



City Center Project Steering Committee
Tuesday, August 23, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.
The Visitor's Center
14 North Street, Claremont, NH

Minutes
Approved 10/25/11

I. Roll Call

Present: Marty Davis, Jason Farrell, William Greenrose, Tom Rock, David Putnam, Keith Raymond, Gary Trottier, Robert Tatro

Absent: Victor Bergeron, David Messier

Staff: Nancy Merrill, Tracey Thibault, Katrina Spaulding, Kelly LeBlanc

II. Meeting Minutes

- Approve minutes of August 9, 2011

Motion: Approve the meeting minutes from August 9, 2011 as amended.

Made By: Mr. Farrell

Second: Mr. Rock

Vote: Unanimous

III. Old Business

- Review Survey

Mr. Putnam and Ms. Thibault met with the Superintendent of schools to discuss using Claremont Middle School for the community forums.

Mr. Putnam discussed student participation with the survey work with the Superintendent and will forward their email discussion to Ms. Thibault.

The committee discussed the survey questions at length.

The committee commented that in regards to question #1 some buildings are uniformly on the street. Identification would be needed to distinguish the zoning in comparison to what is physically on the property/lot.

The term 'infestation' was clarified.

The survey is intended to be qualitative and not quantitative. Streetscape information would be the desired result.

Mr. Greenrose inquired about who owns the curb/sidewalk areas. Ms. Thibault stated that it is variable by street and how much land is owned by the property owner.

Mr. Putnam stated that question # 12 should discuss the quality of vegetation. A fourth bulleted option should state ‘overgrown and unkempt.’

Mr. Rock asked how to distinguish between the general condition of the street and a single building that does not meet the standard for yard maintenance. Ms. Spaulding stated that the committee should go with the general condition of the street because there is nothing written in the zoning ordinance about the maintenance of the lawn.

Mr. Putnam relayed the concerns of Mr. Bergeron who was unable to attend the meeting. His concern was that the committee was not looking at the interior of the building. Ms. Merrill stated that the assessing office has codes that address internal deterioration. The Planning and Development Department has access to these records.

Mr. Greenrose suggested adding a question to evaluate the windows and what can be viewed internally from the windows visible to the surveyors. Mr. Rock suggested adding a comment section.

Mr. Davis stated the examples cited in the questions are very helpful. Mr. Putnam suggested the committee to look at the goals.

Ms. Thibault stated that they are looking to define where the code and policy items become issues.

Mr. Greenrose asked if there would be a benefit to having a question which allows the surveyor to rank a property from 1-10.

Mr. Putnam reiterated that they will be surveying residential and commercial properties. Ms. Thibault stated the survey uses the terms ‘buildings and properties’ as it was intended to be used for both residential and commercial properties.

Ms. Thibault stated that the focus group involving the realtors might be most helpful in determining the percentage of vacancies downtown and related information.

Mr. Greenrose inquired about question #13 and rewording to state ‘Is parking adequate for...’ and includes an example.

Mr. Tatro stated very few questions have to do with commercial properties and if a commercial survey needs to be done then there is a significant amount of information missing.

Mr. Trottier stated that commercial buildings with 2nd and 3rd stories generally go unused. This is valuable commercial space that needs to be invested in and would make a good focus group discussion.

Bernie Folta, Ward III, presented the committee with 5 points: (1) streetscapes photos, (2) aesthetics, (3) cultural gentrification, (4) commercial v residential and (5) mixed use.

Ms. Thibault and Ms. Merrill will email the committee by the end of the week with accepted revisions. Review of data will occur at the next meeting. Mr. Putnam suggested the press go with one of the committee members when they are completing the survey. The surveys are to be completed by the Labor Day meeting.

Phase II survey – Community Wide Survey

Mr. Putnam stated that if questions are misunderstood it would skew the data. The committee discussed the question ‘in which area of the City Center do you feel 4 dwelling units per acre is appropriate (see map)?’ The committee decided that using the phrase ‘1 unit per 10,000 SF’ would be more widely understood as opposed to ‘4 dwelling units per acre.’

Regarding the question ‘In which areas of the City Center do you feel safe when visiting,’ the board decided adding an ‘AM/PM’ would be beneficial.

Mr. Trottier stated that clarification is needed in terms of zoning and the definition of dwelling units for the average citizens. ‘Dwelling unit’ not easily understood.

Ms. Merrill reiterated that the goal of this survey is for the City to know what others think about these issues. Some of the questions listed are ones that go to the Zoning Board and/or Planning Board on a regular basis.

The City adopted the property maintenance code 6 years ago.

Mr. Putnam suggested eliminating ‘taxpayer priority’ (sidewalk) and changing the wording to ‘Municipal funded.’

Mr. Folta reminded the committee of the political impact of surveys and the importance of addressing the political concerns of the public.

IV. New Business

- Training 3: On the Ground

Training 3 focused on general code enforcement, neighborhood nuisances, quality, landscaping, and private and public items.

Ms. Merrill presented a series of before and after photos for the benefit of the committee.

David Putnam would like Nancy to present her information to the new members in writing.

- Review Focus Group Questions

Residential tenants that live in the City Center will be included in the public forums held at the school. The Business owners and commercial building owner's focus group would include business tenants.

Residents must be present to participate as they have the most to gain and lose.

The focus group size will correspond with cost and staff time. Focus groups notification will be publically posted. The Realtor Group is OK with the CCCP as an agenda item at one of their upcoming monthly meetings.

Mr. Putnam stated that there should be a RSVP date for the focus group. This would allow the committee to contact those members who should attend but have not responded.

Mr. Rock stated that non-local owners would not see local notices. Major employers and contractors should be notified.

A public focus group meeting will consist of City staff (Police Chief, Fire Chief, DPW Director, EMT's, Building Inspector, and City Assessor). Committee members are asked to submit any questions before next meeting so additional these questions can be added.

Mr. Putnam suggested distributing the survey to city staff.

Mr. Greenrose suggested that all participants provide their general impression of the city center and why they feel this way at the beginning of the meeting. At the end of the session the participants should be asked the same question to see if their perception changed.

Focus groups and public input sessions will be completed by mid November. Focus groups will be limited to one hour. An opinion poll will be utilized.

Other

- Review dates for public meetings

Candy corn voting and surveys – Booth at the October 1st Chili Fest

Deb Mays from UNH will be at the Sept 27 meeting of the CCCP.

Adjourn

Motion: to adjourn.

Made By: Mr. Trottier

Second: Mr. Rock

Vote: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 6:54 PM

Respectfully Submitted by, Kelly LeBlanc