



PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSION

Monday, July 24, 2017 6:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall

MINUTES

Approved 8/14/2017

I. Call to Order

Mr. Putnam called the session to order at 6:00 PM.

II. Roll Call

Present: Marilyn Harris, Bruce Kolenda, Charlene Lovett, Marlene Jordan, David Putnam

Absent: William Greenrose, Richard Wahrlich, James Short, Victor Bergeron, Nicholas Koloski

City Staff: Michael McCrory, City Planner

Review of Minutes – July 10, 2017 Work Session

Motion: To approve the minutes of July 10th as presented

Made by: Mayor Lovett **Second:** Ms. Jordan

Vote: Mr. Kolenda abstained; all others voted in favor

III. Master Plan Update

a. *Transportation* chapter

Mr. McCrory said he had made the changes requested by the Board at the last meeting. He reviewed each of them with the Board.

Goal 1: Mr. McCrory took one objective and made it into two to better describe the intention:

- Develop a regular maintenance program of public parking lots including consideration of establishing new tree plantings and greenspaces, and innovative stormwater management techniques. Make
- Development review of new or existing private parking lots shall evaluate opportunity to incorporate tree plantings, innovative stormwater management techniques and impacts upon neighborhood aestheticsally pleasing with “green fences” or plantings.

Objective 8 was modified as requested at the previous meeting:

- Encourage-Educate downtown businesses about downtown parking and to monitor the parking of their employees and patrons to stay within the parking time limits.

Objective 13 was added:

- Develop a Downtown Parking Plan to incorporate and improve upon the above objectives.

Goal 2 was modified as requested:

GOAL 2: ~~Improve~~ Increase the use, the appearance, and importance of the ~~airport~~ Claremont Municipal Airport and the Amtrak Station.

It was agreed to use the word “station” in place of “stop” when referring to the Amtrak train stop/station in Claremont Junction, on the grounds that the Amtrak website refers to all stops as “stations”.

Mr. McCrory added the date “2020” to the 1st objective under Goal 2. There were no objections:

Plan for expanded use of the Amtrak Station to a medium-sized station (more than 4,000 passengers per year) by 2020.

He also added “online resources” to: Add information/tourism signage, including “you are here” type signage and online resources.

Mr. McCrory combined two objectives into a single one under Goal 4:

Build sidewalks on at least one side of every city street within the developed portion of the community and include connections/crosswalks for continuous network with a priority on streets ~~Build sidewalks on every street within a the pupils’ required one-one-mile walking radius of public schools.~~

Ms. Harris asked to have the words “and maintain” added to the above objective: Build and maintain sidewalks on at least one side of every city street...

Mr. McCrory asked if “developed portion of the community” might be refined to “the City Center of the downtown”, because the southern extent of Charlestown Road could be considered “the developed portion of the community” that may not yield a public benefit from having a sidewalk.

Mr. Putnam said, “If we use the “city center” as defined by the city center project, then Maple Avenue falls out of that. Maple Avenue and Bluff both have an integral responsibility in maintaining sidewalks for the school populations.” By limiting the area, the plan would eliminate important areas that host City schools.

Mr. McCrory said, “Being the one that worked on the Safe Routes to Schools plans for the elementary schools, a 1-mile radius from all of the schools pretty much covers all of Claremont.”

It was agreed that “City Center” would not be the right terminology for this objective.

Mayor Lovett asked how “developed portion of the community” differs from “urban compact zone”. Mr. McCrory said “urban compact” means different things in differing rules/regulations – e.g. firearms vs state highways vs City Center zoning district.

Mr. McCrory said, “If we talk about urban compact, that’s talking about the state highways. So, we have some good definition. Unfortunately, it is limited to a half-dozen streets. There would be some benefit to defining the urban zone/district for Claremont. The City would have to decide what standard would be used in developing it. At present, we consider the City Center zoning districts as fundamentally the ‘urban core’.”

Mr. Kolenda asked if Charlestown Road would be excluded in the present wording of the objective. Mr. McCrory said it would include Charlestown Road, because we know there is a need. It would likely be within the 1-mile radius of Maple Avenue school.

Mr. McCrory changed the graphic image in Figure 8-1 to a photograph that he felt was appropriate for Claremont. It shows a modest bump-out for a downtown street.

Mr. Putnam asked, “If the Planning office – in proposed road work – what recommends that certain streets have a bump-out at intersections -what would be the process for bringing that to the public? Would that first come to the Planning Board?”

Mr. McCrory said no. There would need to be some scoping. If the City adopts the process for complete streets, there would probably be a couple of public hearings that are unrelated to any boards – they might be hosted by DPW or some traffic advisory committee. The way complete streets is structured is it goes neighborhood by neighborhood so it is consistent with the context of the neighborhood. For example, there could be a Broad Street proposal that would have some traffic calming recommendations. That would be the subject of a public hearing. Or it could be South Street or Pleasant Street from Opera House Square to Glidden Street – there would be a defined scope and public meetings on that scope – then a design is developed – then back to the public for feedback. He said he could not guarantee that every project would be developed in exactly that way, but this is the general idea.

Under Goal 7, some of the language was modified:

Approve zoning and planning measures that require or create parallel back street connections to improve roadway network connectivity~~and avoid cul-de-sacs and hammerheads.~~ (See Figures 2a and 2b.)

and Figures 8-2a and 8-2b were removed. Mr. McCrory said it was a full page of information that he felt was not necessary and could be misleading, as previous discussions had revealed. He said the Board can deal with this on a case-by-case basis and a proposal and have much greater impact. As long as connectivity is mentioned in the Master Plan, it should be good.

