

MINUTES

PLANNING BOARD WORK SESSION

CITY HALL, MUNICIPAL COMPLEX, 1 JUNKINS AVENUE

6:30 P.M.

JUNE 22, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dexter Legg, Chairman; Rebecca Perkins, City Council Representative; Nancy Colbert-Puff, Deputy City Manager; Colby Gamester; Jeffrey Kisiel and Corey Clark, Alternate

ALSO PRESENT: Juliet T.H. Walker, Planning Director

MEMBERS ABSENT: Elizabeth Moreau, Vice Chairman; Jay Leduc; David Moore, Assistant City Manager; Jody Record; and Jane Begala, Alternate

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I. WORK SESSION

A. Draft Zoning Amendment on Housing.

Ms. Walker and Mr. Ted Brovitz, City Consultant, gave a presentation of the draft zoning amendment on housing. The purpose of the session was to get questions and feedback from the Board. Zoning recommendations are based on the master building planning process to adapt the housing policy to meet growing demand for housing with more diversity for more affordable housing. Looking at areas that weren't currently zoned for housing where there can be more mixed use zoning and be more pedestrian friendly areas like the rest of Portsmouth. The goal is to make the most of gateway districts, and create diversity of housing that appeals to many walks of life and their needs through high quality development and walk-able areas.

- Chairman Legg asked for education around the zoned Gateways 1, 2 and 3 so all would understand what is being identified. Ms. Walker explained the gateways are seen as entryways into the city that are very commercial oriented and are not designed for pedestrian use today. There is flexibility for mixed use space, and to foster new development in those areas. These areas were identified as opportunity areas.
 - G1 – Lafayette Road will be mostly horizontal types of development. Will spread out over a bigger footprint
 - G2 – Mirona Road area will be more of a neighborhood center. With a more vertical use that is more condensed. Has wetland limitations, but could be attractive for residential housing.
 - G3 – Will be very similar to G2 but off of Exit 7, Kearsage Way.
 - There are mostly paper streets on the map so in reality it's more connected than it appears.
 - Chairman Legg clarified that the paper streets do mark them as separate lots. Ms. Walker confirmed this.

- The goal of the zones is to create new opportunities for mixed use and new development. What's planned for the City with streetscapes and open spaces, coordinated and compatible, and to be able to incentivize additions to new public rooms.
 - POPS – Publically oriented private spaces – privately owned but open to the public
- Testing individual parcels haven't happened yet, but hope that the next work session will reflect how some of that is going.
- One of the key sections in Article 5B are the building types and standards. Everything from cottages to maximum sizes. Smaller housing will appeal to those interested in downsizing that want to own. This type of housing has very high demand.
 - Paired houses – apartments
 - Chairman Legg questioned why paired housing was conditional for G1 and G2. Mr. Brovitz responded it was because the areas are low density.
 - Row houses – attached single family homes
 - General commercial, mixed use, single shop/home housing.
 - Cottages – smaller housing will appeal to those interested in downsizing.
- Ms. Walker identified these property types and development types on a larger scale. We don't know how many buildings will be a completely new building developers could be adding to an existing building.
 - Chairman Legg suggested that sometimes easier to start with more conditional permits, so that you can see how that goes then give flexibility later. Mr. Brovitz explained the thought behind that is that if all the zoning and standards are clear from the front and making things less conditional would make it easier to make this construction happen.
 - Ms. Walker further clarified that everything would still require site review
 - Chairman Legg requested to see some specific examples of successful developments for the board and public to see.
- Ms. Perkins was interested in why they chose to have conditional permitting on residential but permitted on commercial when we are trying to incentivize residential building. Ms. Walker explained that new conditional permitting would be for buildings that are strictly residential. In general the City is trying to incentivize more mixed use and not just all strictly residential. So the idea is to encourage mixed use.
- Ms. Perkins – If someone comes with a proposal to add residential to an existing commercial space they would qualify as mixed use? Mr. Brovitz confirmed this.
- Chairman Legg – For new buildings being built, he asked if they would have to follow the guidelines as far as setbacks from the streets etc. even if it's adding to an existing building? Mr. Brovitz confirmed if the building is there today, then it can be there forever, but if it is expanding then you will have to abide by some new guidelines.
- Ms. Perkins questioned how would adding residential space to the tops of commercial buildings work? Mr. Brovitz explained that this piece hasn't been fully worked out yet, but they definitely want to have those types of opportunities for existing buildings.
- Ms. Walker asked for feedback regarding what might be too much. Are we implementing too many standards? Or should they just set more guidelines? Should we have specific façade standards? Or can they just be guidelines (more of a preference than a standard)
 - Ms. Perkins gave feedback that it is important to keep in mind that objectivity is easier for people to meet than subjectivity. The more clear standards are up front is the most useful.
 - Chairman Legg was comfortable with what was presented. The clear direction provides enough flexibility to have new building look good.

