



Business Corridor Project Steering Committee

Tuesday, October 22, 2013 at 5:00 p.m.

The Visitor's Center

14 North Street

Claremont, NH

MINUTES

APPROVED 1/7/2014

• **Roll Call**

Present: Thomas Rock, David Putnam, James Feleen, Martin Davis, Russell Fowler

Absent: Victor Bergeron, William Greenrose

City Staff: Nancy Merrill, Mike McCrory

• **Introductions**

- Meeting began at 5:07 pm.
- Review of Minutes
- Mr. Feleen stated that he would have to leave early and would like to be added as the first item on the agenda to discuss the rail trails and their presence on Washington Street.

Motion: to accept the agenda and add Mr. Feleen as first item of new business

Made by: Martin Davis

Second: Thomas Rock

Vote: Unanimous

Motion: to accept the minutes

Made by: Martin Davis

Second: Thomas Rock

Vote: Unanimous

- Nancy Merrill stated that the first report was due and requested that the hours worked on the project be turned in.

• **Old Business**

• **B-2 uses and review of zones**

- Members received packets that included charts that showed B2 uses showing what is permitted and exceptions.
- They identify different parts, what they have in common and how they are different for use in making recommendations, supporting current B2 and restructuring.
- The charts test how they mesh with different zones with no intent to create new zones, maybe re-designate certain areas.
- B2 mixed use is really limited. Dave Putnam stated that it was important to review the definition from the city center project. Mike thinks mixed use as separate building uses, office retail, and commercial recreational could co-exist in the same buildings. In the past they've separated but some uses can coexist, such as multi-family/retail, hotel/motel.

- The supplemental grant applied for is to do scenario planning; map 20 years. This is a preliminary discussion of what committee would like to see in the future. Dave Putnam stated that the committee could influence how these areas develop.
- Mike stated that the structure of Claremont has been reactionary and prescriptive. The City Center Project has a more aspirational vision and is not a rule book but more like a cookbook of opportunities to help set and refine a vision for a supplemental grant.
- Designated B2 zones are Charlestown Road, Washington Street, Depot Junction, Maple Avenue, Lower Main St., Upper Main Street by Tractor Supply.
- Discussion ensued on the future of residential properties on Washington Street. Will it still be relevant in the future to maintain single family/duplex properties on Washington Street. Martin Davis suggested that long term it was not the best use of those properties in that zone.
- The subject of the property behind Hannaford was mentioned as being just outside the B2 zone and that you have to go through B2 to access it. That was considered not part of the focus now. Thinking to the future 20 years Rusty Fowler said that he would like to see residential housing with a mini-mart. B2 businesses impact the quality of life in a residential area. Nancy Merrill used the example of a single family neighborhood with a neighborhood grocery store appealing, describing it as mixed use.
- In regards to the Moody Avenue Development, Martin Davis said that it would be next to impossible to make that area all B2 with no residential. Should B2 not include Moody Avenue? Davis asks if in 20 years it should be commercial.
- Nancy Merrill asked if they envisioned a B2 zone in that Moody Avenue area. Residential within and outside the B2 is perhaps an opportunity for mixed use. Do they want residential on Washington Street?
- Rusty Fowler noted that there is a big difference between manufactured homes and mobile homes which are on a chassis and can be moved. Manufactured are modular, more stick built.
- There was no definitive answer arrived at this meeting. It was suggested that there be no residential in B2 zone on Washington Street or no expansion of residential except perhaps with an exception with a zoning board review process.
Mr. Feleen commented that he felt that residential didn't fit along what is a corridor now. However the entire area does not have to be zoned B2. The Dane Avenue area and riverside areas could be treated differently.
- Martin Davis suggested that they step back and think about incorporating residential / retail / mixed, considering if they wanted the corridor to be a retail area, more efficient.
- Mr. Feleen said that he hated to create a permanent commercial strip. If there were a spot where sprawl was emphasized it could maintain a presence of community.
- Nancy Merrill suggested you could allow single or multi-family use in B2 area with special use permits and review the criteria.
- Unlike 12A in West Lebanon Claremont grew but was surrounded by residential. Claremont hasn't divorced residential from commercial. They haven't prohibited it.
- Thomas Rock said that it makes sense to keep it like it is.
- Merrill noted that people like to be able to walk to the businesses.
- Types of businesses were defined and how they fit into the area. Considerations looked at included lot size needed and amount of traffic it would generate.
- Nancy suggested that they define retail so that the city solicitor would not exclude them if they are not listed.

