

This set of minutes was approved at the Town Council meeting on May 17, 2009

**DURHAM TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
2009/10 TOWN COUNCIL GOALS
MONDAY APRIL 13, 2009
DURHAM TOWN HALL - COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Neil Niman; Councilor Jerry Needell; Councilor Karl Van Asselt; Councilor Julian Smith; Councilor Mike Sievert; Councilor Doug Clark; Councilor Diana Carroll; Councilor Robin Mower; Councilor Peter Stanhope (arrived at 7:10 PM)

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Town Administrator Todd Selig

Goals Work Session

Councilor Niman called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

Chair Niman asked that Councilors provide their ideas for the discussion, and then explain why they wanted them included on the Goals list. He said the Council could then make decisions on them.

Administrator Selig explained that he had spent some time trying to put together his vision of what the Council's goals could be, in order to generate some discussion. He said he would not be insulted if Councilors didn't like what he had put down, or wanted to do something different.

He said he had tried to look out ahead at things they had been doing, things they had talked about doing. He noted that last years' goals were meant to be a 2-3 year game plan. He said he also gave consideration to things they were doing, whether or not they were in the Council goals.

He first spoke about the Core Purpose and Core Values goals, which he noted had been dropped from the Goals list in 2008 in favor of more nuts and bolts goals. He said he personally liked having these goals, stating that it was good to think about them when going through the decision making process on Town issues.

Administrator Selig spoke in some detail about #1 on his list, **Revisit long-term vision for Durham**, and said this could be accomplished in part through the update of five chapters of the 2000 Master Plan:

- Downtown and Commercial Core
- Environmental and Cultural Resources
- Tax Stabilization
- Land Development Regulations
- Energy

He noted that the Energy Chapter would be integrated throughout the Master Plan. He said the initial update of the Master Plan would be done primarily by a consultant, and said Mr. Campbell would come to the next Council meeting to discuss this.

Administrator Selig next spoke about item #2 on his list:

Develop and move forward with efforts to increase taxable value and social capital in the Central Business District and downtown commercial core.

He reviewed the following items listed under this heading:

- Support efforts to position the downtown area in becoming more vibrant, varied, pedestrian friendly, and attractive to potential new businesses/investment and the community as a whole by revisiting existing zoning regulations within the Central Business District
- Consider the possibility of a more detailed strategic planning process, as recently described by Councilor Clark, and move forward as appropriate
- Adopt RSA 79-E to support the substantial revitalization of downtown structures
- Support continued efforts to encourage the Mill Plaza redevelopment
- Support continued discussion concerning potential downtown location for a new UNH Business School and UNH Performing Arts Center
- Support continued discussion concerning the development of a new Hotel/Conference Center within the downtown area
- Infrastructure planning to support downtown core redevelopment (water, wastewater, storm water, roads, sidewalks, traffic improvements)
- Facilitate various development and redevelopment projects
- Mitigate the impact of UNH on campus

Administrator Selig spoke briefly about additional items in the Goals list he had put together:

3. **Provide clear direction on Budget goals for FY 2010** as part of June 2009 Council budget work session and support Administrator in his efforts with departments to develop service delivery innovations intended to increase efficiencies, reduce costs, and enhance service satisfaction.
4. **Continue to explore cooperative efforts with UNH** to enhance the intellectual, cultural, and potential future economic benefits of being a university town to include the following
5. **Work in support of the Library Board of Trustees'** efforts to address issues relating to site selection.
6. **Determine future location of Town Center** (incorporating Town Office, Library, and other appropriate services) and Fire Department. He said he thought this Town Center should be on the present Town Hall site and that he thought they should discuss this.
7. **Work to more closely align efforts of boards and committees** with broad goals of Town Council and strengthen communication and collaboration between committees

8. **Expand recreational opportunities** by hiring a part-time recreational director.
9. **Preserve and maintain open space**, while balancing benefits against the broader municipal priorities.
10. **Engage the Oyster River Cooperative School Board** in an effort to support educational excellence while at the same time ensuring affordability for Durham taxpayers.
11. **Enhance affordability for Durham's senior citizens** by evaluating the elderly exemption and veteran tax credit amounts and qualifications currently in place and making modifications as necessary.
12. **Maintain the integrity of Durham neighborhoods** through collaborative relationships with the University of New Hampshire, the Durham Landlords Association, the Rental Housing Commission, and neighborhood residents.
13. **Monitor status of the Durham Business Park and Stone Quarry Drive TIF projects.**
 - Consider zoning changes within the Durham Business Park District.
 - Monitor status of Stone Quarry Drive TIF as needed.

