



PLANNING BOARD MEETING
Monday, September 10, 2018 7:00 PM
Council Chambers, City Hall

MINUTES
Approved with amendments 9/24/2018

Mr. Wahrlich called the meeting to order at 7:12 PM and asked for a roll call.

I. Roll Call

Present: Allen Damren, Marlene Jordan, Bruce Kolenda, Nick Koloski (in the audience), Charlene Lovett, David Putnam, Richard Wahrlich, David Pacetti

Absent: William Greenrose

Guest: Steve Schneider, Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission

City Staff: Michael McCrory, City Planner

II. Review of Minutes

A. August 27, 2018

Motion: To approve as presented

Made by: Mr. Putnam **Second:** Ms. Jordan

Vote: Mayor Lovett and Mr. Damren abstained; all others in favor

III. Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

IV. New Business

A. Housing Initiative Steering Committee Kick-Off Session

Mr. McCrory said it had been decided at a previous meeting that the Planning Board would serve as the Steering Committee for this initiative. There will be a work session dedicated to this initiative each month for the duration of the grant. Guidance from the committee will change as the project progresses.

Mr. McCrory introduced Steve Schneider from the Regional Planning Commission. RPC was one of the partners in the grant application. Following a competitive process, the RPC was chosen as the consultant to do the planning work. This keeps a lot of local expertise on board.

Mr. McCrory encouraged the board to be active in the process.

Following this kick-off, they will be going into an outreach process. RPC staff will be researching and assessing the current housing regulations. This will be followed by

development of what codes and ordinances should be changed or added and getting the committee's feedback on what's most effective.

The committee's local understanding of the community is needed. It will help refine what's to be done. The committee's ideas for outreach will also be sought.

Mr. McCrory said he wanted the committee to be ambassadors to the community and talk to people about this project. As the project evolves, the committee will return to being planning board members to evaluate the recommended changes.

Setting this project in context – there have been Master Plan updates; various initiatives that may or may not have been successful – an open space committee for looking at rural development/subdivision options; open space advisory committee to look at the downtown and housing issues to relieve pressure from the periphery, which gave rise to the City Center Initiative (densities, housing types, street construction, historic preservation and design guidelines).

Mr. McCrory is encouraging this project to be a City-wide assessment. He encouraged looking at the rural areas, at the “residential areas” that have a higher potential for residential development and how we can maximize the use of City resources for the benefit of the community.

The core of this initiative is being driven by the Land Use chapter, the Economic Development chapter and the Housing chapter of the 2017 Master Plan. They express the need to more coherently and thoughtfully develop housing, or redevelop or improve on existing housing. This is one of the major economic drivers for the City. To have a stable, robust work force, there must be affordable places for people to live and we'd like to encourage them to live in our community. Affordability, however, is a scale. There should be sufficient housing that is affordable to each income level.

Currently there is a shortage of rental units.

New housing development should not squander valuable resources.

Successful housing goes beyond the structure itself and Mr. McCrory urged the board to keep their perspective broader – don't focus just on the metrics of housing units, but include how people feel living in those units. How do people feel about where they live and are they connecting with their neighbors?

The Housing chapter addresses future housing demand. With a level population growth, some housing units will become unusable, which will require building hundreds of new units to replace them. If the population grows to 20,000 (by 2040 or 2050), thousands of new units will be required. How can these future housing needs be met? Meeting those needs will have to be built into Claremont's regulations.

We want to attract new housing, but we want to be purposeful in how that works – the composition of the housing, its location, the services that will be required – and have that in place before it happens.

Mr. McCrory and Mr. Schneider will be meeting with Plan NH (funders for this program). UNH Cooperative Extension (its community engagement arm) is contracted with Plan NH to provide services in developing an outreach program. They will engage the community partners that have been identified in the grant application – Healthy Vibrant Claremont, RPC, Vital Communities, Greater Claremont Chamber of Commerce, and the Claremont Development Authority. They would like to engage the Greater Claremont Board of Realtors and the public at large.

An outreach program will be developed with these partners for this fall. Public outreach has already started at the staff level. (Mr. McCrory noted that the project is about a month behind due to other projects.) But the staff is ready to go now; RPC is ready to go now; and Plan NH is ready to go.

Mr. McCrory and Rebecca Vinduska, Business Development Specialist, had a booth at the *Back to School Festival* in late August and at one of the last *Farmers Markets* in early September. They had informal conversations with people about living in Claremont – their likes, dislikes, concerns and so on – a roundabout way of surveying them on housing. Notes that Mr. McCrory took during this exercise will be used in the outreach process. They were able to engage families with kids, a group we don't traditionally reach in planning outreach programs.

