



## PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSION

Monday, February 13, 2017 6:00 PM  
Council Chambers, City Hall

### MINUTES

Approved 2/27/2017

- I. **Call to Order**  
Mr. Wahrlich called the session to order at 6:00 PM.
- II. **Roll Call**  
**Present:** Marilyn Harris, William Greenrose, Richard Wahrlich, Bruce Kolenda, James Short, David Putnam  
**Absent:** Charlene Lovett, Victor Bergeron, Nicholas Koloski, Marlene Jordan, Rois Neil Ward, Jr.  
**City Staff:** Michael McCrory, City Planner
- III. **Work Session – Master Plan Update**
  - a. **Natural Resources chapter**  
deForest presented the changes that had been requested by the Board at the previous meeting – they included:
    - i. Statement added to the Introduction:  
*Implementation of the goals and objectives of this chapter will at times require collaboration with regional organizations, because ecosystems, wildlife and water resources are not confined within the City limits. Fortunately, there are a number of such agencies available to assist including, but not limited to:*
      - *Connecticut River Watershed Council (<http://www.criver.org/>)*
      - *Sullivan County Conservation District (<http://www.sullcon.com/>)*
      - *NH Association of Conservation Commissions (<http://www.nhacc.org/>)*
      - *USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/nps/portal/nrcs/site/nh/home/>)*
    - ii. Goal #1, Action #1, page 49 was amended to read:
      1. Develop management plans for *the long-term health and preservation of* each of the ecologically significant areas and implement them.

No other requests for changes – editorial or otherwise – were received.

**Motion:** To accept the Natural Resources chapter as complete.

**Made by:** Mr. Greenrose      **Second:** Mr. Short

**Vote:** Unanimous in favor

**b. Parks & Recreation chapter**

Mr. McCrory read the vision statement and described the format of the chapter.

Mr. Putnam said that parks and recreation is a “strong part of our culture here”.

The Board reviewed each of the goals and action items at the end of the chapter.

*“Take the steps necessary to make Claremont, especially the downtown core, a pedestrian and bicycle friendly community, including the maintenance, improvement and creation of biking and walking trails.”*

Mr. Greenrose asked how realistic it might be to make dedicated bike paths on, for example, Pleasant Street. He said when there is snow on either side and parking on both sides, there is barely room enough for two cars to pass. He asked if this is a viable option for most of the downtown area. Is it realistic?

Mr. Putnam said the City is currently hosting a grant that will improve the head of the rail trail on Pleasant Street, then on to Broad and then Chestnut Streets. He said because there was language in the Master Plan about the trail, it gave the City an opportunity for grants. Because this action item is in the Plan update and it is backed by survey results, it gives the City an opportunity to apply for grants. Then it is up to the engineers and architects to figure out how it fits the City. Mr. McCrory said there are a number of options to make bike/ped paths fit different situations.

Referring back to the goal under discussion, Mr. Putnam said it is a broad goal – broader than just this chapter. He said at some point he is going to ask the Planning Board to consider including a chapter on public health for a couple of reasons. Some of the materials in just this one goal would be included and covered in public health. The public health chapter could host a public health committee. It would cover welfare and poverty and many other public health concerns. He said he listens to the City Council struggle with the welfare part of the City’s budget every year. He said he thinks that because there are no goals and objectives that focus on public health concerns, a chapter dedicated to the subject would provide some useful guidance. Goals and objectives would provide more opportunities for additional grants. He said this chapter and other chapters have health components to them. Economic development will have a public health component to it. He said that’s how it’s being covered now and it may not be as thorough as it could be.

Mr. Greenrose moved on to the item regarding invasive species. He said this topic is discussed in the Natural Resources chapter. He said he thought redundancy isn't bad – it strengthens the importance of it. He then spoke to the use of the word, “address”, as being too vague. Mr. McCrory said that this statement could be an objective and the actual means of addressing invasives could be defined in an action step.

Mr. Greenrose said there are some invasives that he doesn't see as being a problem. If it were worded to address “annoying” or “harmful” plant species – for example poison ivy – it might be better. Poison ivy is a native plant, but no one wants to see it on the bike or hiking paths.