Chair Niman asked Administrator Selig if he thought they should begin the discussion by talking about what was not on the list he had provided, and Administrator Selig said yes.

Chair Niman said he thought that a decision needed to be made about either fixing the Oyster River dam, or going forward with a study regarding possibly removing it.

Councilor Smith said this goal was implicit in #9 on Administrator Selig's list - "Preserve open space, vistas, farmland, forest and conservation lands."

Councilor Mower said it was reasonable to define this as a separate issue, and in a way that left open ended what the Council's actions would be on it.

Administrator Selig noted that there were many public works projects, and said he had categorized the Oyster River dam as one of them.

Councilor Mower said she didn't see that the impoundment issue as part of the Oyster River dam was under the Public Works Department.

Chair Niman said that in general, what Administrator Selig had put together was a great list. He said he had one little thing he would disagree with and would discuss later.

In response to a question from Councilor Smith, Administrator Selig noted that the words "town character" were woven throughout the draft list he had provided.

Councilor Mower said she would like to see discussion about committing to a set of sustainability principles, and perhaps exploring cooperative efforts with UNH as part of this.

She also spoke about the need for a comprehensive plan for the downtown, and Administrator Selig said the Downtown Community Core chapter of the Master Plan would address this.

Councilor Mower asked if a comprehensive plan would include some design guidelines. She noted that some developments were proposed for the downtown that could set the character of the entire area.

Administrator Selig said there was in fact a zoning framework to carry forward the 2000 Master Plan vision. But he said they should take a new look at the downtown to see if this vision should be modified, given today's realities. He said he recommended working on this in 2009, and completing it in 2010.

He said the items under #2 on his list of goals reflected more of a near term approach. He said these were things that could be done now as a jump start to drive the new vision, so they weren't waiting until 2010 to do some Zoning changes.

Councilor Mower noted that the idea of reducing unit sizes for apartments downtown, while not increasing overall density, had been discussed, and said she thought it was a good approach. She said if they talked about these kinds of specifics, she didn't see why they couldn't also discuss some architectural standards. She said that otherwise, they were at risk of having something they didn't want. She noted that Exeter had architectural standards.

Councilor Clark said that in regard to goal #6 on Administrator Selig's list, he didn't feel they should decide on where to build a new Town Hall/Library until a feasibility study was done. He also said he would include the Mill Pond Center as one of the possible locations, before it was gone.

He also said he thought there should be a conversation on the glaring need for professional oversight and consultation in order to help identify gaps, and to help get projects underway.

Councilor Clark said he had discussed with the EDC the fact that there were more ways to create municipal wealth than increasing the tax base. He said he could identify half a dozen ways, involving such things as renewable energy, clean, quaint public transportation for profit that transported people of all ages, etc. He said he also believed there were untapped opportunities to market Durham's historic nature as a tourist destination, in collaboration with private owners.

Councilor Mower agreed there were opportunities to promote Durham that hadn't been taken advantage of. She suggested allocating some funds in the Budget for marketing the Town online as well as doing other kinds of marketing.

Councilor Clark said if marketing Durham's historic nature was a goal, it might be possible to inspire property owners to recreate things coming out of the past, and to allow them to become commercial entities. He gave as an example the idea of ghost stories in Durham.

Councilor Mower suggested that this kind of thing might fit with 1 b. on Administrator's list, regarding environmental and cultural resources.

Councilor Carroll said she liked very much what Councilor Clark had said about the fact that there were more ways to create municipal wealth than increasing the tax base. She said with a greater sense of community in Durham, good transportation, access to cultural events, etc., the quality of life would be such that residents would feel wealthy at the community level.

Councilor Stanhope said his concern was that only those who were wealthy would be able to live in the community. He also said a concern was whether Councilor Clark's agenda was one that complemented economic development of the downtown core, noting that smart growth meant revitalizing the downtown.

He noted that the former Don Thompson property had sold at a significant increase in price, so the downtown was not experiencing declining property values. But he said the Council needed to encourage revitalization of a downtown area that was tired. He said he agreed that architectural guidelines were needed for the district, and also said it was reasonable to consider expanding the Historic District to include the entire Central Business District.

