



City Center Project Steering Committee

Tuesday, June 12, 2012 at 5:30 p.m.

The Visitor's Center

14 North Street

Claremont, NH

Minutes

I. Roll Call

Present: Marty Davis, Jason Farrell, David Putnam, Kristin Kenniston, James Feleen, Tom Rock, Gary Trottier, David Messier

Absent: Keith Raymond, Victor Bergeron, Robert Tatro, William Greenrose

Staff: Tracey Hutton, Nancy Merrill, Kelly LeBlanc

II. Meeting Minutes

Approve minutes of May 22, 2012 meeting

Motion: approve minutes as amended

Made By: Mr. Rock **Second:** Mr. Davis **Vote:** Unanimous

III. New Business

- Chair Punam stated that the CCCP is in Phase IV
- The CCCP's Survey work has made it to the Safe Walk to School Campaign
- Meet with Zoning Consultant

Steve Cecil, The Cecil Group in Boston, signed the contract as Zoning Consultant for the CCCP project. The tentative meeting date for the charrette is Sat July 21, 2012 (8a-12p).

Steve Cecil stated The Cecil Group is a firm of 11 professionals from multiple disciplines. The Cecil Group has completed significant work within the realm of zoning in New England and more specifically, New Hampshire. Form Based Zoning brings together the idea of accomplishment with what can physically be attained. The vision is followed by the tool to get there.

Chair Putnam asked if there is anything missing from the CCCP reports/documents from the view of Mr. Cecil. Mr. Cecil stated he has not looked through the reports yet.

Chair Putnam asked if the CCCP should review the charrette before the presentation. Mr. Cecil stated yes, the CCCP should review the charrette first. Mr. Trottier asked if Mr. Cecil has toured the historic district and if he has worked with similar areas. Mr. Cecil stated he walked through and drove through the area and there is a lot

in common with other New England communities. Claremont is a mill town and the way it is perched on the river is extremely picturesque. Claremont is in very good shape compared to many other communities. Parking structure, architecture and neighborhoods are intact. The position of Claremont in relation to Highway I-89 and I-91 is favorable.

Mr. Rock stated that the community feels there are better ways to present Claremont; what are the next steps? Mr. Cecil stated historic town centers grew without a lot of planning. Today, decisions and management must be made (mixed use, business, residential).

Mr. Trottier asked the timeline for growth and development in an ideal situation. Mr. Cecil stated that if the zoning is making it difficult, then growth is dependent on the market. The question is what can be done to promote and attract the kinds of uses desired. Chair Putnam stated low income families and poverty are issues the City faces. This is still an image regardless of improvements. Part of the goal is to publicly show we are trying to change our image.

Mr. Cecil stated that this should be looked at as a public relations opportunity. One thing that might be useful is using some of the charrette time to show case studies. Newport, VT, for example, has been incredibly successful. These examples can be helpful. Ms. Hutton stated that Burlington had more people during their last charrette meeting than they knew what to do with. Mr. Cecil stated they are trying to be on the leading edge. He explained that charrettes are workshops to present results in an organized way. Planning, along with many factors, are brought together in a short amount of time. This is not a necessary part to zoning but it makes sense. We will learn from those who attend. Therefore if a solid cross section attends, a large amount is accomplished.

Mr. Davis asked if there is a visual outlet to the charrette process. Mr. Cecil stated Form-Based Zoning works as a visual of what you see and don't see. A team will be brought in for the charrette. Don Powers and his group in Providence, RI are more architectural based. A landscape artist will be brought from the Cecil group and some money has been set aside for additional aids in the process. A real estate economist and traffic studies specialist would be essential. The charrette is a way to get everything on the table. The information will be presented back to the CCCP and an overall zoning strategy will be produced. A public forum is then held for validation of the plan. Mr. Messier asked about duplication of information in the charrette (as the CCCP has already conducted surveys). Mr. Cecil stated that a technique that may be used is to take large maps and have pre-made models of parking lots, town houses, etc. to show the proposed effects to scale.

Mr. Folta, citizen, asked what Cecil group already knew about Claremont (demographic, census) prior to work. There were three zoning proposals were shot down in the last three years because the citizens did not like them. This process has a higher chance for success. He would like to know if the product is a new Zoning Ordinance in the end. The project area is not the whole City so if zoning is re-done, will there be spill over? Chair Putnam stated the responsibility is for the City Center area zoning only.

