

Economic Development Committee
Meeting Minutes

December 18, 2009

Present: Douglas Clark, Susan Fuller, Chris Mueller, and Tom Elliott

Absent: Jason Lenk

Staff Present: Jim Campbell

I. Call to Order

The meeting called to order at 7:34 am.

II. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as amended switching items V & VI.

III. Public Comments

Diana Carroll – Canney Road and Town Councilor

Mrs. Carroll spoke about an article she read from Planning Commissioner's Journal on libraries and the importance of placing them in the right places.

Joanne Celentano – 3 Davis Avenue

Ms. Celentano stated she was a neighborhood representative and wanted to stress maintaining the integrity of neighborhoods. She said that student neighbors should become part of the neighborhood and not consider neighborhoods part of the university.

IV. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of November 13, 2009 were approved as presented.

V. Discussion with Barrett Bilotta and Eric Chinburg on redevelopment proposal and possible rezoning

Mr. Bilotta gave the Committee some background on the last time he was before the EDC in February 2009. He stated that he owns 26 Strafford Avenue and has an option on 14 Edgewood, the neighboring parcel.

Eric Chinburg introduced himself to the EDC and said that he has been in the rental market for a long time. He has spoken with a concerned resident and is aware of the issue in town with the invasion of students into the neighborhoods. He believes that high-end, well managed units can help. He also stated that Strafford Avenue is not a residential street.

Chris Mueller reminded everyone about the recent Charrette and that we need to consider the location.

Mr. Campbell stated what areas were included in the Charrette and that the Professional Office District was included.

There was discussion on the type of apartments and that they would be more of a high-end product and not like the ones that are being built on Jenkins Court.

Tom Elliott asked whether or not they thought of renting to graduate students. Mr. Bilotta said that they could certainly take a look at that.

Eric Chinburg said that it was a good idea and that this project might be attractive to them because it is new construction rather than a renovation.

Doug Clark mentioned the only way to discriminate is with elderly housing and those who would qualify for low income housing and graduate students are poor. He also said that rental housing in Durham is regulated or unregulated, multi-unit or single family.

Chair Mueller asked if they have researched the office needs in Durham. Mr. Bilotta said that the University has already shown interest.

Doug Clark asked how this idea/project could be moved forward? Would it need a zoning change or could it be a Planned Unit Development (PUD)? Durham does not have a PUD ordinance and does not have contract zoning.

Mr. Campbell said it would probably have to be a zoning change or possibly a variance.

There was some discussion on buffering the neighbors and the neighborhood from the proposed development. Mr. Chinburg said that could be done possibly by an easement contingent upon approval. They could use 14 Edgewood as the buffer.

Susan Fuller asked what the next steps were going to be. There was some discussion of an informal meeting with neighbors and then maybe a public hearing with the EDC.

VI. Business Retention, Expansion, and Visitation Program

The Committee reviewed the letter that will be going out to the business owners. There was a slight change adding language about improving the business climate in Durham.

Tom Elliott is working on the questions that will be included to ask the business owners. He said he will finish them and they will be ready for the next meeting.

VII. Other Business (Old and New)

Old Business – Mr. Campbell said he is still working on the draft strategic plan and should have a complete draft in January. He also gave an update on the Charrette and stated the consultants should be providing a draft report in January.

New Business – The Town Council and Planning Board representatives gave an update on what they have been doing.

VIII. Next Agenda and Assignments

This item was not discussed.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:10 am.

Susan Fuller, Acting Secretary