Councilor Stanhope said he was strongly opposed to the Town Hall site as the only possible site for a new Town Hall/Library, etc. He said rather than taking land that was very valuable economically, they should look at other sites that were more economically feasible.

Councilor Needell said Administrator Selig's statement on this issue was very strong, and said he was curious as to why. He said this was a very important topic still to be debated.

Chair Niman said that regarding Councilor Clark comments, he liked the idea of creating municipal wealth, and said they needed to figure out how to leverage Durham's water resources for recreation and commerce, in part to build its economic base. He noted that currently there was no commercial activity on the waterfront.

Councilor Van Asselt said he didn't agree with #6 - that the Town Hall site should be considered the definitive site of a new combined Town Office/Public Library. He also said the discussion on affordable housing seemed to have been lost. He said he didn't sense any great urgency or support by the Town for moving forward with rezoning, building cheaper housing, etc.

Administrator Selig said #1a on his list had specifically included affordable housing as part of development of the downtown.

Chair Niman said another place he saw affordable housing coming in was under #4, regarding continuing to explore cooperative efforts with UNH. He noted that the University was moving forward with the RFP for Leawood Orchards, and said it was his understanding that they wanted to put some affordable housing in as part of that development.

He said still another place where some affordable housing units might be possible was the Nubanusit type of residential development discussed by Chinburg Builders. He said if there were some projects like these where some affordable units could be included, perhaps they could turn the tide.

Councilor Van Asselt said he didn't agree, but said this was probably the level at which

affordable housing would surface in Durham. Regarding the quality of life issue, he said that quality wasn't very good if a resident no longer could afford to live in Town. He noted that Durham had the third highest taxes in the State, and said maybe that was just the way Durham was.

He said perhaps taxes weren't the problem that Councilors said they were. He said Durham was not an affordable community, and said people living on fixed incomes couldn't afford to live there. He said he didn't have a problem with that, but he said he thought they needed to say this. He said if instead, the goal was to make the Town more affordable, they needed to find a way to do this.

Councilor Needell said he didn't think the situation would be changed by tweaking the Budget here and there. He said if they accepted Councilor Van Asselt's premise that Durham was not affordable as he defined it, in order to change this, they needed to fundamentally change the Town. He asked what it would be that would have to change, and what they would have to give up compared to what the benefits would be.

He questioned what an affordable Durham would look like, and how things would have to be restructured in order to achieve this. He questioned whether Durham's un-affordability was because it hosted UNH, or did things like picking up trash, or something else. He said he didn't believe that the development projects would fundamentally change the tax structure.

Councilor Van Asselt said he didn't think it was a case of giving up something, it was a case of adding something. He said there was a narrow tax base, and said by increasing the economic base with commercial and industrial development, some residents saw this as adding benefits and some saw this as giving up Durham. He said this was a fundamental difference among residents.

Councilor Needell said what he was hearing was that the only answer to changing the tax situation was to bring substantial commercial/industrial development into the Town.

Chair Niman said he didn't agree with this. He said he thought there was potentially \$100,000,000- 120,000,000 of value in the downtown itself, noting that the total tax base currently was about \$900,000,000. But he said he didn't believe that everything could be concentrated downtown, and said other options had to be created.

He noted the new medical facilities in Lee and Dover, and said he didn't see why Durham couldn't have one of those. He said he also thought more could be done with the waterfront, if the area from Jackson's Landing to the Business Park was rezoned to allow some restaurants, etc., there. He said a Chinburg development could create about \$12 million of value, and said additional development he was describing could bump this up to about \$20 million.

Chair Niman said if Stone Quarry Drive was developed, that could be another \$30 million. He also said he thought it would only take 2-3 plots of land to create \$50-100 million from student housing. He said perhaps there could be another \$30 million of development near Goss that no one would ever see. He said all of this development totaled about \$300 million, which was about a third of the tax base. He said this would substantially alter the economics of the town, and said he didn't think these changes would ruin the quality of life in Durham.

Councilor Needell said a lot of people in Town were cheering the idea of development of the downtown, and saying that perhaps it could really work. He said the development of the outer areas of Town brought more questions. But he said it was really good to see the focus on the downtown, and also said he appreciated Chair Niman's clarity and honesty as to what it would take to increase the tax base. He said people needed to know this.

