



**Planning Board Meeting**  
Monday October 23, 2006, 7:00 p.m.  
City Council Chambers, City Hall, Claremont, NH

**Meeting Minutes**

**Meeting Called to order by Chair Anita Engel at 7:00 pm**

**Roll Call**

**Present:** Fred Kuriger, Mayor Scott Pope, Ralph Swift, Anita Engel, Russell Fowler, Peter Guillette,, Richard Warhlich

**City Staff:** Gerald Coogan, City Planner, Michelle Aiken, Boards and Commissions Coordinator

**Absent:** Alan Grigsby, Lori Richardson, Erwin Caplan, Chhouen Prach

**Guests:** Charles French, Community Economic development Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension

**I. Minutes of October 9, 2006 Meeting**

**Motion to:** Minutes of October 9, 2006 Meeting approved

**Made by:** Mr. Swift **Second:** Mr. Kuriger **Vote:** Unanimous

**II. New Business**

Mr. Coogan advised that Charles French is here to talk about public participation for the Masterplan Update. Mr. French has worked with Master Plans in many communities and is here to discuss the public participation process, the type and number of meetings, when the survey should be undertaken and how we should proceed.

Charlie French advised he is a Community Economic Development Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension. He provides outreach to communities in community planning and a portion of his time is spent teaching at UNH. Mr. French has worked with a number of communities in NH who are working on updates of their Master Plan. Mr. French provides technical assistance and training programs in a number of areas. What is of most interest to the Planning Board is his work in engaging the public in the planning and decision making processes.

There are many ways to collect information for the Master Plan --- focus groups, small groups for feedback, larger meetings. The information is useful to frame some of the larger issues. A Community wide survey is helpful to get feedback on priorities. Surveys are statistically valid and good indicators upon which policies might be formulated. A technique that works best is a public forum. There are various ways to design the forums. In Claremont, he can work with the advisory committee to help shape the process.

A "Community Profile" is a visioning process for communities, during which community leaders and interested residents come together for a one or two day event or meeting. The community will discuss where it has been and some of the issues it now faces. The process usually ends up

with 3, 4 or 5 citizen committees working to address particular issues. This is a very involved technique and it takes about 6 months of planning to get to that point. Mr. French has been working with a lot of communities on their Master Plans and many have been using the community profiles process. Some communities feel this is a great process; the outcome is not only for the Master Plan, but there are beneficial effects such as civic engagement.

The process needs to be fine tuned to one that is targeted toward the Master Plan. Typically there are 1 or 2 forums with the 1<sup>st</sup> forum being general in nature and getting into the vision for the community. The 2<sup>nd</sup> forum is focuses on community facilities, infrastructure or their capital improvements plans, depending on what items need to be addressed. Following the forum, Mr. French stated he works with communities in order to achieve their vision through the Master Plan document. This is a process that the Advisory Committee needs to articulate and the facilitator will not draft it for Planning Board, as this is Claremont's document public and Planning Board input is needed.

Mr. Kuriger inquired as to what the Board should be doing before getting into a public forum. Mr. French advised that the Board should review existing planning documents, such as the existing Master Plan and other documents such as the economic development chapter. A review of information from the previous Masterplan will serve as a starting point. The survey should be initiated after the forum as information will assist with a strategy and prioritize information.

Chair Engel inquired if the survey is broad based. Mr. French advised that the survey is a useful tool, although it has to go out to the entire community for a valid response rate. A valid response is at least a 20% response rate. There are ways to get the survey out to the public such as a mail survey, a door to door campaign, etc.

Mr. Swift asked what technique is used for the forums to get a good cross section of the community. Mr. French stated that is always a challenge. The Master Plan is sometimes viewed by the public as a dry process that has no bearing on them. The first priority is to make it known to the public that the Master Plan is an important document and it is important in shaping the growth and development of the community for the future. Use as much media as you can to broadcast the forums. That alone does not guarantee a good turnout. Serving food at an event always attracts people. With a forum, 1 to 2% of the population would be positive. Another way would be to schedule a prominent and well-known key note speaker, whose presentation would impact the Master Plan.

Mr. Guillette asked what other techniques have been used for collecting public input. Mr. French advised that focus groups have worked best in communities who lacked the resources, time or funding for a larger forum. This technique good for identifying information but only a small percentage of the community is involved and it does not assist with prioritizing. Another way is a Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC), which is helpful if you form a committee of different stake holders with interests in the Master Plan, such as the conservation commission, business interest, schools, et cetera. The MPAC will bring issues from the forums to the Planning Board.

