

D-R-A-F-T
Mill plaza study Committee Minutes
Wednesday, July 11, 2007
Durham Town hall – Council Chambers
4:30PM

Members Present: Julian Smith (Vice Chair of Committee), Crawford Mills, Douglas Bencks, Chuck Cressy, Ed Valena, Warren Daniel, Thomas Newkirk

Members Absent: Edgar Ramos, Dave Howland, Lorne Parnell, Perry Bryant, Deborah Hirsch Mayer

Also Present: Reps. of AIA: Patricia Sherman at table, John Merkle, Mike Castagna in audience; Members of the Public: Ed Garcia, Robin Mower, Bill Schoonmaker, Jen Murray of UNH, Henry Smith, Town Administrator Todd Selig, Tom House, Art Guadano

I. Call to Order

Vice Chair Julian Smith called the meeting to order at 4:36PM, and he introduced the new minute taker, Adam Knowlton-Young, working for CBI with Patrick Field.

II. Welcome and Update from Vice Chair and AIA NH Co-Chair

Patricia Sherman outlined that the meeting would be dealing with the information that is to be presented to the public on July 18th. She also briefly recapped the productive meeting with town department heads held last week.

III. Approval of Agenda

Warren Daniel motioned to accept the minutes, Crawford Mills seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously.

IV. Approval of Minutes from June 20th Meeting

Doug Bencks motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Tom Newkirk and they were unanimously approved.

V. Public Comment

Henry Smith brought up the possibility of using House Bill 657, which details various forms of tax relief for community-oriented development projects.

Don Brautigam let the committee know that he was in attendance representing the Durham Energy Committee.

VI. Discussion of Site Information gathered to date that will be covered at the July 18th public workshop

Julian Smith introduced this section stating that the July 18th meeting is to be held at UNH MUB Theater from 7PM on.

Patricia Sherman summarized the material to be presented at the meeting: qualitative criteria, quantitative or specific data, economic data, and other graphic presentations. The presentation will be Power Point, not very long, and also likely on boards. Patricia then went through a draft agenda for the July 18th public meeting:

1. First, there would be a presentation on the collaborative process as designed by this committee, detailing some of its key elements, such as it being a public process, etc.
2. Patricia Sherman gave the committee a handout defining what success will mean for the project and asked the committee if this handout could be formally approved. The definition of success read: "Success for the re-envisioning of the Mill Plaza would be ... A permitted project for the Plaza site backed by the owner and developer that meets the community's goals and is slated for phase 1 construction by 2009." Crawford Mills' motion to accept the handout as part of the presentation for July 18th was seconded by Tom Newkirk and unanimously approved. Patricia Sherman continued with her presentation.
3. The handout on Qualitative Criteria was distributed and discussed. Patricia Sherman noted these will be the evaluating criteria for the project.

Warren Daniel commented that the concept is good, but that he had not had sufficient chance to really read this over. Patricia Sherman continued and explained that the goal of this section is to emphasize to the community that their principals are in line with AIA and LEED – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, principals of design. There was discussion if this material would be in the website, and it was agreed that yes it would be, but likely not before the July 18th meeting. Patricia Sherman continued, noting that more stakeholder meetings; involving people from the neighborhoods, the library etc., are planned and this information will be brought to the town.

4. "Quantitative data" would be presented to help folks understand why this property is slated for redevelopment, seeking to convey that currently there is a very low commercial density, that Libby's before and after the fire could be used as an example of redevelopment with greater commercial density that has been accepted by community, and to convey the overall potential of the Plaza site.
5. Aerial photos detailing the Pinto site plus additional properties around it would be useful. This would show folks exactly what area is being talked about.
6. Next, Doug Bencks would produce cross sections of the topography of the Plaza. These "site sections" would detail cross sections both ways showing elevation changes and highlighting the opportunity for changing the grade. There was

discussion of the availability of this material to the public and it was agreed that it would be available on the Town's website.

At this point Warren Daniel asked if there would be any discussion of the grant process; how the AIA got involved and describe how we got where we are today? Patricia Sherman answered that yes there would be discussion of that in the introduction.