Mr. McCrory said it is up to the Master Plan to set the vision. It is up to people to figure out how to carry out that vision. He said the CIP is one way that things in the Plan get implemented.

*“The Parks Department and the Claremont School system should develop a comprehensive, formal relationship regarding programming, facilities, staffing and shared resources.”*

Mr. Greenrose asked Mr. Putnam if there isn't already a formal relationship between the school district and the City. Mr. Putnam said it changes – it really depends on who the administrators are at the time. One factor that remains consistent is the school district has full use of the City-owned parks and fields for their sports/athletic events. If the City had voted to build a new school, that agreement would have gone away, because as soon as you design a new school building, state educational standards require that there be dedicated space for parking and athletic fields. The City has a waiver from the State Department of Education because of the agreement that the school district has with the City Parks & Recreation Department for using the fields. He added that there is somewhat of an agreement that is reviewed when a new superintendent comes in on “who pays for what”. He said, “It floats around a little bit.” He said that's really the only formal agreement there is. It is “formal” because of the waiver from the state of New Hampshire.

Mr. Wahrlich said, “In all actuality, the school system gets off pretty good.”

Mr. Putnam said, “Don't say it that way, because it's not about the school district – it's about the City of Claremont. It's about all of us. Here we have with the parks – for example, Monadnock, with its fields that are there, it's utilizing them to their fullest potential – tennis, football, baseball. In a town the size of Claremont, why do we need duplications of it? The taxpayers pay for it whether it's run and owned by the City or by the school district. With the waiver and collaboration we have, I think it's utilizing it to its best potential.”

Mr. Putnam said, with regards to #7, he asked the board to consider adding: *The Parks Department and the Claremont School system should ~~develop~~ review and re-develop a comprehensive, formal relationship regarding programming, facilities, staffing and shared resources.*

He said there is already an agreement in place and felt that a new relationship was not needed.

Mr. McCrory said this appears to be a recurring theme throughout the different goals. It seems there are a series of informal agreements - there is no memorandum of understanding, no written, formal procedures – but there is a working relationship.

Mr. Putnam said that historically the relationships have been formulated between the head of parks and rec and the assistant superintendent or the head of the athletic department. He said the superintendent would assign the roll of “conduit” to whomever he felt was most appropriate. At present, there is a very good relationship between the two entities.

Mr. McCrory said the wording could altered a bit to call for enhancing the relationship, but formalizing it is the important piece, however it is achieved.

Ms. Harris commented on #7 as well. She asked the Board to consider adding a sentence at the end that says, “*that meets the needs of cultural programming, athletic and other activities in the community.*” She said she hears a number of people who feel there isn’t enough utilization of basketball courts for indoor soccer, all kinds of athletic activities; travelling to Grantham to play various sports. She said she didn’t know if the City has enough indoor courts for all of these activities, but there is the feeling “out there” from a number of people that the schools’ courts are underutilized and that the community center isn’t as available as it might be to meet the needs of all of the people in the community.

Mr. McCrory asked if that could be part of Goal #5, part 1, “*community-driven planning process*”. Ms. Harris said it could, but she felt the need to have it say that it meets the needs of all of the various groups. It then appeared that Ms. Harris’s thought might fit better in Goal #5, part 2. Mr. Putnam agreed that it would be better in #2 and said he liked what Ms. Harris was saying. Ms. Harris agreed and said it would fit in both #2 and #5.

Ms. Harris said there is nothing in the chapter regarding the Junior Sports League (JSL) building. She asked if the City still owns it. Mr. McCrory said it is City-owned, but the directive has been to sell it. There have been public requests for proposals on how someone might use the facility. He said he would have check into it further for more details than that.

Mr. Putnam asked Ms. Harris to repeat her suggestion for language. She said to add it to Goal #5, part 2, “*developing suitable programming that meets the needs and requirements of cultural programming, athletic and other activities in the community.*”

Mr. Putnam said the Planning Board can make changes to the draft chapters without referring them back to the steering committee or subcommittee so long as the changes are not substantive. He said the Board relies on Planning & Development staff to rule when a proposed change is substantive (or not). The consensus was that Ms. Harris’s proposed change was not substantive.

Mr. Greenrose asked why under Goal #5, item #1, those particular parks are being called out – did it come from the community survey? Why not ALL parks and facilities? There was much speculation as to why this item was worded this way.