- Mr. Clark asked if the streets are going to be re-developed? Example, some parts of Lafayette don't have sidewalks now so he asked how the facades will work then? We don't want something to go in that doesn't match the existing environment.
 - Chairman Legg assumed the new streets would need to be developed on the big tracks. Facades may not be as possible on Route 1, but new streets off of Route 1 can do this.
 - Mr. Brovitz confirmed this assumption and further explained that there should be a hierarchy of street types with design standards, so it would be clear what is expected.
 - Ms. Walker added that they will have a street design guidebook coming out soon and will be used toward this new development. Would the Planning Board have the right to waive certain ordinances?
 - Ms. Perkins would want to encourage design so she doesn't want to make it too strict.
- Mr. Brovitz stated they originally had different parking standards and backed off on that for now because it belongs in a different section more in the site review area.
- Density bonuses – are tied to public benefit – employment housing, energy efficiency, and public realm improvements.
- Chairman Legg offered the feedback that it sounds like you can get the benefit from providing affordable housing or providing other mixed use space. Should be directing that you are only getting the benefit if you're building affordable housing because that is the focus of the project for more mixed use and affordable housing. Ms. Walker can't get density benefit without providing 50% affordable housing. So it's workforce housing and something else for the public.
- Ms. Perkins asked if you have to shoot for qualifying for 2 things or just do residential housing? And is 50% the right number?
 - Mr. Brovitz answered that 50% is higher than he typically has seen in past projects. Typically there is a 10% minimum and density benefit is up to 20%. If affordable housing is the goal then making it a higher percentage would be beneficial, but will need to discuss if 50% is the right number.
- Ms. Perkins asked if in article 10.5B.74.20 Item D submissions made that increased density won't have impact on traffic, environment etc? Does this have potential to be subjective and undermine what we are trying to do?
 - Chairman Legg suggested that this could fall under the normal criteria in a site review where items like traffic are considered and then an informed decision is made on those considerations. Normal process looks at impact. This item should be removed or modified.
 - Ms. Walker agreed and will look at modifying that item to reflect this.
- Chairman Legg questioned why some parking guidelines say that the parking should be behind the building but other clarifies that it has to be 30 feet from the building.
 - Mr. Brovitz explained that the thought was parking wouldn't be in the front of the building, but could be to the side so the 30 feet is speaking more to that. They will modify that language around this to clarify.
- Ms. Walker reviewed the topics that were identified for potential internal revisions.
 - Do we need 3 districts or can it just be two because two of the three are so similar?
 - Standards vs. guidelines - which makes more sense. Based on this meeting standards seemed to make more sense.
 - Can some things be waived by the Planning Board instead of a variance
 - Integrating lead standards
- Ms Walker offered next steps for scheduling. It was suggested process is to have some sort of public meeting where people can come and give feedback. This could be fit it in for July or

August. They are trying to get this in adoption for September. This doesn't have to be a Planning Board meeting. It could be a separate work session. Suggested an additional work session with Planning Board and developers and property owners to come give feedback (could happen an hour before a planning meeting.) Feedback could also continue to be collected electronically.

- Chairman Legg liked all three suggestions; public meeting does not have to be a Planning Board meeting, agreed with the other two suggestions. Encouraged the survey monkey or some other online feedback forum for those who can't attend meetings.
- Ms. Walker will be making a separate page on the site for all this info.
- Mr. Kisiel offered the Kmart plaza as a place to show a parcel example. Also asked why the end of Woodbury and the Market across from Rite Aide were not considered for zoning.
 - Ms. Walker explained that this was an area with a pretty invested group already.
 - Ms. Colbert-Puff added that the mission was limited to a good first step. It was not looking at every single opportunity.
- Mr. Kisiel suggested the lot corner of ocean road and Lafayette where Bursas Pantry was/
 - Ms. Walker said they can look into this
- Mr. Kisiel added feedback that adding new roads to Route 1 could result in very high traffic issues. Suggested that they minimize roads directly out to Route 1 and have more crossroads within new development. Mr. Brovitz confirmed that you should be able to get around the new developments without getting on Route 1.
- Mr. Kisiel – Suggested the Gosling Meadows property to be included. Initially they weren't because they already have some activity going on. Ms. Perkins agreed that it would be worth consulting with them.
- Everyone was in agreement of leaning on the higher percentage side of affordable housing
- Mr. Gamester asked the St James property should be included as part of a gateway.
 - Ms. Walker explained that was avoided because of resistance, and a more on it's own than close to any of the gateways.
- Mr. Gamester raised concern around the wetlands on Mirona road. Town houses may be the only thing that's possible.
- Ms. Perkins asked if we should think about workforce housing – do we want to use the state zoned definition. It's an awkward definition that may or may not align with our goal of affordable housing.
 - Chairman Legg requested Ms. Perkins or Ms. Colbert-Puff for that definition to be outlined for the Board, and make sure the Board decides on what the appropriate definition for this project should be.
- Mr. Brovitz suggested that rentals with 2 bedrooms may be fine but ownership may need more space than that.
 - Mr. Kisiel asked how you would control the affordable housing to make sure the rent doesn't get too high. Mr. Brovitz explained that there will be restrictions around income, family units etc. The properties will only be rented/sold for certain prices and would be part of the housing authority realm.
- Ms. Perkins suggested that an informed covenant should be included with this project.
 - Ms. Walker agreed and said it would be added.
- Chairman Legg requested that when this is presented to the public they should include what the Kmart Plaza could look like and what other success stories are out there which are similar to this project. Ms. Walker and Mr. Brovitz agreed with this.

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II. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved by Ms. Perkins, seconded Mr. Gamester, and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

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Respectfully Submitted,

Becky Frey,
Acting Secretary for the Planning Board

These minutes were approved at the July 20, 2017 Planning Board Meeting.