

PLANNING BOARD
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire

Minutes of June 8, 2015

Members Present: Ivy Vann, Rich Clark, Tom Weeks, Joe Hanlon, Alan Zeller, Barbara Miller, and Matt Waitkins.

Staff Present: Peter Throop, Director, and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development

Chair Vann called the Workshop to order at 6:30 p.m. She noted there were no cases and the discussion would revolve around their work plan and Planning Board priorities. She then asked for a motion to appoint Mr. Waitkins to sit for Mr. Galus. A motion was made/seconded (Zeller/Weeks) to appoint Mr. Waitkins with all in favor.

Minutes:

Mr. Weeks noted a correction in that he had mentioned a street drain *not* a state highway pole would have to be relocated at the entrance of the new parking lot driveway. A motion was made/seconded (Zeller/Weeks) to approve the Minutes of May 11, 2015 with all in favor.

Chair Vann told the members “we need to revisit Open Space, its purpose and to talk about how do we really want to see development going forward.” She continued “no one wants to see a house and then a house and then a house and then house.” She noted the answer was in the current zoning ordinances. “It is suburban zoning, not village zoning at all” she said.

Mr. Throop distributed the Vision Statement of the 1995 Master Plan as well as the town’s 2003 Future Land Use Plan. “Ironically” he said “it encourages smart growth through mixed development and infill, village districts or nodes in the downtown and a new model for traditional neighborhoods.” Chair Vann added “this is a *big picture* conversation that we will be having tonight.”

A brief discussion about the Vision Forum a year ago followed with the members acknowledging that the current zoning does not support what they wanted. Chair Vann asked “so what do we do to get our zoning to work with the vision of Peterborough? How do we get it to work with our vision versus against it?” The

members then briefly discussed the intimate scale of the town, development within the town and dimensional requirements for the zoning districts. “Frontage standards are intimately connected to sprawl” said Chair Vann adding “if we don’t want rural sprawl, we need to take a hard look at the code.”

Mr. Zeller noted he was a resident of Legacy Lane and asked about the history of how the development came to be. Chair Vann described the development as having a streetscape reflective of Union and High Streets. “It is a large parcel with little parcels on it” she said. Mr. Weeks noted the transition of the Open Space Rural Development ordinance during that time where multiple units were erected in a small area with a smaller infrastructure. Chair Vann added “they did a good job on the streetscape, it looks like a neighborhood.” She then briefly contrasted that neighborhood to the Hunter Farm Road development “with big houses and long frontages, big front yards with a traditional building style.” The members briefly discussed connectivity and street design (narrow in nature with parking so they do not become a conduit). “Wide streets with broad shoulders say *drive fast*” said Chair Vann.

Mr. Hanlon noted the encouragement of new models for traditional neighborhoods was important but noted “we need to be careful with the new tools.” Chair Vann agreed “absolutely, it does not work everywhere” she said adding “what we have and like grew organically. It is the newer stuff we do not like and we can go a long way to get *more* of what we *like* by taking a good look at our zoning.”

Mr. Throop interjected the Conclusions from the update of the Population & Housing Chapter of the Master Plan noting “how lots sit on the land, their relationship to the road and each other makes a big difference in the look and feel of a neighborhood.” Chair Vann noted the dignified 4-plex model of increasing density. “There is nothing wrong with them” she said. Ms. Miller asked about a definition of *smart growth* and a brief discussion followed. Chair Vann concluded by noting “I think the goal is to enable more of the development you like (meaning) some areas can be denser than currently zoned.”

With that said Chair Vann began the exercise of reviewing a town map “to see what we have.” The members gathered around the map and discussed several different neighborhoods. Mr. Throop reiterated the real need for decent, affordable housing and a brief discussion about the real estate inventory and occupancy as well as inventory for rent versus inventory for sale followed. Mr. Waitkins described a neighborhood model consisting of a mix of young professionals, retail and professional buildings in Nashua with Chair Vann adding her thoughts on incremental urbanism, good quality housing and working on four or six-plex

structures “to encourage higher density in our zoning code.” Mr. Weeks interjected “where we have infrastructure” with Chair Vann replying “yes.” The discussion also included density bonuses (what Chair Vann described as “what we have we can give away.”) As a builder Mr. Clark interjected “offer me another (unit) and I am listening, offer me two and I am listening hard.” With a smile Chair Vann said “yes, sweeten the deal in the places we want to see it.”

