



Planning Board Meeting
Monday, December 22, 2008
Council Chambers, City Hall at 7:00 pm

Meeting Minutes
Approved 1/12/09

Meeting Called to order by Planning Board Chair Alan Grigsby at 7:00 pm

I. Roll Call

Present: Deborah Cutts, Paul LaCasse, Alan Grigsby, Brian Rapp, Adam Burke

Absent: Richard Wahrlich, Peter Guillette, Lori Richardson, Erwin Caplan

City Staff: Peter Dzewaltowski, City Planner; Michelle Aiken, Boards & Commissions Coordinator

II. Master Plan & Department Updates

Chair Grigsby discussed the December 4th Master Plan Advisory Committee meeting, which was the first meeting since the subcommittees were created. The four sub-committees are Transportation, Housing, Economic Development & Historic Resources and Community Design. This meeting was to see how the groups were progressing. Chair Grigsby advised that there was discussion regarding communications between the groups and how important it is for all the groups to know what the other groups are doing and how they are progressing. Chair Grigsby is on the transportation committee and he discussed how they are interested in doing a survey. They are also discussing a Master Plan implementation committee and they feel it would be a shame to do all this work and then nothing be done for another 10 years. A concept was that it would be an arm of the City Council, another one was an arm of the Planning Board, and there are things about traffic and transportation that would be in the City Council's purview that is why he felt they should be involved.

Mr. Peter Dzewaltowski explained that he met with the Historic Resources & Community Design subcommittee. They were initially concerned because they did not have a staff member helping them with their direction. Staff are now assisting each of the sub-committees. During the MPAC meeting there was concern related to the request to complete design guidelines. Their impression early on was to develop detailed information on the historic resources of the City and describe how development should occur in the community, this was challenging due to the scope, the amount of resources and their expertise. Also, design guidelines are politically challenging to implement. It does make sense for design guidelines to be a part of the plan, but we need to shape how that will occur. We need to talk about what the real threats are to the design of our city. What are the challenges and what impact do they have on historic resources, also what can be done to mitigate these threats. Recommendations for next steps can then be explored by the City. This may be done by a sub-committee comprised of the Historic District Commission, the Planning Board, someone from the City Council and other groups to take the first steps in developing guidelines. There is nothing in the Master Plan that suggests they should create design guidelines, if such a Master Plan policy were created it would provide a strong basis for investigating those types of provisions. There is one member of the committee who is very interested in design guidelines and has advised that he will explore it in a broad and methodical way. Identifying what the threats are, where the city is going and what can be done to help address the concerns that exist now.

Mayor Cutts she is glad that the Historic District signs were brought up in that meeting because the Historic District Commission has discussed this many times. They have also looked into banners and she knows the chamber has been talking about doing this.

Chair Grigsby stated that he is impressed with the amount of people who have been involved and have stayed involved. He also believes this will help to keep the end product alive.

III. Review of Minutes

- Monday, November 24, 2008 public meeting minutes

Motion to: Approve the November 24, 2008 meeting minutes.

Made by: Mr. Burke

Second by: Mr. Rapp

Vote: Unanimous

Chair Grigsby advised that at the next meeting January they will elect a new chairman and the new chairman will appoint members for other boards.

IV. Correspondence

- **Meeting Dates for 2009**
- **Notice of Decision:** Claremont Fiber, LLC, 98 Plains Road, Claremont, NH 03743
- **Notice of Decision:** Green Acres Trust, Foisy Hill Road, Claremont, NH 03743

V. Reports from Boards and Commissions

Mr. Burke advised that the Conservation Commission has been discussing the forestry management plan and they have also reviewed some culvert work that is going on in the City.

VI. Other

Mr. Folta advised he is part of the Master Plan Advisory Committee. He mentioned that the Historic Resources sub-committee has shifted to be primarily Historic Resources and design guidelines seems to be a small emphasis. As for street signs, the Department of Public Works is in the process of replacing signs and he would suggest speaking with Bruce Temple, director of the Department of Public Works. He stated that it is his impression that the former City Planner Eric Giles had a very strong interest in community design and it could be that may have changed since he is not here and the sub committee may not have that same interest. Threats to historical character has already happened in Claremont. He was advised that the contemporary atrium on City Hall is a threat to the historical character. He has also been approached regarding a zoning issue, a historic structure could have a fire, the building could collapse, etc and zoning does not allow this structure to be rebuilt. He believes this requirement is too stringent and he and others in the community feel that the City needs to rethink this. One of the groups is the Economic Development group is writing the chapter with staff assistance. He thinks citizen involvement is a good thing, but he understands that the City Manager was hired to improve Economic Development; he says that it takes 3 things, good schools, a skilled workforce and work force housing. It would seem to me that there is already an existing vision from the current staff and he hopes that there will be meshing with the current members of the Master Plan Advisory Committee. The first two chapters done last year were required by state law, Land Use and Visioning and it was his impression that there was not enough internalization of what the outsiders produced. He feels that this time there is much more participation and it will be much better.

Chair Grigsby advised the Zoning board has a big responsibility on granting variances and it is hard to balance the needs of the applicants and the citizen, it can be tricky.

Discussion regarding the comment on rebuilding a property that was non-conforming and property owners being confronted with zoning problems. Mr. Dzewaltowski advised that the Zoning requires a variance which is a safety valve for property owners. Where there is a building that is non-complying the Zoning Board is able to look at the structure when something is not specifically allowed in that zone and complete a review process. There are many nonconforming lots within the city and that makes it challenging to meet current zoning requirements. Property owners can seek relief from the Zoning Board.

VII. Adjournment

Motion to: Adjourn

Made by: Mr. Rapp

Second: Mr. Burke

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting Adjourned at: 7:45 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Aiken

Boards & Commissions Coordinator