Mr. Cecil stated that their job is to come up with a draft for zoning. It then goes through the zoning process. Zoning cannot spill over, so current structure must be analyzed. They reviewed the census information before submitting the application. After this meeting, information will be compiled, land use regulation will be analyzed, and if the City continues to use the existing zoning results will be analyzed.

Prior to the charrette meeting: staffing a storefront office for the week before the meeting. The storefront will provide information on how to get involved and attain information even if the citizen cannot attend the meeting.

After the charrette meeting, the Cecil group will go to the Planning Board and City Council. Data collection will occur over the following 4-5 weeks. There will be a review in August and roll out in early Fall. The goal is not to re-plan the city center but simply focus on zoning.

Mr. Davis there might be a need to remove some of the build-up. Repurpose and use is key. Cecil Group can bring examples of how to solve the issues. Mr. Cecil stated they could designate a session on parking during the charrette meeting. Mr. Messier stated that if development takes off, parking would become a concern.

Mr. Feleen stated he does not believe there will be any huge controversial issue. He believes that the pervasive attitude of pessimism could be a problem. There is an overall low self-esteem in the City. It is more the locals that have this pessimistic view. Mr. Cecil stated that this is not due to zoning but could be formed as a recommendation. Mr. Feleen stated while there might be a lack of vision, there is a pessimistic thought that Claremont does not deserve things like this.

Mr. Cecil asked about use of the downtown. The CCCP approximated the City Center capacity at 60– 65% full (not counting the empty mill buildings). The question is how to entice some people while keeping others out.

Ms. Kenniston agrees about the outward and inwards perceptions. She stated that the website should be updated as this generation is more likely to go onto the website for the charrette and email in comments.

Mr. Rock stated much of the root of negativity is taxes. There is a thought that progress means more taxes. If the City core was fully developed, the tax base may lower.

Mr. Davis stated that the City Center contains 50% of the community therefore recommendations for the neighborhoods is as important as commercial recommendations. Mr. Cecil stated that a goal could be to increase the value of the City Center.

Chair Putnam inquired about making recommendations without a financial piece. The City has been working hard to uphold building codes, permitting processes, etc. and this is an asset to the City.

Mr. Cecil stated an option would for Zoning not to change until the business comes forward. This would be an incentive for potential business owners.

Mr. Feleen asked what if, during the charrette process, someone states we need to be able to use the 2nd and 3rd stories of downtown buildings. Mr. Cecil stated that if zoning cannot do this there will be an explanation of what would happen.

Mr. Folta stated when he grew up in Claremont it was thriving. There has been a decline, and in the 1980s when Joy Manufacturing left there was a significant economic impact. In the 1990s the placement of the interstate was a hit as Claremont missed the economic growth. The question is what Claremont can achieve being in the shadow of Hanover and Lebanon.

Mr. Cecil stated that Claremont is thriving compared to many communities. A susceptibility to change analysis is needed as some things will not change. The reality is that Claremont is truly small and thus the scale of change is relatively bite sized.

Ms. Kenniston asked if the group, as public relations piece, can ask people to bring a photo of what they like about Claremont to the meeting. This would promote a positive outlook.

Mr. Feleen stated that in response to the demographic, Claremont is significantly poor, undereducated and underemployed, elderly, and retired citizens. There is considerable subsidized housing and a shrunken middle class. The people we want information from aren't here in Claremont yet.

Mr. Davis suggested a presentation to the Planning Board and City Council before the charrette meeting.

Ms. Merrill stated that there needs to be a consensus in the community; a visual and verbal connection. Mr. Cecil will provide handouts, visuals, etc. for the charrette meeting.

Mr. Messier stresses the important of showing how this attempt is different from previous revitalization attempts. The results from this study will go into policy making. Mr. Trottier suggested stressing the positives over the last 10 years.

Attempts to get the charrette information 'out there' are essential. It was proposed that on the 4th of July information should be handed out. CCTV and local radio stations might also act as a tool for making the public aware.

Mr. Cecil will not be present and any meetings before the charrette, but he will put together a draft agenda/Promotion/guide documents.

IV. Adjourn

Motion: to adjourn at 7:22 PM

Made By: **Second:** **Vote:** Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted by,
Kelly LeBlanc