- The Chapter 22-Zoning chart was reviewed with suggestions of reconsidering what is retail and what is a service business.
It was suggested that perhaps the chart be restructured. For example, antique and second hand shops and building supply could fall under retail category; Service would include carpenter, cabinet, upholstery, sheet metal plumbing, heating, and sign paint shops. Nancy suggested that fuel storage could be considered industrial zone.
- Traffic consideration and site plan should be addressed noting that Dunkin Donuts needs a bigger lot than it has.
- It was also noted that businesses such as carpenter, cabinet sign painting, florist, cabinet builders, sewing machine repairs, etc. need to be encouraged.
- Mike suggested that perhaps they have performance criteria for different scales of services. Definition of scale would include noise level, traffic generated, scale of the development, size of the building. A tractor supply store would be different from a Dollar General, for instance.
- Washington Street, B2 is designed to deal with larger businesses such as Ford Sales, which is considered service/repair business.
- Mike noted that it became more cumbersome when they had more categories and tried to be too specific. He wondered if they should look more toward concepts such as lot sizes, display, parse into large scale, moderate scale. Large scale criteria might exclude big box store or auto sale. However he suggested that it shouldn't cause them hardship. Impact of usage, traffic congestion, volume should be considered. He noted that some communities prohibit gas stations, not wanting that kind of sales and service in town.
- Mr. Rock commented on South Willow Street in Manchester. If we don't allow all of these businesses on Washington Street, where would we put them?
- Nancy Merrill recommended one distinction: large scale fuel farm could be in the future and that they should reside in the industrial zone, not B2 zone. Large scale versus small scale should be taken into consideration. A small propane tank fuel up business would be acceptable.
- When the question of limited traffic count arose it was noted we have Home Depot, a significant investment to Claremont, because of the traffic count. A four story hotel/convention center would generate traffic.
- Talk ensued about lot size with a suggestion being that the buildings not take up more than 30% of the lot size.
- The highest traffic generators get businesses to the other businesses / places.
- It was suggested to evaluate the uses on the chart. Is this the flavor of the types of uses that we want to see.
- Bernie Folta, member from the public, noted that buying patterns will be changing in the future with more online sales stating that he had ordered something online and picked it up at the store. However, he still had to go to the store to pick it up. He suggested they look to the future to see how people's shopping habits will change noting that people will still have to physically go to Market Basket.
- Mr. Feleen said that a list should emerge from what's there. He'd like an inclusive, generic description subject to site plan issues.
- It was noted that the City Center Project zoning definitions made the permit process easier. Do we want new definitions and process and a performance based code?
- There could be a negotiation process for the developer who negotiates with the planning board.
- Nancy Merrill suggested that we step back and redefine the use chart noting that performance matters. Charlestown Road and Maple Avenue can't handle the volume. She suggested leaving Washington Street as an "all in" unless it appears to not fit with site plan issues. Specific use permitting makes sense in other B2 areas.
- Performance criteria vs. use but would need some use guidance. Zoning ordinance will allow or disallow certain uses. Mike noted that this is the list of allowed uses suggesting that we look at what

opportunities we want to provide. For example, if a CVS wanted to move to a historic district area could they use a historic façade. Also noted was that Washington Street is more form based, leans toward B2 more a free for all with fast food restaurants. Charlestown Road is more concerned about how it looks and feels and interacts with the neighborhood. Rockingham Electric and Bernie's were noted as good examples of what businesses should look like on Washington St. If someone purchases Reeds that look will be updated. The planning board will have control over how it will look, taking into account the rail trail.