Goal 8 was modified as requested by the Board at the last meeting.

The discussion returned to Goal 1. The Board asked that the words “and patrons” and “to” be removed:

- ~~Encourage~~ Educate downtown businesses about downtown parking and to monitor the parking of their employees and patrons to stay within the parking time limits.

It was also agreed that objective 6 (Goal 1) be broken into two objectives so as to make the need for clear signage more apparent:

- Provide year-round enforcement of downtown parking regulations.
- Provide adequate signage to identify public parking facilities and their corresponding time limits, with a standardized sign design for all public parking.

That concluded the discussion on this chapter.

Motion: To accept Chapter 8, *Transportation*, with the changes discussed tonight.

Made by: Ms. Harris **Second:** Ms. Jordan

Vote: Unanimous in favor

IV. Other

Master Plan (Tentative) Time Line

All but three chapters have been finalized: Economic Development, Community Health and Housing. There is a Steering Committee meeting on August 15th. Drafts of the Economic Development and Health chapters are anticipated for that meeting. There will be a Housing subcommittee meeting before that and at least a preliminary draft will be presented to the Steering Committee. The next Planning Board meeting is on August 14th. There won't be any Master Plan chapters to discuss at that meeting. The 6 PM work session can continue if the Board wishes to discuss other topics. However, there are a number of applications – including a couple of large ones – scheduled for the 14th. There should be at least one chapter to review on August 28th, and again on September 11th and the 25th. The final phases of the Master Plan update should take place in October and November.

Mr. Putnam said the Steering Committee has seen the Economic Development chapter and has had its first discussion. He said the Steering Committee will be serving as the public health subcommittee for working on the public health chapter.

The Planning Board will host a public hearing on the final draft of the complete Master Plan. The format of the hearing will be set by the Steering Committee.

Site Plans Expectations

Mayor Lovett said she had emailed Mr. Wahrlich (by way of Mr. McCrory) as a follow-up on the discussion regarding expectations of site plans that took place at the last Planning Board meeting. She asks that language be included in the site plan conditions of approval stating the expectation that what is shown on the site plan will be maintained as a means of keeping properties well-maintained. She asked if this could be discussed at the next (this) meeting.

Mayor Lovett also asked what authority the Planning Board may have when site plans are not properly executed or maintained and a process for the periodic review of site plans for compliance.

In reviewing previous decisions and their conditions, Mayor Lovett said there is no language stating that once the landscaping is installed that it must be maintained. She said she has observed projects around town where the landscaping is installed, but then not maintained afterwards. She said there is no point in having landscaping if it's not being maintained.

Mayor Lovett asked that the Board come to a consensus on what that language would be, and then insert it in future conditions of approval.

Mayor Lovett said the site plan regulations stipulate what happens when a site plan is not executed or maintained in accordance with its conditions of approval. She asked that the Board have a more methodical approach to compliance and periodic review – perhaps an end-of-year wrap-up.

Mr. Putnam suggested that at a future work session when the Board is looking at the drafts of some of the Board's policies that this be included. He said that for him, it's all about enforcing the approvals that the Board is providing. He agreed that (noncompliance) happens "all over town, all over the state".

Mayor Lovett said she didn't think this was something that needed to be handled by Mr. McCrory. She said she thought the Planning Board could come up with some language that could just be included in the conditions of approval.

Mr. Kolenda asked who would follow up on it. He said nine times out of ten it doesn't happen. Mayor Lovett said that's an administrative issue.

Mr. Kolenda said he remembered the Board discussing bringing up one site plan a year and reviewing it.

Mr. McCrory said a couple of years ago he and another staff person from RPC did an inventory of all the site plan approvals from the prior two years. He said overall there were very few outliers at that time. He said it is something he has been thinking about, that it needs to be periodic. He said that should be the course of regular business to put that in the schedule. He said he was hoping to look at it in December. He would like to make it an annual event, a check-up. There are a number of things to check – e.g. parking agreement with a neighbor; site maintenance; snow removal; contracts that must be renewed from year to year. It is reasonable to require proof of such contracts and ask to see them each year as opposed to asking for them when something arises.

Mr. Putnam said it is the Board's responsibility to understand the conditions being imposed, how they will be followed-through on, and if the Board has the authority to enforce them.

The Board has the authority to revoke a recorded plan if conditions are not being adhered to.

Mayor Lovett asked that development of draft language for landscaping (and other) expectations be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

Mr. McCrory said he felt the most constructive way to address Mayor Lovett's concerns is, when the Board has a case in front of it, and it asks the question "how" – we want this to remain this

way, how will it be done? He said, “It’s ok for the Board to muddle through that during the hearing, because the applicant is wise not to object.” In each case, there will differing items to be considered. How will the Board make each one enforceable long-term?

Mayor Lovett said this needs to be part of the review checklist – people on the board will change; attention to that detail may fade with time; and it’s not in anybody’s best interest not to have it discussed. She wants to ensure that it will be discussed during the application process.

Mr. McCrory said he wanted everyone to read the current site plan regulations before the next meeting to see if they address the concerns being raised. Mayor Lovett said she had already read them. The draft amended language should be reviewed as well.

V. **Adjournment**

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Made by: Ms. Jordan **Second:** Ms. Harris

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 6:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse
Resource Coordinator