7. "Site context" will be provided next by architect Bill Flynn of Saucier and Flynn. Patricia Sherman noted that this would help tie things together, and would demonstrate through graphics how Mill Plaza links to downtown, to UNH, and to the surrounding neighborhoods. They will speak to scales, solar orientation, and all those things that make good design.
8. Next a civil engineer would talk about the current development, which would emphasize the development wouldn't be permitted today, as it is not acceptable by today's standards. It has been grandfathered along. This is to emphasize that past design and development choices would not be possible to repeat. Patricia Sherman also mentioned that the engineer will speak about utilities and when upgrades may need to happen.
9. Discussion of "transportation and parking", would discuss the current understanding of issues, concerns and ideas. She emphasized that no solutions would be presented yet.
10. "What could be put on the site" would mention some specific ideas already posited such as, the Town Hall, library, and various types of housing. In particular they are interested in discussing and getting feedback from the public on the types of housing discussed so far.
11. "Economic data" was presented and this part would be an introduction to how real estate economics works. There was some question and discussion over specifics of what would be detailed on the slides. Patricia Sherman continued, emphasizing that the owner has right to return on investment, and reminded everyone that they need to keep things simple for this presentation to which there was a general agreement. Doug Bencks wanted to know how long all of these presentations would take. Patricia Sherman answered that collectively they would take about 20-30 minutes. Julian Smith suggested they could discuss this later.
12. Patricia Sherman continued and asked Doug Bencks if he could get a hard copy of the recently completed UNH Master Plan, especially as it details the other side of Mill Road, which they could present at the July 18th meeting. Doug Bencks said he could.
13. Patricia Sherman said that a series of photos, completed that day, would be presented to show the public what they are currently looking at, and she would

like to present graphics of similar projects, so the public could see what the possibilities are.

At this point there was general discussion about taxes and the possibility of using Tax Increment Financing (TIF) for infrastructure improvements at the Plaza site.

Julian Smith segued to the next item on the agenda.

VII. Updates on the status of:

a. the design teams

Patricia Sherman said that they are currently working on it.

b. the stakeholder and focus group interviews

Julian Smith read an e-mail that Patrick Field listing interviews scheduled with the library, with UNH, conservation and ecology stakeholders, historic preservation, housing advocates, abutters, and the Durham Business Association. Warren Daniel asked if there were any groups missing that they knew of. Chuck Cressy answered that the leaseholders are missing, but this is being worked on.

Patricia Sherman mentioned that they, the Chair of the Committee, Patrick Field, herself and Doug Bencks among others, will also be meeting with Mr. Pinto on the morning of July 18th.

c. review of public workshop agenda

Julian Smith distributed and read a draft of the Agenda for Re-Envisioning the Mill Plaza, the meeting title for the July 18th public forum. Patricia Sherman mentioned that the group discussion should generate lots of interest and comments, and that the AIA is looking for validation and consensus to go ahead with the design phase. Julian Smith commented that each team leader (group elected) will report back questions and answers to the large group, with 25 minutes allotted for this.

There was discussion of how the meeting would be advertised.

At this point there was a general discussion about the length of the meeting being planned for July 18th. And a general consensus of the Committee was that the small groups were not necessary and that a more general Q and A would be more efficient. Patricia Sherman noted that the goal is to have an engaging process to get and keep people involved, so this feedback was welcome. She offered that she and Adam Knowlton-Young would be in touch with Patrick about the above discussion of changes to the Agenda.

VIII. Other Business

No other business.

IX. Public Comment

Robin Mower of Faculty Road spoke to the “comparing principals” sheet, and that it might be helpful to explain what LEED is as this is associated with Green building, which is of concern to the community. On the topic of “site sectioning,” she wanted to know if this extends to across College Brook, as this would be important.

She suggested that the Committee consider including TIF and the House Bill 657 information at the July 18th meeting, as an alternate source of funding would be interesting to know more about. She also suggested that the D-CAT announcement note that the meeting on July 18th will be tapped, and that it will be aired at a specific time—that it not be just a meeting announcement. Her final comment was a plug for more responsible snowplowing even before redevelopment happens.

Art Guadano of Pine Crest Lane and AIA NH suggested that discussion of a possible TIF include improvements to the social environment of the area.

Robin Mower asked if AIA NH is familiar with a town similar in size to Durham with a similar example of core downtown areas being developed. Bill Schoonmaker answered that possibly in Exeter, as they have a project, but that may not be TIF. Patricia Sherman offered that TIF has an economic rationale behind it, with lots of guidelines, and that the size of the town only impacts the size of the project, not the guidelines for development, so that Concord is still a good example. Julian Smith offered that there was one project in Raymond, but not downtown. Ed Valena, Julian Smith and Patricia Sherman clarified differences between House Bill 657 and TIF, that these are really quite different.

X. Adjournment

Warren Daniel made motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Tom Newkirk, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:55 PM by unanimous vote.