

**Mill plaza study Committee Minutes
Wednesday, August 1, 2007
Durham Town hall – Council Chambers
4:30PM**

Members Present: Dave Howland (Chair), Julian Smith (Vice Chair of Committee), Crawford Mills, Douglas Bencks, Chuck Cressy, Ed Valena, Warren Daniel, Thomas Newkirk, Perry Bryant, Lorne Parnell, Deborah Hirsh Mayer (arrived at 4:46pm)

Members Absent: Edgar Ramos, Mark Henderson

Also Present: Patricia Sherman (AIA Representative) at table, Members of the Public: John Merkle, Robin Mower, Henry Smith, Leslie Schwartz, Amy Mower, Ellen Dudley, Ed Garcia, Nat Balch, Maura Adams, and Representatives of the Three Design Teams: Chris Drobat, Kevin Burke and Chris Urner from the Manchester Valley Team, Bruce Dicker, Rob Westhelle, and Fabiana Orlando from JSA Portsmouth, and Robbi Woodburn, and Bill Schoonmaker from the Durham Team.

I. Call to Order

Dave Howland called the meeting to order at 4:35pm, welcoming all those present, and mentioning that Patrick Field of CBI would not be present tonight but will be present at the next regular Mill Plaza Committee meeting on August 22nd. Representatives from the three design teams were welcomed, and the primary goal of the meeting was laid out; to provide the teams with a first draft of design parameters to begin their work, as described by the materials provided.

Julian Smith requested that the design team representatives introduce themselves at the podium and they did so.

II. Approval of Agenda

Ed Valena moved to accept the meeting Agenda, Julian Smith seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously approved.

III. Approval of Minutes from July 11th Meeting

A vote on accepting the minutes from the July 11th, 2007 meeting was delayed till the next regular meeting.

IV. Public Comment

Robin Mower reiterated a suggestion made by someone else that a kiosk be placed at the Plaza to update the public on progress of the redevelopment plan, and also when redevelopment is completed to be an information center, would be a good idea. She also emphasized that specific information for the public about when Mill Plaza business will be aired on DCAT would be useful.

Another point made was to emphasize the need for a maintenance plan for the Mill Plaza when it is redeveloped, paying attention to the history of this issue at the site, and that more attention could be paid to the current landscaping as there are many dead or dying trees currently.

Henry Smith, referring to the list of “Ideas, Issues and Concerns” that grew out of the stakeholder interviews and public forum, shared concerns about mixed residential that included student housing, reiterating that his preference was to not have student housing but rather elderly or work force housing, or the like.

V. Debrief as needed on July 18th Workshop

There was brief discussion on this topic, which involved thanking folks for their hard work and general comments that the workshop seemed to have been positively received overall.

VI. Walkthrough, Discussion and Approval of design team parameter materials

Dave Howland suggested that the Committee focus on the table of contents for this meeting, and that Patricia Sherman could speak to some specifics, along with anyone else who could add anything. And, in-depth editing, if necessary, could be done by fewer people outside of the Committee meeting.

Patricia Sherman read through the “Table of Contents” reading the headings and briefly described what information each section will encompass. After going through the “Table of Contents” Dave Howland said he hoped before the Aug. 22 meeting to have a PDF copy of all this material online for public access and for design team access, have a hard copy at Town Hall for the public, and provide a copy for each design team. He emphasized it was important to have the same baseline materials for all the design teams, and for the public to see, so everyone could be comparing the same information.

At this point general discussion on this Agenda item was opened.

It was noted that the report was incomplete and that committee members had not had time to review the document in advance. After some discussion, it was agreed that the committee would focus its discussion on the report’s table of contents and introduction and could agree to forward this, and the materials listed in the table of contents, to design teams to begin their work, understanding that the entire report

had yet to be reviewed and approved by the committee – a potential agenda item for the next meeting on Aug 22..

There was also briefly discussed if there was a need for securing clerical help in organizing all the information being collected INTO A COMPLETE REPORT.

Ed Valena raised three issues that he thought the Committee should provide specific input on for the design teams: the issue of Chesley Drive, issues relating to College Brook, and the issue of a parking garage on the site.

Lorne Parnell wanted to know how the project cost projections would be arrived at, which Patricia Sherman related would be done by looking at a variety of hard and soft costs.

Warren Daniel, referring to the Table of Contents, noted that there was no mention of a UNH partnership, which has not been ruled out. He also mentioned he would like to see more specifics about tax relief for business owners, not just for the Town, and he would suggest softening language around what specific buildings and structures should be included as information that could change things may still be forthcoming.

Chuck Cressy mentioned a customer source survey will be carried out by his cashiers, and Patricia Sherman commented she would like to see what info this can bring out, which could then help develop a general survey for Mill Plaza.

Doug Bencks suggested that a copy of the DVD of the July 18th Public Workshop might be useful for the design teams.

Following was a more general discussion where Committee members shared their points of view about what are the most significant issues for the development, including mixed housing, the carbon foot print of the project, and the issue of access points to the site.

On the issue of access, neighborhood representatives Newkirk, Hirsch Mayer and Howland reminded the committee about the long history of defeated proposals to access the plaza via Chesley Drive and the continued sensitivity and protectiveness of the neighborhood of this pedestrian corridor and green buffer that protects the neighborhood from the downtown core. Valena, Newkirk and Howland cautioned that reopening this issue – settled in the town's master plan after much debate – would invite needless negative attention and could jeopardize the plaza project. Rather than completely striking vehicular access via Chesley Drive as an option, Patricia Sherman proposed that it be "out of the pot" for now and revisited later only if it could be demonstrated that no other options worked.

There was also brief discussion concerning the developments impact on historical buildings, about which there was general agreement that the Historic District

Commission will have some input for the designs that come back, but is not going to be obstructionist.

It also came out that the project will necessarily be phased given the nature of the current site and the need to accommodate existing businesses, and that the major businesses there will need to be asked for their input about what square footage they envision they will want.

In wrapping up this discussion Dave Howland proposed that for August 22nd meeting copies of all the materials should be provided, and until the informed input of the Committee is received these materials will be considered in draft form, but that the process should continue forward.

Perry Bryant made a motion to approve this course of action, Crawford Mills seconded the motion and the motion was approved unanimously.

VII. Check in on Work Plan schedule meeting dates and goals

Dave Howland noted that the next regular meeting of the Mill Plaza Study Committee is scheduled for August 22nd, 4:30pm to 6:30pm.

Dave sought approval that the September 8th meeting be planned for 3pm.

Perry Bryant made a motion to set the September 8th meeting at 3pm, Ed Valena seconded the motion, and the motion was unanimously approved.

VIII. Other Business

No other business was discussed.

IX. Public Comment

Robin Mower asked if a hard copy of the July 18th Public Workshop materials could be made available at library. Patricia Sherman answered that this could be done. It was further suggested that the issue of Chesley Drive should be approached from a larger prospective, including encompassing the history of traffic flow in the area. A final comment was that in looking over the Compilation from the stakeholder interviews and the Public Workshop it appeared that the abutters on Faculty Road and beyond did not receive sufficient mention, including on the issue of the Mill Plaza being a buffer zone, which was in doubt as stories were mentioned that conversations from the Mill Plaza could be heard by abutters. [Mower asked that trees in the Plaza parking area be better maintained and dead trees removed.](#)

X. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Perry Bryant, seconded by Tom Newkirk, and unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 6:18pm.