



City Center Project Steering Committee

Tuesday, August 9, 2011 at 5:00 p.m.

The Visitor's Center

14 North Street, Claremont, NH

Minutes

Approved August 23, 2011

Present: Marty Davis, Victor Bergeron, Jason Farrell, William Greenrose, Tom Rock, David Putnam, David Messier, Keith Raymond

Absent: Gary Trottier, Robert Tatro

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

I. Meeting Minutes

Motion: Approve the meeting minutes from July 26, 2011 as amended.

Made By: Mr. Messier

Second: Mr. Rock

Vote: Unanimous

II. Old Business

- Continue Discussion on Surveys

Ms. Merrill reiterated that the grant was written based on the four goals: (1) Public Involvement, (2) Baseline inventory of housing units, (3) Zoning and Land Use, (4) Revitalization, Redevelopment and private investment.

The product is unknown until the survey, focus group and analysis are complete.

Mr. Davis asked if the goal is something we plan to attain at the end of the 12 months. Chair Putnam confirmed that this is accurate. As data is gathered and analyzed the impact it has on the four goals will be addressed. It is currently vague as the results of the survey and focus groups will cause everything to come together. Mr. Davis asked what the deliverable will be for goal number 2. The base line inventory, for example, is a product of the goal. Mr. Greenrose stated that the goals are to set the process in motion but will not necessarily all be accomplished at this point. Mr. Rock confirmed that the end goal is to have recommendations for the city council and planning board to act on.

Mr. Farrell asked if the committee is performing 'housekeeping' and how their

recommendations will be taken. The recommendations will be presented as suggestions for the Zoning Ordinance, CIP and other City Ordinances.

Mr. Raymond stated some of these ideas started on North Street when lots were reclaimed by the City and resold.

Chair Putnam reviewed the new mission statement and letter. He considered this meeting a second reading of both documents.

Ms. Merrill stated she received an e-mail from Mr. Davis today with suggestions to revise a few minor grammatical issues. These issues have been resolved and are reflected in the documents presented to the committee. Mr. Davis also recommended taking out the term 'character' from the last bullet on the CCCP letter. the term 'character' was retained as it conveys the desirable message.

Mission Statement

Motion: accept the mission statement of 8/1/2011

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

CCCP Letter

Motion: accept the re-written letter from 8/3/2011

Made By: Mr. Bergeron **Second:** Mr. Farrell **Vote:** Unanimous

- o Methodology Draft

Phase I Draft and Internal brainstorming of Phase II presented to the committee.

Ms. Thibault stated there are 1648 parcels in the City Center. GIS and Assessing data will be used to calculate a per square foot (SF) value of each structure identified in the study area. This information will provide a base value of the units. Assessing neighborhoods also have the potential to be analyzed by values (these are not traditional neighborhoods but can be mapped out per SF values).

Phase II – brainstorming in process–The map provided is the designated City Center for the project. Phase II would incorporate the survey, identification of possible zoning issues, property maintenance concerns, non-conformities, and neighborhood conditions.

Non-conformities would be when zoning went in 1978 but the new ordinance has side setbacks. More properties have a house and a garage near property lines and do not meet setbacks. If they are taken down the garage cannot be rebuilt as it is against the current ordinance.

Mr. Bergeron stated that some of the neighborhoods are falling apart and survey work, not assessing, will provide this information. Mr. Farrell asked if the assessor's checklist

can be provided to the committee. Ms. Merrill stated that there are deterioration percentages in assessing. Mr. Messier stated a neighborhood might have an assessment but if it is deteriorating we find out where it was ranked and where the neighborhood is going. Mr. Rock supported the 'value by SF' data as a baseline. Quality of information might be directly related to the quality of volunteers.

Mr. Farrell asked if a sampling can be done with approx 50-75 houses to assure that we are all looking at the same things and verify accuracy. Mr. Bergeron stated that there will be training sessions for those who are conducting the survey and it should not be dumbed down.

Mr. Greenrose asked if there were a perceived number of census takers for this project. Ms. Merrill stated there could be a variety of volunteers (i.e. high school students). The California sample survey on page 4 is a viable reference point. Mr. Greenrose stated that with a larger number of questions a higher detail rate could be attained.

Mr. Greenrose asked what constitutes a registered vehicle. Ms. Thibault stated that each house is allowed 1 unregistered vehicle but that surveyors will remain on public property.

