

**PLANNING BOARD  
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire**

**Workshop Minutes of June 25, 2012**

**Members Present:** Audrey Cass, Tom Weeks, Ivy Vann, Alan Zeller and Barbara Miller

**Staff Present:** Carol Ogilvie, Director Office of Community Development; Laura Norton, OCD Administrative Assistant

The Peterborough Planning Board held a Workshop on June 25, 2012 in the Selectmen's Meeting Room of the Town House. The Workshop was called to order at 5:38 p.m. by Ms. Ogilvie. She noted several members were unable to make the workshop but they did have a quorum. She distributed an agenda which included some thoughts from the Chairman and a copy of the Draft Work Program for review.

Ms. Ogilvie noted that "at the very least I thought we could go through the work program one more time to make sure everyone is on board with it" adding "and then next time we can break up into smaller groups or subcommittees and work on what you might especially care about." Ms. Vann noted that perhaps the best approach would be to take the draft home, review it, think about it and discuss it at the next workshop. "There is no new news here" she said.

Mr. Weeks noted "there are some things on here we have been looking at for years" and asked "why haven't some of these things been moved forward?" Ms. Ogilvie replied "the simple answer is that we spent almost all of our time on infill last year and the year before that was the wetlands ordinance." The members reviewed several of the items on the draft. It was noted that work force housing was another item that had been on the work program for some time. Ms. Vann noted the Open Space Ordinance should be re-written "using language from the Randall Arendt model." She went on to explain how that model begins with a site visit "to walk the land" before going into a meeting about the plan. "It includes everyone, the owners, the abutters, all stakeholders" she said adding "and they all sit down and discuss what they would like to see happen." She went on to note that anything from steep slopes to wetlands to things likely seen to be preserved are discussed "so the land owner has that knowledge going forward." She noted "not a lot of money has been spent and you end up with a plan. You have the conversations that are necessary before the money is spent" adding "once a plan is on paper it is hard to back away from it. Randall is very fond of his process but it *is* a good process." Ms. Vann told the members "we can say this is what we want to do; I would urge us to make it a requirement, it is not impossible."

Ms. Cass noted a goal for the Board may be to create a time limit for review of potential amendments. She cited the elements before the Board and the time available to get to them. "I can see how things could hold on for years" she said. Ms. Ogilvie agreed and reiterated the two substantial amendments the Board has considered over the past couple of years. She also noted that in the past few years the Board had significantly fewer members than it does today. Ms. Vann added "and there has been a vocal minority when attacking a re-zoning consideration"

stating “it is done to distract, dismantle and derail the process. I am not sure what the solution is but hopeful we are in a position to get some outside professional help to improve outreach.” (Referring to an application recently submitted for a Community Planning Grant funded by the New Hampshire Housing and Finance Authority).

Ms. Ogilvie briefly reviewed several zoning issues that had been around for quite some time and noted “so Tom, in answering your question about moving these forward, I think it is more that we have not had a chance to properly vet them.”

Ms. Vann spoke briefly about the Arendt model noting “I hope we end up adopting it, I really hope we will.” She added the members could have an in-house training session and draw up directions on how to use it on a mock site plan.

Ms. Miller in at 6:00 p.m.

Referring to Chairman Monahan’s written thoughts for consideration Ms. Vann noted “I just want to go on the record and say I don’t think we want to do anything that pushes development further from the center of town or West Peterborough where we already have infrastructure. We should not press out into the Rural District; that is my personal opinion.” She went on to note she was in favor of infill “but expansion into the Rural District, no. Not until we have to. It is hard to get around, the road structure does not support it and it is committing to a car-centric way of life.” Mr. Weeks noted small pods of Rural Districts where expansion would be appropriate for development. Ms. Vann replied “as a general position and on the record, I do not think we should take that track. That is a suburban environment and that is not Peterborough.”

The members briefly discussed retail businesses and the status of the two plazas in town. “Come the non-recession we would like to see them upgraded” said Ms. Vann. Ms. Miller noted absentee landlords, empty storefronts and structural problems adding “you can’t force them to improve.” Ms. Vann agreed they were privately owned “and we cannot compel them but we can certainly let them know what we would like to see.” She spoke briefly about the Congress of New Urbanism (CNU) of which she is a member. She noted the CNU is a group that sees the development pattern in the United States as destructive. “CNU promotes walkable, mixed-use neighborhood-based development that is coherent and sustainable” she said. Mr. Weeks suggested asking the plaza owner to attend a Planning Board meeting and address concerns face to face. “We could let them know what the town would like to see as far as redevelopment before we go elsewhere.” Ms. Ogilvie noted the Peterborough Plaza owner (Jim Young) “has been very responsive in the past.” Mr. Weeks also questioned the physical space for any redevelopment of the plaza. “Go up” said Ms. Cass. “The problem is parking” replied Mr. Weeks adding “they don’t have enough parking as it is.”

