

REGION

Jaffrey looks toward the past to define the future

By GREG CANNON
Sentinel Staff

JAFFREY — It was billed as an opportunity to mull over Jaffrey's future, but there was just as much talk about the past.

About 40 residents devoted their Saturday morning to taking stock of their town and giving some thought to where it's headed. The name tags they wore seemed unnecessary, as neighbors and friends called out to each other or chatted over coffee and doughnuts. They were people who knew the town well, many long-time residents, a few of them Jaffrey born and bred.

Some people want to see more

participation at town meeting. Others say revitalizing downtown is a priority. And most agree the town should preserve open space and make more of Mount Monadnock's appeal.

All seemed to agree on one thing: the key to Jaffrey's future lies in strengthening the familiar things that have always defined this small town.

"There is no wrong opinion here and there is no bad idea," said Ron Despres, president of the Jaffrey Chamber of Commerce which, along with town selectmen, sponsored the brainstorming session.

Many of the same residents who gathered Saturday at the fire-

house went through a similar exercise in 1993. But after issuing some findings and recommendations, that effort faded. Town officials now want to know if there's enough interest to revive it.

The earlier effort did yield consensus on the qualities that make Jaffrey what it is. And those qualities — from traditional values to work ethic and quality of life — rang true again Saturday.

Residents were asked what it is about living in Jaffrey that they take most pride in. Residents said it's friendly, spirited and beautiful. There were a lot of answers, all

variations on a theme: Jaffrey is good place to live, with beautiful surroundings and good neighbors.

The task tackled at Saturday's gathering? How to enhance and protect those qualities. If the interest is there, they'll form task forces to look at specific issues and make recommendations to the town.

But it wasn't all complimentary. More than a few residents were concerned that downtown is a drag on Jaffrey. They say it needs an infusion of new businesses and that residents need to support the ones that are there.

At least one downtown mer-

chant agrees. "It would be nice to have more retail shops downtown," said Richard L. Costa from behind the counter of his antique book shop. He and his partner, David R. Smith, opened Davric Antiquarian Books on Main Street in February. They say Jaffrey is the right place for their business because they can draw on its historic charm. "The types of books we sell, we wanted to be in an older town," Costa said.

Carol Ogilvie, a senior planner with the Southwest Region Planning Commission, is encouraged by the effort Monadnock Region towns are putting into their downtowns. She pointed to Troy's efforts as a good example, and said

Greenfield, and other towns from each other similar efforts.

The big picture that and other people involved Stephenson Jaffrey. He the drop in ment at to meetings a "The whole participatio here today seems that interest of much publi ble."

REGION

A-3

The Sunday Sentinel
April 5, 1998

Jaffrey looks toward the past to define the future

s billed as an
ver Jaffrey's
just as much

nts devoted
ng to taking
and giving
it's headed.
ore seemed
ghors and
ach other or
doughnuts.
o knew the
t-time resi-
affrey born
to see more

participation at town meeting. Others say revitalizing downtown is a priority. And most agree the town should preserve open space and make more of Mount Monadnock's appeal.

All seemed to agree on one thing: the key to Jaffrey's future lies in strengthening the familiar things that have always defined this small town.

"There is no wrong opinion here and there is no bad idea," said Ron Despres, president of the Jaffrey Chamber of Commerce which, along with town selectmen, sponsored the brainstorming session.

Many of the same residents who gathered Saturday at the fire-

house went through a similar exercise in 1993. But after issuing some findings and recommendations, that effort faded. Town officials now want to know if there's enough interest to revive it.

The earlier effort did yield consensus on the qualities that make Jaffrey what it is. And those qualities — from traditional values to work ethic and quality of life — rang true again Saturday.

Residents were asked what it is about living in Jaffrey that they take most pride in. Residents said it's friendly, spirited and beautiful. There were a lot of answers, all

variations on a theme: Jaffrey is good place to live, with beautiful surroundings and good neighbors.

The task tackled at Saturday's gathering? How to enhance and protect those qualities. If the interest is there, they'll form task forces to look at specific issues and make recommendations to the town.

But it wasn't all complimentary. More than a few residents were concerned that downtown is a drag on Jaffrey. They say it needs an infusion of new businesses and that residents need to support the ones that are there.

At least one downtown mer-

chant agrees. "It would be nice to have more retail shops downtown," said Richard L. Costa from behind the counter of his antique book shop. He and his partner, David R. Smith, opened Davric Antiquarian Books on Main Street in February. They say Jaffrey is the right place for their business because they can draw on its historic charm. "The types of books we sell, we wanted to be in an older town," Costa said.

Carol Ogilvie, a senior planner with the Southwest Region Planning Commission, is encouraged by the effort Monadnock Region towns are putting into their downtowns. She pointed to Troy's efforts as a good example, and said

Greenfield, Harrisville, Hinsdale and other towns are all learning from each other as they undertake similar efforts.

The biggest key to achieving that and other goals is getting people involved, said Robert B. Stephenson, a 21-year resident of Jaffrey. He and others lamented the drop in community involvement at town meetings, school meetings and other civic events. "The whole issue is community participation, like what brings us here today," Stephenson said. "It seems that it would be in the best interest of the town to have as much public participation as possible."