Chair Niman said a fundamental problem was that people were still asking why anyone would want to bring a Wal-Mart to Durham when it was clear neither Durham nor Wal-Mart were interested in locating a Wal-Mart here. He said he didn't think the kind of development he had outlined would change the character of Durham.

Councilor Stanhope said part of the character of Durham was that it was anti-business and unaffordable. He said developers didn't look at Durham because the property taxes were too high, and because they couldn't do business because of the codes. He said the Town needed to change developers' perceptions, to see that the Town was looking for high quality development in order to build its tax base.

He noted that Durham was one of the few towns with a university that has no major R&D firm in the service community, and also said he agreed the tax base could be rebuilt without changing the Town's character. He suggested changing #11 on the list, "Enhance affordability for Durham's senior citizens", by deleting the word "senior". He said they should look at the various ways that had been mentioned to create wealth, and said otherwise, it would be less and less affordable to live in Durham.

Councilor Sievert said it would be good to move the items listed under #2 to first place on Administrator Selig's list. He said it took too long to do things in Durham, and said that was part of the problem. He said he agreed that there didn't have to be one industrial block in Town to get where they needed to go, and said the development could be spread out. He said he didn't agree exactly with possible development currently being discussed for the Business Park, but said he did like the idea of having restaurants in that area. He also said he agreed with Councilor Stanhope's idea to remove the word "senior" from #11.

Councilor Sievert said he hoped everyone was cheering about development of the downtown, which he said was underway. He said it would be good if they could get going with the planning efforts for that area.

Councilor Mower said in general, Administrator Selig had created an excellent list. She suggested that some of the cheering about the downtown might be about the basic concept of redevelopment. She said she had heard some questions about whether residents would want a hotel conference center there, and said the Council should get community input on this.

Concerning affordable housing, she suggested possibly working with UNH to see if there were properties that were currently privately owned that might be appropriate for junior faculty and graduate housing.

She said the Council should look at the idea of working with UNH to make a commitment to

sustainability regarding land use practices, and requiring low impact development. She noted that other towns in New Hampshire and across the country were doing this.

Councilor Mower said she understood Councilor Van Asselt's basic question about what they all wanted Durham to be in terms of affordability, and whether there was something they wanted to change regarding this.

Councilor Carroll said taxes were the key to affordability. But she said the houses built in Durham in recent years had been at the large end, and said it was hard to find something that was more moderately priced. She said these kinds of houses weren't being built anymore, and said this issue fit into what they envisioned for their community, and was another piece of the affordability puzzle.

Councilor Needell said his goal, and a goal he thought should be a Council goal, was to make sure the Town was following its ordinances in the running of the Town. He said some Councilors were visionaries, but said his goal was to make sure the Council carried out its ordinances in a fair way, in accordance with its governing principles.

He said the marketing of the downtown was to be done by Administrator Selig, Mr. Campbell, and the EDC, but said what got built was determined by the Zoning Ordinance. He said if they wanted to control what happened downtown, it was through the Zoning Ordinance. He said he felt a goal of the Council should be to get the Zoning Ordinance where it wanted it to be, but said the Council should then move on to other things. He said the Council was not there to manage the development process.

Councilor Sievert said one of the reasons Durham didn't have affordable housing was because of the regulation changes concerning soils about three years ago, so that one could hardly get any houses on a large parcel. He noted that this had now changed somewhat.

Councilor Clark said when they talked about affordable housing, this related to the integrity of the neighborhoods. He said the situation was driven almost completely by the imbalance between supply and demand for student housing, noting that every time duplexes were built, they knew it would go to student housing. He said this imbalance needed to be addressed, so they would have a fighting chance of bring affordable housing to Durham.

Councilor Clark said a Core Purpose of the Council should be to do short as well as long term planning. He said he believed the Council had two roles to play, and said the current wording concerning Core Purpose sounded more operational than visionary. He said he would like to see words that said the Council accepted its role as visionaries.

He said his feeling was that the only way to do sustainable development was to come to terms with the fact that the Town needed to invest in the infrastructure for it. He said the Town had been reluctant to invest in this way, but said such an investment would generate a return over time. He said they needed to find a way to do this.