At this point, Mr. McCrory invited Mr. Schneider to speak to the board.

Mr. Schneider said he looks forward to reaching out to the people that don't normally participate in planning projects – to get their feedback on what they think about housing in Claremont. One of the outreach goals will be to find those places where these people are and talk to them there.

Mr. Schneider said that the issues that face Claremont are no different than the other areas in the region. There's just more of it here because Claremont is a bigger place. He said housing is the issue that will "make or break" northern New England. "This is an older, greying community - we have to fix that. How do we fix that?"

Mr. Schneider said that housing makes communities sustainable. There are plenty of great jobs here and a great quality of life. But if someone cannot afford to live here, the good things are wasted.

The timing of this project is good as the RPC is starting their regional housing needs assessment. It will dovetail nicely into the regional project.

RPC has a good working knowledge of where things are in Claremont (like housing and infrastructure), because of RPC staff work done here in the City.

There will be two RPC staff members working on this project.

Mr. Schneider said they will be relying on the board to tell them where they should be going and what types of questions they should be asking. The board should tell the consultant (RPC) what it wants, and the consultant “will go out and make it happen for you”.

Mr. Schneider said, “This is not something that’s going to be cured overnight.”

Mr. Schneider concluded his remarks by citing recent successes in White River Junction that are turning that city around. It is a close-by model that Claremont can use.

Mr. McCrory called for questions from the board.

Mr. Putnam said the board/steering committee has to come up with a really strong, motivating message to use as a talking point. He said the message has to be given more than once, it is time consuming and involved, and it takes time to gain momentum for the project. He cited the high school expansion project as an example.

He said the message could relate to the mission statement of the housing chapter of the master plan. Greater success is achieved when the entire committee is in agreement with the project and promoting the same goals.

Mr. McCrory equated this message to an elevator speech where one quickly explains what one is doing and why (and how important it is, added by Mr. Putnam). Mr. McCrory said he thought this was something they could try to assemble and asked the board to give it some thought. He agreed that it was an important point.

Mr. Wahrlich said to be sure it ties in with the master plan.

Mr. Damren asked, “How do we start? If we’re the steering committee, how do we start steering the ship?” Mr. McCrory said he would come back to this after all other board questions had been addressed.

Mayor Lovett said mention had been made of previous projects (City Center, Open Space, etc.). She thought it would be helpful to have some type of fact sheet about what is still outstanding so it can be folded into the board’s process.

Mr. McCrory said that some of those efforts are now 20+ years old. Much will have to be started fresh. He thought the City Center Initiative could be checked for incomplete items. It would be the most relevant project to this one. RPC could also work with the Open Space Committee’s findings.

Returning to Mr. Damren’s question, Mr. McCrory said he wanted to focus on the outreach effort. He asked the board where they thought the outreach effort should go. He said it’s good to convene a meeting where people come to you – it’s even better to go where people already are. He cited the Back to School Festival as a successful example. He asked the board for their ideas. Mayor Lovett suggested the Valley Regional Wellness Fair. Other ideas:

- Chili Cook-off

- Kiwanis monthly meeting
- Realtors Association quarterly meeting
- Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors

Claire Lessard, City Councilor and director of the senior center, spoke of the need for good quality senior housing.

Nick Koloski, City Councilor, spoke about the City's requirement that new development hook into the City's water and sewer systems and how that can become a major hurdle. He suggested surveying local employees of the larger companies in the City or approaching employees outside the businesses or at the transfer station.

RPC will be running a concurrent review of the zoning ordinances during the outreach efforts.

Mr. McCrory asked the board to think about how they can help with the outreach.

The grant runs through July of next year. Mr. McCrory gave a tentative timeline for completion of the grant: fall gather information; winter discuss what changes are to be proposed; spring test proposed amendments.

Plan NH will be looking for actionable items as an end product.

The question was raised about City Council expanding the historic district and whether it would impact work on this project. Actually, Council is expanding the areas where historic tax credits can be applied for in renovation of historic buildings, which could actually be of benefit to housing.

Mr. McCrory said that's the kick-off – consider this project underway.

V. Reports from Boards and Commissions

- A. There were no reports.

VI. Other

- A. There was no other business.

VII. Correspondence

- A. Fall Town and City magazine
 B. Drinking water – water supply newsletter

VIII. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting

Made by: Mr. Damren **Second:** Mr. Putnam

Vote: Unanimous in favor

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
deForest Bearse
Resource Coordinator