Mr. Rock stated that they have to be careful not to over analyze and paralyze themselves with an over abundance of information. Chair Putnam stated they must identify what they want to do with the data. Ms. Merrill stated that they will have the ability to use the census data and incorporate City owned parcels that are green spaces, brownfields and the like. We have the ability to verify what we see on assessing data with the census data.

Mr. Farrell clarified that the process is to identify the issues. Ms. Thibault stated they are looking to inform the consultant of the zoning study produced to attain recommendations.

Mr. Rock stated it might be easier to say that different neighborhood blocks would be coded for values. If we went into that neighborhood and it was primarily single family, and there were 4 electric meters it would show an inconsistency.

Mr. Messier asked if it would be beneficial to go out onto a selected street and discuss examples of various issues/concerns. Chair Putnam stated if the committee did the sampling as a whole, then the street could be a training ground for the volunteers. Mr. Greenrose stated they have to be careful not to appear as the police of the situation.

Mr. Davis asked about taking photographs of the houses on the designated streets and analyzing them as a committee.

Ms. Spaulding stated that the zoning ordinance could be helpful in the survey because if 10,000SF per unit is needed then this would act as a telltale sign when evaluating properties and comparing them to the assessing records.

Chair Putnam asked for a conclusion.

Mr. Bergeron stated that a sample survey should be completed to see if the desired outcomes and information is being produced (in regards to streets, conditions of homes, etc.).

Mr. Messier stated that we use what was given as a starting point and email any changes to Nancy.

Mr. Bergeron suggested taking a photo of questionable properties. Mr. Putnam would like to take a photo of each sample property to work off of.

Survey Feedback

Mr. Greenrose suggested asking participants about what brought them to the City Center. What do they like about particular areas?

Mr. Rock suggested posting the survey online, on paper, at the library and other public places, etc.

Mr. Greenrose inquired about the term 'green space' in survey question #8. Ms. Thibault stated green space was a generic term.

Chair Putnam reiterated the next steps: (1) sampling, (2) review of survey questions and (3) the committee will send feedback to Ms. Merrill. At the meeting in 2 weeks this survey will be approved and the sampling will be done in Sept. A residential and commercial street is recommended for survey sampling by the committee.

The next agenda will include approving the sample survey. Sample survey work will be done by the committee between now and the next meeting in August.

Mr. Farrell asked if something is distressing should the committee bring this issue to the attention of the city and it will immediately get rectified? Any concerns the committee members have while conducting their survey should be routed to Ms. Merrill.

- Draft Questions for Phase I and II

Phase II review and feedback should be sent to Ms. Merrill. The desire is to keep the survey at two pages.

Ms. Thibault stated that at the first public forum electronic voting buttons will be used to gauge the response of participants regarding which visual is preferred. General planning terminology might be too specialized for much for the general public so this method would provide the visual depiction of these terms.

III. New Business

- Focus Group Discussion

Chair Putnam explained that ‘focus group’ surveys targeting specific groups of people that have a role in the City Center will be utilized.

Ms. Merrill reminded the committee that these specialized events have to be scheduled. Currently, 3 public meetings have been proposed (1 in each ward) in addition to the special interview focus groups (questions have not been finalized). The Claremont Board of Realtors also includes bankers and appraisers which might make an interesting focus group. The City of Dover used business owners in the city center area. Chair Putnam asked if we could join the realtors meeting and be their agenda? Ms. Merrill stated that the bank industry deals with an interesting set of issues that would be beneficial for the CCCP to understand.

Each group will be presented the same questions and only the emphasis will change.

List of Focus Group Participants:

1. Realtors (inc. bankers, insurance, mortgage lenders)
2. Home inspectors retained by the bank, General Contractors (inc. Plumbers, electricians)
3. Business & Commercial owners
4. Police & Fire & DPW & Building inspections & Assessor & EMT & Social Services

Safe Route to Schools Study

Mr. Folta reported that 2/3 of the full-time Claremont City employees are residents. 1/3 are not residents. This information might impact findings.

It was suggested that there might be a hesitancy to improve properties because of higher taxes. Mr. Davis stated that most people want an immediate response and are there tax abatements to put in place?

Mike McCrory –UVLSRPC – A Model of the City center to be produced by the school system and possible volunteers.

IV. Other

V. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 6:46PM

Motion: to adjourn

Made By: Mr. Messier **Second:** Mr. Greenrose **Vote:** Unanimous

Respectfully Submitted by

Kelly LeBlanc, Administrative Assistant