Councilor Mower agreed that this was a very important distinction, concerning investment. She asked whether the Town had looked into the cost of community services when a new

development was brought in, and noted that a person at UNH had been engaged in determining this. She said they didn't have a good handle on this, and suggested that perhaps it could be done by Zoning district.

Councilor Van Asselt said they didn't make this kind of investment because 70% of it went down the street. He said he would like to see a goal that encouraged the Council to work toward broadening the tax base beyond the single family home, with high quality development and smart growth. He said the priority should be the downtown area, but said other areas in Town could also be identified, and could be developed in a way that protected open space and rural character.

He said this spoke to what Councilor Needell had said about what the Council's job was. He said if they agreed with the kind of development he had described, and saw that it was possible, they could let it happen.

Councilor Van Asselt said if they wanted to develop affordable housing in Durham, it could be done. He noted that students could be restricted from such housing. He said the Town could work with UNH on the development of Leawood Orchards, and said they would have a much better chance of getting there if they created a housing authority. He said he would like to see this as a Council goal.

Councilor Stanhope said if they were able to address #10, "Engage the Oyster River Cooperative School Board", and rein in expenses, that would free up local tax dollars. He also said investing in infrastructure could create a lot of important things. He said if the Town extended water and sewer to some tracts of land, density could be increased while conserving portions of the tracts for conservation. He said this could create some affordable housing, but he said capital was needed for this, and said the question was where it would come from. He said he did think that if the investment wasn't made, the Town would stay stagnant.

Councilor Stanhope said affordability didn't just have to do with the price of a home; it had to do with the property tax bill. He provided details on this, and said junior faculty and other people who worked at the University didn't live in Durham because of this. He said this problem wouldn't be solved until they invested in the community and attracted good quality growth. He said if they were just dedicated to preserving farmland, there would be shops closing downtown on a regular basis.

Chair Niman said he was aware that the School Board had been talking about doing a strategic planning process.

Councilor Clark said he thought this would be a critical year for the School District. He said there would be an initiative to create a real strategic plan, and said the Council would have the opportunity to participate in the discussions. He said he thought this should be a Council goal. He said it didn't seem unreasonable to ask if there could be an update of the relationship with the School Board, including the creation of some articles of agreement, which were now required for school districts.

Councilor Mower asked if that would require that the Council meet in some way with the

governing bodies of the other towns, before moving forward, and Councilor Clark said yes.

Chair Niman asked about the idea of using sustainability principles, and Councilor Mower noted that the Energy Committee had been looking into this. She also said that as part of the Natural Step concept, these principles had been adopted by the City of Portsmouth.

Chair Niman said in order to adopt them, there would need to be more specificity.

Councilor Clark said he had some wording on sustainability, and related to ideas from the Energy Committee and the Economic Development Committee.

Chair Niman said he would like to see more detail on this before saying it would be put in the Goals document, and suggested that perhaps Councilor Clark and Councilor Mower could draft something on this.

Councilor Mower noted the work Portsmouth had done as well as the UNH Office of Sustainability. She suggested working toward adopting a set of principles, rather than doing something hastily.

Chair Niman said a Goal could say the Council could work toward adopting sustainability principles.

Councilor Mower said this set of draft principles could work its way through the various Town boards and departments.

Chair Niman spoke regarding a comment that had been made that some people in Town were unhappy with the idea of a hotel/conference center project downtown. He said such a development would represent \$15 million in taxable property value, and could be a possible foundation for getting more restaurants and retail opportunities downtown. He asked why people didn't want this.

Councilor Mower said there was some skepticism about the demand for such a project, and noted that there were questions about what was going on with the New England Center. She said there were also questions about whether people would truly be turning to Durham for the kinds of services such a facility would offer, or instead would go to Holloway Commons or Portsmouth.

She said some of the questions had to do with trying to imagine a hotel/conference center at the location of the Town and Campus. She said perhaps it would help if the Town got some professional planners to help with this. She also said some people didn't understand that there would be a tax benefit from doing such a development.

She said she was not as clear how much the Council bought into this concept. She said she agreed with what Councilor Needell had said about letting the market determine whether it would work, and whether people would then buy into it, given the Master Plan and the Zoning Ordinance.

Chair Niman said a hotel/conference center, a redeveloped Mill Plaza, and a performing arts

center couldn't happen without a place for people to park. He said there would have to be a discussion on the need for a parking structure at some point, if they wanted to see some of this kind of development downtown.