Mr. Zeller noted capabilities of the Wastewater Treatment facility but noted his concern for the water supply. “It is realistic we are not going to double in size” he said but asked “could this put a strain on the water system?” Mr. Throop replied “that is a good point, understanding the infrastructure is important but we are not talking about hundreds of units, we are talking more about finesse given the scale and character of the community.”

The members continued to review the map and discuss where density could reasonable happen. In particular it was noted the Catholic Church parking lot was identified as a potential lot for a cottage court with Chair Vann pointing out “but as it is that cannot happen, this is a great example of how our zoning code does not support what we want.” Mr. Throop agreed adding “the Family and General Residence Districts are a big part of the problem. They are classical suburban zoning.”

The members reviewed developments such as Pineridge in the north, Rivermead to the south and Robbe Farm Road to the west. They briefly discussed the various ways to calm traffic (keeping neighborhood street *neighborhood* streets and not highways) and the type of development they would like to see closer to town. Chair Vann noted “to change our code everybody has to tell the story. We need a compelling story to tell and that is we would like to build more of the nice parts of Peterborough” adding “the street design of Union Street is classic New England but it could not be built like that today, not under our current zoning. We need to make the code easier to build the things we would like to see closer to town.”

With respect to an aging population Mr. Throop said “in the next twenty years we are likely to see the largest land transfer we have ever seen” noting the sale of inherited homes. “We want to see the character of these homes retained but you cannot count on it” he said. He went on to briefly talk about striking the right balance of an older affluent population with attracting young people. “There is not enough of the type of housing they want” he said. The members went on to discuss how to market the town to developers with Mr. Throop telling them “also the timing with developers is really important.” The members discussed the Open Space Residential Development ordinance with Chair Vann telling the members

“we need to make it a better deal and not mandatory.” She told them that initially she was in support of having the ordinance mandatory she had changed her mind adding “but they still need to have a land review before plans so they are not vested in what they bring in” adding “they don’t have any interest in changing anything once the money has been spent.” The members agreed a conceptual meeting/land review to talk before putting pencil to paper was a good idea. “Open Space Residential Development is sensitive to the lot it is on and should start with a site visit” said Chair Vann.

Mr. Hanlon asked about flexibility with Mr. Weeks interjecting “they can come in with sketches, we just do not need to see engineered plans.” Chair Vann added “a plan that is able to be altered if it seems sensible.” Mr. Throop cited a recent application by a local convenience store and gas station. “They came in with a CAD design but they had not invested anything in the storm water management system or utilities prior to coming in.” He also noted the good channel of communication telling the members “they also came in and met with staff three or more times and got a consistent message each time.” He also suggested they start to research model ordinances from other towns “and refine what may work in terms of Open Space Residential Development in Peterborough.” Chair Vann noted “another goal is to incorporate language into the ordinances and regulations on how to treat condominiums.”

In summary Chair Vann noted her sense was that the members should focus on **zoning corrections in the Family and General Residence Zoning Districts** (not suburban development as pushed in the current zoning); **street design language for neighborhood streets** (not highways) and **open space/rural development** (how to make sure the rural district does not get cut up and turn into rural sprawl, specifically noting there is another model that is available).

After a brief discussion the members agreed they should focus the next meeting on the Shoreland Conservation District ordinance. “Tom has taken a stab at it” said Chair Vann adding “and it seems pretty contained.” Mr. Weeks interjected “the only change is that where an applicant currently goes to the ZBA they will instead go to the Planning Board. “That is the only change” he said. Mr. Throop briefly reviewed 245-41 Conditions for Appeals and Special Exceptions as well as the Conditional Use Permit criteria. Mr. Weeks reiterated “the intent is not to change it or re-write it.” Mr. Throop agreed adding “it is a clarification involving shoreland crossings.” Chair Vann also suggested they research and review model rural ordinances as well as identify places they want to leave rural.

In closing Ms. Miller announced that newly elected Selectman Ed Juengst would be replacing her as the Board of Selectman Liaison. She thanked the members for their support and friendship.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant