



**Planning Board Meeting**  
Monday March 24, 2008, 7:00 p.m.  
City Council Chambers, City Hall, Claremont, NH

**Meeting Minutes**  
*Approved 5/12/08*

**Meeting Called to order by Chair Alan Grigsby at 7:01 pm.**

**I. Roll Call**

**Present:** Richard Wahrlich, Peter Guillette, Andy Austin, Alan Grigsby, Russell Fowler

**City Staff:** Jerry Coogan, Interim City Planner; Eric Giles, New City Planner for the City of Claremont; Allan Britton, Director of Planning & Development; Bruce Temple, Director of Public Works; Michelle Aiken, Boards and Commissions Coordinator

**Absent:** Lori Richardson, Erwin Caplan, Mayor Deborah Cutts, Paul LaCasse

Mr. Austin appointed to sit in for Mr. LaCasse

Mr. Coogan introduced Mr. Eric Giles as the new City Planner and Zoning Administrator for the City of Claremont.

Mr. Coogan advised that the book that has been handed out is called "Communities & Consequences, The unbalancing of New Hampshire's Human Ecology, & What We Can Do About It" by Peter Francese and Lorraine Stuart Merrill. This book is a good reference regarding the demographic imbalance that NH is experiencing and what communities are doing and not doing to encourage young families to locate in the state.

Mr. Coogan advised that there have been 6 educational workshops and the City believes there is a need for housing in this community and would like to have more education on the needs of Claremont. Mr. Coogan advised that the Master Plan Advisory Committee would like to work on the housing chapter for the Master Plan.

**II. Minutes of March 10, 2008 Public Meeting Minutes**

**Motion to:** Approve the March 10, 2008 meeting minutes as amended with minor grammar changes

**Made by:** Mr. Austin

**Second:** Mr. Guillette

**Vote:** Unanimous

**III. Workshop Presentation**

- **Guest Speaker Anne Duncan Cooley**, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Housing Coalition

Ms. Anne Duncan Cooley provided a presentation on housing and advised what a competitive problem housing is for employers in this area. Ms. Cooley advised that employers have told them that you need to have decent affordable housing for employees at all salary levels in order to effectively run your business. Now the market is changing and there are more homes in the higher income brackets for sale and builders are starting to look at how they can make money supplying the demand in the lower and moderate income level.

Ms. Cooley advised that moderate income housing is building something for under \$200,000 and this is difficult to build. Housing is affordable if it doesn't take more than 30% of a family's pre-tax income. We are now seeing high rates of families paying more than half, which puts a strain on family budgets. We also need smaller homes for empty nesters; NH has an aging population and need an option for downsizing. Seniors need a decent place to live, near services and bus routes.

Zoning is a key approach to encourage housing to fit needs, a lot of communities have large lot zoning which increases housing prices. Zoning needs to make it economically possible for a builder to build these homes. The housing coalition works with developers to help shape developments to fit the need. The permitting process that developers have to go

through can get expensive and time consuming which is adding to the cost of the housing. The housing coalition tries to work with the developers before they start the process to find out what they are trying to do and if it fits in the neighborhood. Developers have been very receptive to this kind of time saving assistance.

They have found that families are getting smaller and the fastest growing household is the single person. People are living alone longer before they get married, older people are living alone and with divorced people this category makes the single household a big component of the housing market. This is a part of the market that we have not been building towards. We need to be thinking about building energy efficient, smaller housing units, on public transportation. In town housing near jobs and shopping seems to be very attractive.

Ms. Cooley advised that in the Communities & Consequences books it talks about employers leaving areas where they cannot fill jobs and moving to areas where their employees can find housing. There is a video on the book and it will be aired on NHPT at 9pm on April 16<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Cooley answered questions on housing.

Mr. Bernie Folta asked why people are not rushing to Claremont when Claremont's housing has always been cheaper than the housing around us. Ms. Cooley advised that the housing market is very sick and she tells people that now is the time to get into a nice reasonably priced home. It appears that many people are taking a wait and see attitude and that is why you are not seeing people rushing to Claremont.

Mr. Austin asked how they handled parking in the areas with housing above the downtown area stores. Ms. Cooley advised that parking garages is one solution. But most people can walk to work which would reduce the need for the number of cars.

Chair Grigsby asked if the NH School Aid system hinder the type of housing you are talking about. We have to put a lot of money into our schools to educate the people who come from the subsidized housing, but we don't have the property tax base to do it. Especially when other communities have more resources should bear some of the burden. For Claremont to take on that burden he feels it is difficult and asked if she thought this issue is affecting housing. Ms. Cooley advised that not every work force housing unit has 3 or 4 kids in it. She knows of a property that has 170 units and there are fewer than 10 children in that complex. If you build workforce housing, you are increasing your tax base and it does not necessarily bring a lot of kids into the school system.