Mayor Pope advised that the City is working on establishing a Master Plan Advisory Committee and is waiting on acceptance from members. The MPAC members that have been chosen will be given a copy of tonight's tape and will be invited to the next Planning Board meeting on the November 13<sup>th</sup>. Mr. French advised that he has drafted a typical time line and sequence of

events, as advisory guidance. Once the MPAC is formalized, they will conduct a series of focus groups to frame public input forums, so that important will be identified. At the public input forum, an appropriate key note speaker can be invited. The public input forum is helpful to articulate a vision and a strategy. A survey is useful for prioritizing visions and what is most important to the community at large.

Mr. Swift asked what Mr. French's role is. Mr. French advised that his role is to work with the committee, to provide public input techniques or instruments and assistance with the focus groups and / or the public forum. He can serve as the large group facilitator; the community will want someone who is perceived as neutral. He would also provide training. You will likely want to break into small groups to discuss particular topics and local facilitators will be needed. He could also arrange for some of his colleagues to give presentations or seminars prior to the event.

Ms. Pope asked who compiles the questions for the survey. Mr. French advised that the information received from the forum provides input for the survey. Mr. Folta stated that there are two sections required in the Master Plan --- the Land Use Chapter and the Vision Chapter. Master Plans usually consist of several chapters, such as transportation, housing, economic development, etc. At some point, local demographic characteristics should be assembled.

Mr. French advised that whatever body the City decides to work with to create Master Plan, there should be a strategy of how the plan will be used and how it will be effective. The question about how to engage different age groups in the community requires marketing. The City needs to make sure that the word gets out to everyone! A lot of the success depends on the date, time and location of the meeting so that conflicts can be minimized.

Chair Engel advised that the City has policies recommending how the City will grow.

Mr. Swift stated the existing Master Plan can provide the basis for a major discussion of the future Master Plan. Mr. French advised the City has a fine document in the Master Plan and has portions that are relevant today.

Chair Engel advised CCTV is an excellent tool to distribute information.

Ms. Pope asked in Mr. French's opinion if a change in a local land use regulation is proposed, should the Master Plan be in place first. Ideally, the Master Plan should be completed first and subsequent changes in local regulations should be based on it.

Mr. Folta inquired of the role of the committee and the if community wide participation is preferred. Mr. French advised that the advisory committee is to frame the forum. Mr. French advised he is here to provide a process to collect public input on how Claremont wants to grow.

Mr. Swift advised that the Master Plan is a long range planning document and all other planning activity should not come to a halt since the Board is working on the Master Plan. Mr. French advised that he did not mean that the City and the Planning Board should stop all work. All available and relevant information has to be taken into account when City revises its Master Plan.

Mr. Wood asked if there was a particular ideal time frame to actively update the Master Plan. Mr. French advised revisiting the Plan every five years so the City can stay focused on the implementation aspect.

Mr. Coogan advised that the state statute requires that the Master Plan be updated every 5 to 10 years. Back in 1991, the world did not have internet along with many other things; it was significantly different in 1991. Mr. Coogan advised that the City needs a planning consultant and should budget an appropriate amount of funds for said services. The City should budget for assistance with preparation of the land use chapter, vision chapter, transportation, housing, et cetera. The impact on the budget could be spread out over a period of a year or two.

Mr. Fowler advised that the Planning Board needs a consultant because, with on-going work, the Master Plan will be pushed back. Ms. Pope inquired about the approval process. Mr. Coogan advised that the Board can approve Chapters as they are completed. The Planning Board has the responsibility for approving the Master Plan. The Master Plan is purely advisory and does not have legal status. The Master Plan Advisory committee (MPAC) will attend the November 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Mayor Pope advised that last budget year the City includes \$5000 for the Master Plan and he wanted to know if they have any money left. Mr. Coogan advised that the City has not spent much at present. Mayor Pope advised that he will request additional funding at the next Budget meeting.

Mr. Swift asked what precipitated the letter from L&R Machine. Mr. Coogan advised that a Planning Board member advised that the LaValley's business has a sign for an additional business at the location. When he receives such information, he follows up on the issue. After looking into the matter further, Mr. Coogan determined that the matter does not require further review since it is such a small impact.

### **III. Adjournment**

**Motion to:** Adjourn

**Made by:** Mr. Swift    **Second:** Mr. Kuriger    **Vote:** Unanimous

**Meeting Adjourned at:**        7:57 pm

**Respectfully Submitted,**

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