A brief discussion about re-thinking the parking requirements followed. “In many cases you will find they are excessive” said one member. “And cars are smaller” said another. The members then discussed planned mixed-housing projects. Ms. Vann noted “there are plenty of good models for doing that, without reinventing the wheel.”

Ms. Vann noted “as a Board we need to do outreach” adding “people have no idea what density looks like, no clue what eight units to the acre looks like. It is not the end of the world. They hear eight units and think *oh my God it is like midtown Manhattan* that is what they think.” Ms. Miller interjected “another thing we could do is use a word other than density.” Ms. Vann replied “village neighborhood” Ms. Cass added “maybe village neighborhood is good for here but generally just the word neighborhood sticks.”

The members briefly discussed infill, density, and sustaining the community and making it attractive to employers. They noted small businesses were the future. “My sense is that the day of the New Hampshire Ball Bearing is done.” Ms. Vann also noted “and we need to look at fourth floors of buildings. I am a huge fan of fourth floors and a mix of retail, office and residential.” Ms. Vann went on to clarify “I am in favor of fourth floor buildings but not the 65-foot height limitation for the Downtown Commercial District.” She went to the white board to draw an example of fourth floor roof tops differentiating in height noting “you get a much more interesting streetscape if all the buildings are not the same height.”

It was noted that one thought from the Chairman was to think about an update of the Land Use Chapter of the Master Plan. A brief discussion followed with Ms. Vann noting “a more present urgency than re-writing the chapter.” She noted the state of the economy and said “because there is no money this is actually a good time to do some planning, when things get busy we will not have time.” A discussion about the Master Plan in general followed with the members in agreement that often time the Master Plan says something that the zoning does not reflect. Their consensus was to make the zoning match the Master Plan. Ms. Miller suggested the members review the Master Plan “as homework” and be prepared to discuss it at the next workshop.

Ms. Vann asked about the July Planning Board agenda (July 9, 2012 at 7:00 p.m.) Ms. Ogilvie noted the Peterborough Players were on for a site plan review and Craig Hicks would be back to discuss the density number for his elderly housing project. One member asked “what is he asking for?” with Ms. Ogilvie replying “78 units” and a brief discussion about the Special Exception process of the ZBA followed. Mr. Weeks noted “essentially it is a list of criteria that must be met and prove to the ZBA that the benefit to the town outweighs the impact to the neighborhood.” He added “we do not have that; our biggest consideration will be the road.”

Ms. Vann noted “the ZBA is a quasi-judicial board and works much like a court, using facts and checklists. She gave an analogy of herself as an applicant who wanted to build a 19,000 square foot shopping plaza (she noted “so as not to be specific) ” She said she went to the ZBA and they said she could have a shopping plaza but was sent to the Planning Board to see how big it could be. Mr. Weeks interjected that any request for a Special Exception can in fact be referred the Planning Board for review. Ms. Vann noted the Planning Board is empowered to say the lot can accommodate/support the 19,000 square foot plaza and approve the request. “But then I have to go back to the ZBA and they can accept or deny the Planning Board decision” adding “so now I have shoved all this money into the 19,000 square foot shopping Plaza and I am stuck.”

Ms. Vann then gave a brief description of her experience with the ZBA when she was attempting to create a small neighborhood on High Street. Mr. Weeks interjected “your problem was with the zoning” adding “it did not meet the criteria.” Ms. Vann replied “you’re right, but the point is

the Planning Board wanted it to happen but the Zoning Board was constrained on how it makes its decisions. It is a complicated business.” “Sounds like a mine field” replied Mr. Zeller.

These members agreed the priorities included Open Space, Work Force Housing and the Village Neighborhood Overlay Zone. Ms. Vann volunteered to work on the Open Space Ordinance and the Village Neighborhood Overlay Zone. Mr. Zeller noted he would like to be involved with Home Occupations as did Mr. Weeks and Ms. Miller completing that subcommittee. Ms. Cass noted she would work on the Village Neighborhood Overlay Zone “and I will hold out for the second one” she said. Mr. Zeller asked if the subcommittees could communicate via e-mail with Ms. Ogilvie replying “yes, you can and provided the subcommittees do not exceed three people they do not constitute a quorum so you may meet when and where you please.”

Ms. Miller asked about the road issues with condominium developments. Ms. Ogilvie briefly explained that the way the ordinance is written it appears that an applicant may get a special advantage in getting road standards waived because they are developing a condominium project, adding “it is not clear how the frontage is calculated.”

The members noted their workshop for July would be on Monday, July 16<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. Ms. Vann interjected “does anyone but me want to meet more than twice a month?” Ms. Ogilvie reminded the members as subcommittees they could meet as often as they felt necessary and then report back to the membership at their regularly scheduled meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton,  
Administrative Assistant