Ms. Caplan asked if her statistics show that Claremont has a need for medium income housing, because they have a lot of houses for sale. Ms. Cooley advised that there are a lot of people commuting to the Hanover Lebanon area because Claremont is such a nice area.

Mr. Croteau asked if she found that the increased gas prices has slowed down people working outside of the communities that they live in. Ms. Cooley said it is difficult to know the impact of the gas prices, but they hope that public transportation will help solve some of this problem. But with a lot of people there is no option but to pay the gas prices and people will cut out something else in their budget.

Mr. Croteau asked about the cost effectiveness of running a home. Ms. Cooley advised that they are putting on a seminar about energy consumption in the home and have found that 40% of a household's energy consumption is transportation. Location of housing and public transportation is a key element for affordability.

Mr. Austin advised that he spent some time in Concord with Senator Burling and they are doing some massive studies on commuter trains and freight trains to get trucks off the road and move things faster and cheaper because of the cost of fuel.

Ms. Christine Corey asked if Ms. Cooley found that the majority of people are looking to renovate or want newer style homes because Claremont has a lot of older homes. Ms. Cooley advised that her information most commonly comes from Realtors telling her that most people who move to the area are coming from areas where the housing stock is much newer and they are used to living in a condo or multi family and when they get to Claremont they cannot find that, and they are surprised to find older homes. There appears to be more interest in newer housing that is low maintenance and there is not as much of it in Claremont.

Mr. Folta asked where the people are coming from who are attracted to Claremont and why are they attracted here. Ms. Cooley advised that there are some good jobs and this is a pretty area. She does not have updated statistics on this

although she has been told there were a fair number of people from the mid west/west coast but she is not sure if that trend is consistent. People come to this area because of the quality of life and quality of jobs, 2 hours from Boston, great medical care; there are a lot of retirees here for those reasons. There is also a lot of recreation here, this is an interesting region. People find out a lot about the area from the internet and statistical research.

#### IV. Continuation

- **In Accordance with NHRSA 674:4 Master Plan Adoption and Amendment, the Planning Board will consider adoption of the two sections of the Master Plan; Vision Section and Land Use Chapter, including the Land Use Action Plan and Land Use Maps.**

Open public hearing

Chair Grigsby expressed his appreciation for the Master Plan Advisory Committee and the effort they put into this project. He would like the names of the Planning Board Members to go onto the Master Plan.

Ms. Christine Corey wanted to thank everyone who was part of helping develop the Master Plan. She also wanted to remind the board that the Citizens of Claremont had a lot of input and spent a lot of time creating these portions of the Master Plan. Ms. Corey would like to encourage the board to approve the Master Plan.

Chair Grigsby provided a list of typos and two factual errors (the use of town instead of city and that Claremont is adjacent to I-89) he found in the Master Plan and advised that he would give it to the Planning Office to have fixed. He also felt that the Library sections should be right after Parks & Recreation rather than listed separately from other departments after the analysis summary.

Mr. Scott Pope provided a presentation on how the Master Plan was started and how they arrived at this point. Mr. Croteau wanted to make note that other than having community involvement, he also wanted to mention that the meetings were all held at 7:30 in the morning and that would have allowed public involvement and there was a lot of input. He advised that he is new to this process and it was a lot more involved than he expected and also a lot more satisfying than he expected. It also showed that we are a democratic society and allowed every piece of input and he would be very proud to continue on with the other sections of the Master Plan.

Mr. Greg Stowell advised that if you did not get a chance to get to the public forum meetings, Mr. Charlie French of the UNH Cooperative Extension said that he was astonished at the amount of turnout and input that we had. The document isn't really the committees view; it is more of the community's views. During the forums we were impartial observers collecting data and he hopes that the board will consider this.

Mr. Steve Wood advised that he was selected to be on the committee he believes because he is on the Conservation Commission and you would notice that on the Future Land Use map there is a large chunk in the upper quadrant that will be designated as rural recreational. It makes a lot of sense and the maps and data he views as a first approach to what we have, where it is and where we might be headed. He hopes that someone looking at this map would not think that that area is the only place there will be rural recreation in the City; there are lots of existing areas. He hopes that the MPAC can continue and work on refining the data with further chapters.

Mr. Folta wanted to point out that the normal next piece of action in many communities is zoning and that happens through ordinance by City Council.

Chair Grigsby advised that in the last master plan had a section which looked at previous master plans and the preferences citizens had in them. He asked if the MPAC had considered doing a similar thing in this plan. Mr. Pope advised that they focused on what people wanted today and at times there were points brought up regarding the last Master Plan. He advised that the previous Master Plan contained some detailed sections in it and was a complete plan. The Land Use and Vision Section are more conceptual and the chapters to follow will have more of the detail. Subsequently it has been said that the Master Plan creates zoning has been said and that is not true, the Planning Board and the City Council create zoning.