- Taking all of these considerations, Mike McCory will rework the chart to be more specific about uses.
- Nancy Merrill suggests having a chart for all of these other B2s. Are there any other distinctions or does the city see as the same.
- Mike will have packet for other B2s and come back with suggestions.

- **Rail Trail:**

- Jim Feleen led a discussion and presented a map of the rail trail that influences Washington Street and Monadnock Park. The trail starts at Scott Reed's business and runs 33 feet wide from the center of the tracks toward the river. Width is 65 feet wide. Washington Street has encroached on it. Some of the railroad trestles are still there. The city owns 33 feet south of the center line. This is a golden opportunity to have a true green space, using the full width with benches and recreational spaces down the middle of the commercial corridor. The area in front of Market Basket where the trees are could be paved with benches creating a nice green space, not dusty and dirty. It was noted that that area is a regular snowmobile crossing area. ATV use is an open question. Out of state vehicles hauling trailers with ATVs can be seen parked behind Burger King.
- The rail trail offers the opportunity for walking and biking amenities. The city owns this area and the Conservation Commission has the authority to maintain it.
- The Washington Street Corridor Management Study made this project possible.
- Rusty noted that there is no visible trail behind Home Depot and that perhaps it was just not maintained. Home Depot had said that they would have a maintenance crew maintain the front of the property but that hasn't happened.
- Looking for master plan with recommendations from Conservation Commission. Will look to Conservation public forum on November 21.

- **New Business**

- **Supplemental Grant**

Scenario planning can predict what would happen if a road was built, showing the impact to the surrounding areas. Because of deadlines the grant was submitted but still has to go to the city council.

- **Motion:** To write a letter of support to the city council recommending we support NH Housing Finance Authority for supplemental planning grant for scenario planning.
- **Made by:** Tom Rock **Second:** Rusty Fowler **Vote:** Unanimous
- Mike is looking for support if the grant is awarded in November. He is asking for sub-committee support to build a model. Claremont has robust geographical database already and would like to assemble it for the next meeting. He's looking for volunteers to meet before the next meeting. Meeting will be set with the GIS staff after second meeting in November. Subcommittee will have to post as a public meeting. Dave Putnam asked that he email description to the committee members.

- **Storm water management**

- Booklet was handed out to the members in their packets and is also available online.
- Discussion ensued about controlling water and retaining, keeping it as clean as possible, rather than letting it run off to the lakes and rivers.

- Currently there are no standards. Committee looks to develop expectation by scale development. Suggestion was to have graduated standards based on size.
- It was noted that the DPW repairs and reconstructs sub service drainage issues from 80-100 year old sewer and storm pipes. Bursting pipe from the water pressure coming down Bible Hill was an example.
- Storm Water Management affects how we redevelop, how to mitigate the problem with development. Charlestown Road would be different from Washington Street. Washington Street could use pipes. However, Charlestown Road might use a basin or a retention pond for drainage issues. Over time retention ponds can fill up with debris and sediment, rendering them useless.
- Pre-development storm water flow and post development water flow should match with no net increase in water flow and it could be an opportunity to reduce the water flow.
- Water draining off into the Sugar River from Washington Street was discussed noting that it's not treated, hits the pipes with chemical compounds, grit, garbage and salt and goes straight to the river. We need to know the effects, the remedies, and the implications it has on the river. Ex. Trout die off or move on.
- Mike said that there is no storm water management in the state of NH anywhere.
- It was suggested that committee focus now on B2.
- Marty stated that the planning board could use info from Storm Water Management.
- Mike stated that the BCP could recommend city wide for others in the city to use.
- Dave Putnam stated that we don't have Storm Water Management now but what are the expectations for providing it so that it doesn't have negative impact on water quality. It was suggested that the committee grow some standards and recommend guidelines to the planning board. Guidelines could influence safe water conditions and water quality without making it overbearing.
- If such guidelines had been in place Storm Water Management would have looking at the parking lot on Pleasant/Summer. Areas discussed were Stevens High School redevelopment, Jiffy Mart, Mobile. Pot holes happen when water sits on top.

- **Adjourn**

With Mr. Feleen's absence after the grant vote a quorum was no longer met.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm by consensus.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by, Louanne Lewit