on-going for many of these). This includes town wide analysis for site selection, detailed analysis of potential IHZ sites including potential new housing unit counts as well as infrastructure needs, drafting of zoning regulations and design standards, creation of maps and data required for adoption process, and public presentations.
- ◆ Project manager for a neighborhood study under the Gateway Plus grants program for Leominster MA. Produced a report covering existing conditions and recommended actions to stabilize and improve a significant historic neighborhood adjacent to Downtown Leominster as well as the major retail center for the area.
- ◆ Prepared detailed parking analysis for the Bank Row area of downtown Greenfield MA to determine parking needs for redevelopment of several buildings as well as the feasibility of constructing a parking structure adjacent to the buildings.
- ◆ Wrote bylaws and regulations including a thorough rewrite of zoning bylaws and subdivision regulations (Spencer MA), new sections and amendments to the land management ordinance (Hilton Head Island SC), and many revisions to zoning, site plan, and subdivision regulations (NH towns).
- ◆ Prepared long range plans including the Broad Creek Management Plan (Hilton Head Island SC), master plans (NH towns), open space plans (NH towns, Hilton Head Island SC, and Spencer MA).
- ◆ Created educational materials including brochures, pamphlets, articles, maps, posters, interpretive signs, presentations, internet content, and user guides.
- ◆ Managed conversion of five individual offices into an integrated department, including financial management and budget preparation, development of a coordinated review process, modernization of data management techniques, and supervision of professional and administrative staff.
- ◆ Coordinated and directed staff and outside professional assistants in the successful implementation of emergency procedures pertaining to public health during a three day, widespread malfunction of the public water supply (Spencer MA).
- ◆ Recipient of Community Leadership Award from Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, June 2008, for efforts developing the first Town Planner position and service as the first Director of the Office of Development & Inspectional Services in the Town of Spencer.

Professional Experience

Senior Planner for Concord Square Planning & Development Inc. Manager for field office in Palmer MA for Boston based consulting firm. Responsibilities include marketing and project management for a wide variety of planning contracts for public and private clients. Emphasis on providing municipalities with planning services needed to supplement professional staff capabilities for specific projects or to provide services for day-to-day needs of planning and zoning boards for small communities that have no professional staff. Projects include assistance with revitalization and redevelopment efforts in town centers, master planning, zoning, and smart growth planning. April 2008 – Present

Director of Development & Inspectional Services/Town Planner for the Town of Spencer, MA. Responsibilities included all aspects of town planning in addition to heading up the department, which consists of the building and local inspectors and the four boards charged with various aspects of land development and their professional staff: planning, zoning, conservation, and health. As the first person to hold this position – and the first town planner – I led the town on many issues:

- ◆ *The conversion of five individual offices into an integrated department*, including financial management and budget preparation, assistance to boards, applicants, and town staff in a new coordinated review process, conversion of outmoded data management techniques to better utilize the computer resources available, and hiring professional and administrative staff.
- ◆ *A comprehensive update of the zoning bylaw*, including the addition of Open Space Residential Development, site plan review, and two new zoning districts (to address the unique circumstances of lakefront areas and the opportunities within the town center), reorganization of and updates to the use regulations, modifications to the density regulations, significant reformatting and rewording to enhance the comprehensibility of the bylaw, and the development of a new zoning map based on parcel boundaries. Significant public education efforts which resulted in adoption by Town Meeting on the first try included the production of a set of brochures on the major changes in the bylaw, local cable television appearances, and speaking engagements with various groups.
- ◆ *A complete update of the subdivision regulations*, including revised standards to encourage smart growth and low impact development, thorough procedural provisions from pre-application to public acceptance of infrastructure, and provisions for open space residential development.
- ◆ *Downtown revitalization*, including removal of a burned out structure in the heart of downtown and the subsequent purchase of that parcel and construction of a public parking lot, preparation of an application for CDBG funding for a planning study to determine the best ways for public monies to be spent to encourage private reinvestment in properties and for a housing rehabilitation program; assistance on several projects to rehabilitate and reuse existing public structures, and work on two town owned sites within the town center for affordable housing production.
- ◆ *Open space protection*, partnered with Mass. Audubon Society to secure grant funding for the purchase of conservation restrictions on 65 acres of open space bordering a town road and a pond, assistance to staff on scenic road issues, discussions with residents in the agriculture industry on open space and farmland preservation, assistance to staff on updating the open space plan, and research on zoning techniques to protect open space.
- ◆ *Affordable housing*, including education of town officials on affordable housing issues including MGL 40B and 40R/40S, coordinated a housing summit to open discussion on the issues facing the town on affordable housing, secured PDF funding and managed the grant for predevelopment planning on several town owned properties for affordable housing, and assisted a private developer to navigate the local application process for reuse of a school for low income elderly housing units.

- ♦ *Long range transportation issues*, including working to secure funding for several road projects and serving as a technical member of the Central Massachusetts Transportation Planning Committee (Vice-Chair in 2007/08).
- ♦ *Geographic information system*, including establishment of GIS, staff training, data collection, management of parcel digitization, coordination with other town departments, and map production.