Chair Grigsby advised that he read over all the comments from the survey and he wants to know how the views of the citizens of Claremont translate into Smart Growth philosophy. Mr. Coogan advised that some of the responses they

received showed a need for developing the downtown area, we should have infrastructure, we should preserve key open space areas, have infill development and that those are all Smart Growth planning concepts.

Chair Grigsby asked if the future land use map is an example of smart growth. Mr. Coogan advised that the future land use map does accommodate smart growth. Mr. Pope advised that it was brought up several times about smart growth is having neighborhood friendly areas and it was recognized that the only way you could buy groceries was to go out onto Washington Street and people would like to have neighborhood stores. Mr. Coogan made a note that the land use map has been changed officially 4 times and hopefully has included the comments that were provided.

Chair Grigsby advised that the land use suggests that most of the zones in Claremont would change. He wanted to discuss the potential of rezoning. Mr. Coogan advised that the zoning changes should be done incrementally which would then be sent to the City Council for approval. Mr. Pope advised that they tried to incorporate all the changes they heard in the land use map.

Chair Grigsby read from a Valley News article about the recent defeat of zoning changes there which had taken three years to draft. He said that he was concerned about some of the provisions in the Claremont Land Use section which might make zoning changes in Claremont difficult.

Chair Grigsby went through each proposed zone and voiced his concern with each one.

- In the Urban Mixed Use section he cited the possibility of the Not In My Back Yard attitude (NIMBY) occurring. He said that the most common abutter complaint before the Planning Board is about neighboring development and that one of the most difficult things for the board is to tell abutters that if zoning allows subdivision or another change, there is little the Planning Board can do to stop it. He listed several public hearings where this had happened. He said in this proposed downtown district several existing zones are to be combined. He asked if residents are ready to have the Moose hall on Broad Street become a McDonald's or a Walgreen's. Or would residents want a convenience store at the corner of South Street and Nelmar Heights?

- In the Highway Business district list of uses the small commercial/retail use was omitted and that the Washington Street area presently had many such businesses.

- In the Neighborhood Business district he expressed concern that Maple Avenue and the Charlestown Road were in it. He said that they were different in that the Charlestown Road development was greater. He wondered if it should be included in Highway Business. He pointed out that the list of uses omitted auto dealerships and that there were three of them along the Charlestown Road.

- In the Rural Residential area he thought that manufactured housing ought to be removed from the list of uses because it placed last at 13% in the Master Plan survey

- In the Urban Residential area he asked if hotels, restaurants, and convenience stores should be considered for the Bluff, Chestnut Street and North Street neighborhoods.

Chair Grigsby concluded by saying that resolving these considerations will be critical in making the zoning changes envisioned in the land use section.

Mr. Folta advised he is under the impression that the Master Plan is an underlying legal document for Zoning, if a zoning dispute goes to court the court will see if it is in tune with the Master Plan.

Chair Grigsby talked about the action plan and asked if the MPAC thought of suggesting impact fees for things such as subdivisions. Mr. Coogan advised that impact fees were not discussed, it is usually for fast developing communities where the public utilities are being stressed. He does not believe that the City of Claremont is ready for or needs that. Mr. Pope also advised that people such as Bruce Temple and City staff would decide on impact fees and that is ordinance and not Master Plan issues.

Chair Grigsby advised the previous master plan had a letter included in the master plan to the citizens and he has drafted one and would like input from everyone.

Mr. Folta wanted to share some thoughts he had on the letter and felt that some of the wording was a bit negative and maybe could be reworded in a more positive note. Mr. Pope advised that he feels that he has mentioned a few things in the letter that are out of the purview of the Planning Board and it appears that the chair of the Planning Board is distancing himself from the plan. Chair Grigsby advised that he just wanted to make it clear that the citizens of Claremont are not constrained by the document because there are up to 12 more sections of the plan to be written.

Ms. Corey advised that she has been fully involved in this process and it appears that there is a slant to this letter and it seems like it is being said that the plan does not need to be followed.

Mr. Guillette stated that the MPAC has done an outstanding job, along with the participation of the community which has been excellent. He feels that you cannot please everyone and he does believe that it reflects the needs of the community. He believes that the letter is a good idea but he wants it to be clear that the consultants used the information from the community to write the plan.

Mr. Fowler would like it to be known that he supports the document and would like to thank the committee for doing such a great job. Mr. Wahrlich wanted to bring up the letter received from the UNH Cooperative Extension, Charlie French where it was said that the City of Claremont has gone above and beyond with the respect to engaging the public in a Master Plan process.

