

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION RE: UPDATE AND REVIEW OF THE MASTER PLAN
AND REVIEW PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING REUSES AND/OR IMPROVEMENTS FOR
THE BRIDGE SREET, VAUGHAN MALL AND WORTH LOT**

MUNICIPAL COMPLEX
DATE: MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2017

PORTSMOUTH, NH
TIME: 6:30PM

City Council Present: Mayor Blalock, Councilors Perkins, Dwyer, Lown, Pearson and Cyr

City Council Absent: Assistant Mayor Splaine, Councilors Spear and Denton

Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Robert P. Sullivan, City Attorney, Deputy City Manager Nancy Colbert Puff, Assistant City Manager David Moore, Planning Director Rick Taintor and Assistant Planning Director Juliet Walker

Others Present: Historic District Commission Chair Vincent Lombardi, Zoning Board of Adjustment Chair David Rheume and Planning Board Vice Chair Beth Moreau

Mayor Blalock called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff began by stating that there is a different structure to the Master Plan document this time and the next step is to decide how the plan will be implemented.

Assistant Planning Director Walker explained the new version of the plan takes into account the different types of users that will access the information and will be able to get the information they are looking for, whether a little or a lot. She then reviewed the document and explained that they identified strategic focus areas and neighborhood types and established actions and themes that would be applicable in those areas and neighborhoods.

Ms. Walker continued that there are 5 Themes; Vibrant, Authentic, Diverse, Connected and Resilient; and each theme has a narrative with goals and actions for the goals. She further explained the focus areas; urban core, corridors, urban neighborhoods, suburban neighborhoods and parks/open spaces. She then broke down further each of the focus areas.

Councilor Dwyer stated that she would like to see a glossary as there are terms used such as "green streets" and "complete streets" that should be referenced if citizens need clarification. She stated that she would also like completion of other plans noted and should be updated periodically.

Assistant Planning Director Walker stated that this document is meant to live on-line primarily which allows for flexibility in updating.

City Manager Bohenko referred to page 179, Implementation, stating that this identifies other entities who are responsible for enacting actions and this will be revisited at least annually. He stated that they try to audit annually to see what has been accomplished, and if it hasn't been, why it has not. He stated this is brought before the Planning Board annually so that they do not lose sight of the goals and it gives the staff a chance to self-correct if needed.

Discussion ensued regarding the availability and interactivity of the document on-line.

Historic District Commission Chair Lombardi stated that he has tried to read it on-line but it is very sequential and he would like to see hyperlinks to the topics.

Councilor Pearson asked how milestones will be brought forward in the future so people will know what has been accomplished. Assistant Planning Director Walker stated that it is not in the Master Plan itself, but will be a part of the regular update process.

Planning Board Vice Chair Moreau stated that she would like to see future applicants asked to share how their plans fit into the Master Plan.

Councilor Dwyer stated we should be cautious about doing that.

Next, discussion ensued regarding the Redevelopment of Rte 1 Bypass/Traffic Circle area with the consensus that this should be prioritized for sooner than 2020. Councilor Perkins clarified that this has been discussed by the Planning Board, but has to be brought back after the bridge reopens.

City Manager Bohenko stated that 2020 seems far away, but we are currently working on FY18 budget and some of these things need to be researched and we have to be realistic with the timing. He stated regarding the noise barriers, we have been working the NH DOT to change the policy that this can be done without a current highway project in the area.

Next, Councilor Perkins discussed the Historic District stating that the Planning Board has considered both expanding and shrinking of the boundary in appropriate areas.

Regarding Housing Stock, ZBA Chair Rheaume stated there have been a number of cases before the ZBA condensing the number of units which they have been supportive of, but it results in the loss of housing units which is needed. He stated that we need to find a way to make neighbors okay with the housing in their neighborhoods.

Councilor Dwyer then discussed one-way streets stating it is a hot-button issue but needs to be discussed. City Manager Bohenko stated that we are looking at purchasing modeling equipment to address this issue and that there will be a lot of public discussion in the future.

Councilor Pearson stated she had wanted the Chairs of the Land-use Boards at the table because there are a lot of items that go before those boards and we need to decide how to keep the ideas of the Master Plan in line with being able to keep the neighbors happy.

Mayor Blalock stated he liked the suggestion of Ms. Moreau but feels we will still run into resistance on a case by case basis.

Councilor Dwyer stated she wonders if the Boards are seeing any trends and can look at ways to solve the issues together with alternative ways of looking at them.

ZBA Chair Rheume stated the ZBA can override the Council and is beholden to the Zoning ordinance as written and they make that as clear as possible, but they can use the Master Plan for interpretation purposes if the intent is not clear in the ordinance.

Councilor Cyr stated that people fear change and feels that there are 5 categories of concerns that are most voiced including traffic and site-line, and feels that if there are before/after examples available of these common issues, people can deal with a real outcome.

Councilor Perkins stated that this has been a great conversation and reminded everyone that these boards are governed by legal documents, and we may need to adjust our ordinance to help the Boards do their job. Discussion ensued regarding the various policies that also come into play i.e., complete streets, housing policy, parking ordinance, etc.

At the conclusion of the discussion, consensus was that it was helpful to meet with the Chairs of the Boards and that communication and updates should continue.

City Manager Bohenko stated that different Councilors have brought up various areas in the city that need improvements and he is bringing forward the area of the Worth Lot, Vaughan Mall and Bridge Street as a whole.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff stated that the McIntyre Building Property issue was also a part of the discussion as well as the construction of the 2nd parking garage.

A power point slide show was then presented highlighting the history of the area as well as the challenges to balance objectives. Development would bring in tax revenue; the need for open space to enhance quality of life; and the issue of parking.

Councilor Perkins stated she feels it is important to think about our investment into this area and that there needs to be a committee or working group involving people in the neighborhood, etc.

City Manager Bohenko suggested keeping a tight group to start and inviting people in on an as-needed basis to keep it manageable. He suggested also reaching out to the businesses in the area.

Councilor Lown stated he enjoyed learning of the history of the area and stated that the pace of change right now is dizzying. He stated that he had thought at one time that it was a mistake to not put the 2nd parking garage on Worth Lot, but now feels that there are other uses for it. He stated it will be important to collaborate on this effort.

Councilor Cyr stated that the flow of the area will be important; flow to the parking garage as well as to the residential areas and the North Mill Pond area.

Councilor Dwyer stated she feels a process similar to the Prescott Park Master Plan would work with this as well to include public input and business owners etc.

Councilor Perkins stated she agrees and feels that being able to see how this area extends to the other areas such as Prescott Park and the McIntyre property will be important as well.

Councilor Pearson stated that this is an opportunity through redevelopment to give back to the people who live here and be able to use municipal land for themselves.

Mayor Blalock stated that he agrees with everything that has been said and stated that we have a new streetscape at Chestnut Street and improvements are ongoing elsewhere so it makes sense to continue it to improve the flow and community aspect of downtown.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.