Mr. Putnam suggested that the second sentence become a separate item:

1. *The Parks Department should initiate and guide a community driven planning process to envision and realize the optimal use of Moody Park, Visitors Center Green, Factory St. Park and the city owned parcel behind the old community center.*
2. *The Parks Department will collaborate with the Historic District Commission when considering future changes or improvements to Broad Street Park.* (NOTE: This statement was added at the request of the Historic Resources Subcommittee.)

Mr. Putnam was not in favor of changing the item too much without knowing the subcommittee’s intent first. Mr. McCrory said he would examine it more closely and perhaps coordinate with the subcommittee for clarification.

Ms. Harris asked about the bullpen in Opera House Square. Mr. Putnam said it is not a Parks and Recreation responsibility, so that’s why it’s not in this chapter. He said during the City Center activities, they identified several small areas of land that could be improved to provide beautification of the City. Of course, the question always arose of how to fund maintenance of them. The bullpen, however, was never designated as a park. It falls under DPW jurisdiction.

Ms. Harris said, two years ago, there was lighting on all of the trees in the bullpen. She said there were many, many comments from people coming into the City about how beautiful that was and how much it added to the City. Then there was an electrical fire, Christmas trees were added by one of the volunteer groups, and now there is no lighting. Who does it fall on to restore it? Where in the Master Plan will care of the bullpen fall?

Mr. McCrory said a couple of chapters will be talking about street scape. He said it was in both the survey and the community session – streetscape, aesthetics of the

downtown – very strong response and desire to have that for the downtown. The details of it still have to be worked out though.

Mr. Greenrose said this had been discussed at a board meeting a couple of months ago – who maintains the flowers. There was no one answer to that. He said even the Mayor didn't know the full extent of who is responsible for what. If we're going to have a plan, that should be part of the plan. Who is responsible? Who has taken on that as a volunteer activity? Is the City going to pay for it? He asked Mr. McCrory if this is coming in another chapter. Mr. McCrory said that that level of detail would not be. He said the Master Plan would be casting that vision, then the City would have to figure out how to make that happen.

Mr. Greenrose asked if it would be appropriate to have that as a goal - that sort of organization and delineation, definition and clarity - so this type of ambiguity is reduced.

Mr. Putnam said because there are volunteer organizations and some of them are well staffed and then they drop off and another comes along, and so on. If there was a goal in the Master Plan specifically hosting the idea that there was volunteer work managing and taking care of the parks for the seasons of the year with some oversight from the Master Plan and a department in the City, someone would know who to go to to ask questions or ask permission to do things so that it is very clearly laid out.

Mr. McCrory called for the Board members to continue to seek the best place to put this idea as they continue to review all of the chapters of the Plan. He said there will be some discussion in the Land Use chapter about the public desire to have neighborhood plans. Those areas will be identified in the Plan. He said streetscape is discussed a little bit in the Parks & Recreation chapter because it talks about bike/ped facilities. "Complete streets" address bike/ped facilities as well as aesthetic qualities, layout, safety, lighting, traffic patterns and so on.

Mr. Putnam said he would like to see the board's changes sent out by email and inform the absent board members that the board has reviewed this chapter and ask absent members to offer their input. The changes would be reported to the steering committee. Subcommittee members would be invited to attend the steering committee meeting when their chapter is being reviewed.

Mr. Wahrlich asked about Goal #5, item #6 in the Parks & Recreation chapter: *The Parks Department should establish a comprehensive relationship of collaboration regarding Ashley's Landing with the relevant state or federal agencies having jurisdiction over this area.* He asked who does have jurisdiction over it. It appears to be NH Fish & Wildlife. Mr. Putnam said this is so because it is on a public water way and that the City doesn't

have much control over it. Mr. McCrory said he will make sure it is identified clearly in the chapter.

**c. Community Facilities chapter**

Mr. McCrory indicated the Community Facilities chapter that had been included in the workshop packet. He said the steering committee had not yet completed their review of this chapter. He said the text regarding each facility had been developed by the heads of each of those departments. He said there may be additional changes made to the text by the time Board reviews it.

**IV. Adjournment**

The work session adjourned at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

*deForest Bearse*