Mr. Croteau wanted to point out that the other master plans had history. You should remember that the first public meeting we had the City Historian Colin Sanborn there to explain how we got to where we are today. Also we were given the task of getting from point A to point B. We are at a point where we have received a lot of input and we are not sure what this is going to build. He does not want the public to think that we are not going to use their input, we need a plan that is like molding clay that we can adapt but we need to move forward and do something with it. Chair Grigsby asked what the big rush is to gain approval immediately. Mr. Croteau advised that there is no rush although we do need to move forward.

Mr. Stowell stated he felt the same way the chair did in the beginning of meetings but during the meetings he was reassured that the future land use map was not a zoning map, it was just a vision and would need work. Chair Grigsby advised that he feels as we move forward there should be some sensitivity to the people it will affect.

A discussion was held by the board as to whether a vote should be taken this evening. Mr. Grigsby said that a bare quorum was present. The Mayor, Mr. Caplan, Ms. Richardson and Mr. LaCasse were absent and that Ms. Richardson and Mr. LaCasse had requested that they be able to discuss the Master Plan. Mr. Fowler said that if they were interested enough they would have arranged to be at this meeting. Mr. Grigsby said that Ms. Richardson and Mr. LaCasse had informed him they would be absent and both had good reasons for not being in attendance. Mr. Wahrlich said he wanted to vote on the plan this evening.

At this point Mayor Cutts arrived at the meeting from her home where she had been watching on television. Mayor Cutts advised that she is in full support of this document, the way it was done, the way it was developed and how it came to be. It is exactly how it should be. She has been advised by the City Solicitor that her seat on the Planning Board as mayor is not legal member of the Planning Board; they are working through the details.

Chair Grigsby and Mr. Fowler expressed surprise that she wasn't able to sit on the board because all the previous boards had the mayor as a member. Mayor Cutts advised she is speaking to her tenure only and not previous mayors. She wants to let everyone know that she fully supports the Master Plan.

Mr. Pope hopes that this letter is looked at closer to reflect the full board and the citizens of Claremont. Mr. Pope advised that he would like the Master Plan and the community input respected and do not rewrite the master plan in your own terms.

Mr. Bruce Temple advised that in December of 2006 he took over the job of Interim Planning and Development Director and he expressed to Jerry Coogan that he wanted to see measurable results with the Master Plan, in the past it seemed that it just could not get started, whether it was money, members, etc. The other thing he wanted was to have educational workshops for the Boards. His goal was to make sure the Master Plan was an open process; he was constantly making sure everyone possible was made aware of the need for public input; we provided food, babysitting, etc. He also wanted to make sure that the information we were getting was accurate and to be sure they contacted UNH Cooperative Extension to make sure the results were accurate. He was constantly after staff to make sure that this process was correct. We received a quote from Appledore and UVLSRPC and decided to make them work together especially since we pay to be a member of the UVLSRPC. We paid for these people to come down and do this work. The Master Plan will be like any public document that can be changed at any time, you can reorganize the MPAC, you can choose to complete other chapters, use the Conservation Commission to work on the Natural Resources section, etc. He would encourage this be adopted either tonight or when they decide it is ready. He suggests that the board picks chapters that will get a measurable result.

Closed Public Hearing

Mr. Guillette advised that this is a great process and he does not feel rushed and he would encourage the board to move on this plan this evening. He does not think that nitpicking on this plan is a good idea and he feels that this will help in moving this plan forward.

Chair Grigsby asked if they wanted to change any of the wording. Mr. Guillette felt that it did not need to be changed since it was general wording that will be worked on by the Council.

Consensus that the cover letter will be addressed at the next meeting. Mr. Wahrlich would like to choose the next chapters at the next meeting to keep the Master Plan committee working.

**Motion to:** adopt the Master Plan and have the Master Plan Committee continue with the other sections

**Made by:** Mr. Wahrlich                      **Second:** Mr. Fowler                      **Vote:** Unanimous

Chair Grigsby wanted to express his appreciation to Rusty Fowler for his long service to the City of Claremont as this will be his last meeting. A new member from the Planning Board needs to be appointed to the Conservation Commission since Mr. Fowler will be leaving. There were no volunteers for the position at this time.

**V. Correspondence**

- Planergy – See [page 3](#) and [page 6](#)
- Notice of Decision for Doolittle’s PrintServe

**VI. Adjournment**

**Motion to:** Adjourn

**Made by:** Mr. Fowler                      **Second:** Mr. Guillette                      **Vote:** Unanimous

**Meeting Adjourned at:** 9:38 pm

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Michelle Aiken**  
**Boards and Commissions Coordinator**