In performing these duties, I spent a significant amount of time on public outreach. I also worked closely with Town Counsel on numerous issues, including several cases in litigation. In addition to my significant contributions in the regulatory arena, I positioned Spencer to continue to move into the 21st century in regard to many land use issues, including affordable housing and revitalization of the town center. March 2005 – May 2008

Senior Planner, Comprehensive Planning Division for the Town of Hilton Head Island, SC. Responsibilities included research, data collection and analysis, writing plans, preparing maps, preparing and giving presentations to a wide range of audiences, and public outreach and collaboration in neighborhood planning and environmental issues. Served as team leader for a variety of projects involving creating and implementing plans, drafting regulations, researching planning tools, and analyzing future land use and traffic impacts. Served as team member for variety of projects including recreational planning, redevelopment planning and disaster recovery planning. Led an interdisciplinary team to create a comprehensive plan for Broad Creek, a major tidal river which holds a vital position in the landscape of the island. Partnered with state and federal agencies to create maps of shellfish resources using remote sensing technologies. Created numerous public education products, including brochures, interpretive signs, posters, and internet content on local environmental issues. Gave presentations at international conferences on the Broad Creek Management Plan and the use of GIS and remote sensing technologies for coastal planning. October 1999 – March 2005

Senior Planner, Current Planning Division for the Town of Hilton Head Island, SC. Responsible for development review, including presentation of applications to Town boards. Prepared amendments to zoning and land development regulations. Participated in the implementation of permit tracking software, including the creation of a user manual and training of department staff. May 1998 – October 1999

Planning Director for the Town of Alton, NH. Responsibilities included all aspects of community planning. Prepared amendments to zoning and land development regulations, coordinated work on the comprehensive plan update and the capital improvements program, performed development review, assisted the public, managed the department budget, assisted in the hiring of several staff members, and supervised the department staff. February 1997 - August 1997

Planning Consultant for New Hampshire communities. Managed all aspects of town planning, from development review to long range planning. Advised applicants and Boards on applications, prepared amendments to land use and zoning regulations, created educational materials on planning processes, performed demographic analyses, prepared capital improvements programs, prepared open space and recreation plans, and wrote updates to a number of comprehensive plans. May 1989 - December 1996

Regional Planner/Consultant for Southwest Region Planning Commission, Keene, NH. Responsibilities included working with towns on master plans, capital improvement programs, and land use regulations. Produced a socioeconomic profile of the region's 35 towns, a labor market study for the Keene Labor Market Area, a report on emergency planning for towns within the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant emergency zone, and a regional housing study. November 1985 - April 1989

Planner/Information Specialist for Seminole County, FL. Responsibilities included the organization, maintenance, and statistical analysis of data relevant to growth and other planning concerns, participation in the community involvement phase of a Transportation Management Program, development review, and training staff in the use of computer hardware and software. January 1984 - October 1985

Education

Master of Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Project work: applying computer techniques (using a prototype geographic information system on a mainframe computer) in the preparation of a Water Resources Management Study for the Town of Andover, Massachusetts. This work was used by the Town in their decision making on protection techniques for the watershed, specifically regarding water quality of the public water supply. May 1983

Bachelor of Science in Plant and Soil Science, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. May 1981

Additional Courses:

Landscape Planning Short Course, University of Georgia, Athens, GA February 1999
Management Skills and Techniques for New Supervisors, AMA, Atlanta, GA August 2002
Stormwater BMP Academy, Clemson University, Charleston, SC October 2002
Remote Sensing For Spatial Analysts, NOAA Coastal Services Center, Charleston SC January 2003

Professional Affiliations

American Planning Association
American Institute of Certified Planners, Certificate Number 012036
APA Small Town and Rural Planning Division
Massachusetts Planning Association
Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors

Selected Publications & Presentations

Tips on Running a Small Planning Office – An Integrated Small Planning Office, The Spencer Experience. Mass. Association of Planning Directors Annual Conference, June 2008
Town of Spencer Zoning Bylaw and Subdivision Regulations, Nov. 2006 and April 2007
Broad Creek Management Plan – A Comprehensive Approach to Coastal Resource Planning. Pgs 76 – 80 in *Converging Currents: Science, Culture, and Policy at the Coast*. Proceedings of the 18th International Conference of the Coastal Society, Galveston TX; April 2002 (Co-author and presenter)
A Local Approach to Coastal Resource Planning: The Broad Creek Management Plan. Plenary Presentation at 6th International Conference on Shellfish Restoration, Charleston, SC; Nov. 2002 (Co-author/ presenter)
The Use of GIS in the Development of A Coastal Resources Management Plan. Proceedings of the 3rd Biennial Coastal GeoTools Conference, Charleston SC; January 2003 (Co-author)
Remote Sensing for Intertidal Oyster Reef Mapping and Change Detection in Coastal South Carolina. Proceedings of the 3rd Biennial Coastal GeoTools Conference, Charleston SC; January 2003 (Co-author)
Managing and Monitoring Intertidal Oyster Reefs with Remote Sensing in Coastal South Carolina. National Shellfisheries Association Annual Meeting. New Orleans, LA; April 2003 (Co-author)
The Use of Remote Sensing in Local Planning. Coastal Issue Workshop: Remote Sensing of Intertidal Shellfish Habitats, Georgetown, SC; June 2003 (Author and presenter)
A Local Approach to Coastal Watershed Planning: The Broad Creek Management Plan. Poster at the Coastal Zone '03 Conference, Baltimore MD; July 2003 (Author)
Broad Creek Management Plan Web Page (bcmp.org, site no longer online); July 2003
Implementation of the Broad Creek Management Plan – Local Government Can Make a Difference. Poster at the 19th International Conference of the Coastal Society, Newport, RI; May 2004 (Author /presenter)
South Carolina's Shellfish Mapping Project at the Local Level. Presentation at the 7th International Conference on Shellfish Restoration, Charleston, SC; November 2004 (Author and presenter)
Numerous public presentations at local Board meetings and hearings throughout career.