Councilor Mower noted that there had been discussion on the idea of a parking structure as part of the Mill Plaza Study Committee's work.

Councilor Stanhope left the meeting at 8:25 pm.

Councilor Clark said the hotel/convention center idea would be a lot less scary if they were to adopt #2 on the list, and as part of this did a full comprehensive plan of what the entire downtown district might look like, including transportation aspects. He said such a development should be shown in the context of a downtown 10 years from now, and said it could fit in gracefully and accomplish all of their objectives in terms of density, diversity, and economic vitality.

He said residents were less intimidated by redeveloping an already developed district than an undeveloped district. He said the Council should focus for the next 2-3 years on an area they could really make good progress on, with less resistance, to show that this kind of investment and development actually enhanced the character of the Town.

Councilor Mower noted that it could be difficult envisioning possible development, and said this underscored the need to have professional planners come up with ideas.

Administrator Selig said this was why the goals he had put down included revisiting the Master Plan, to try to get at what the vision was. He also noted that he had characterized affordability as tax stabilization, with a concerted focus on the downtown core. He said there was a middle ground in terms of development, which most of the community would be able to buy into. He said the challenge was finding those projects, and helping to facilitate them in a way that allowed people to provide input on them.

He noted that the Zoning Ordinance allowed the hotel/conference center, and said he saw this as a wonderful opportunity to create a critical mass downtown of retail and housing that would make it a wonderful place to go.

Councilor Mower said there would clearly need to be traffic considerations as part of such a development.

Councilor Clark noted that Portsmouth had retained its historic character with developments that had commercial uses on the first floor, offices on the second floor, and residential uses on the upper floors.

Councilor Mower noted that there was very firm guidance as to how things look in Portsmouth's downtown, even if it wasn't exactly in the Zoning code. She said she believed the city was also working on design guidelines.

Councilor Clark said he didn't believe that anyone was going to spend millions of dollars on a

new building and have it not fit in. He said he had no problem with the idea of rough guidelines, and also said the University would be a good partner to make sure they started out on the right foot. He said they should push ahead.

Administrator Selig said he would like to have a sense upfront of what the Council would support, noting that this was a significant help when out meeting with people, and in terms of what to try to implement.

Chair Niman summarized how the revised goals list would be compiled, using some items on Administrator Selig's list as well as a list of items he had developed based on Councilors' comments. He said they would then see if the list was something that everyone could agree on. He said there would be the opportunity to make minor changes to the list as well.

Councilor Smith said there was a danger that the Council would get bogged down if it went through the list systematically.

Chair Niman asked if Councilor Smith was proposing that Councilors make suggestions about possible changes, and then discuss a compiled list on this at the next Council meeting.

Councilor Smith said that was one way to do this. He then said he would like to give some examples of how some items on Administrator Selig's list could be expanded. He noted that many of the residents with property that abutted the Mill Pond, as well as others who overlooked the pond, were now agitated because of fears that the pond would be drained. He said he would like some language in #12 of the Goals that had to do with protecting the integrity of established neighborhoods, not just from students, but from this kind of situation.

He also asked regarding #8, "Expand Recreational Opportunities", whether it would be possible to lease land on the Mill Pond for a canoe and rowboat rental place that also might have a bait shack. He said he would love that.

He said that as part of #9, "Preserve Open space.." they should include preserving things they already had, like the open space of the Mill Pond, and the vistas there.

Councilor Smith also said in regard to #8 that Margery Milne, who had given about 2 acres on the pond to the Town, hated the warning signs that the wildlife shouldn't be fed. He said if they wanted to expand recreational opportunities, they should take these signs down so kids could feed the birds. He said she would like Durham to be a much friendlier place, where people could make use of what they had.

He said a good thing that would come out of the agitation over what to do with the Oyster River dam was that a lot more people would start paying attention to the Mill Pond and the recreational opportunities there. He said a boat rental place there could also rent snow shoes and cross country skis, and could have hot toddies.

Councilor Mower thanked Councilor Smith for his comments about protecting the integrity of the neighborhoods not just from students. She noted that one resident had mentioned to her that Durham should protect what it had, in the face of development.

Councilor Van Asselt spoke in some detail on areas where conflicts in goals could occur, and said this pointed out the difficulty of setting goals. He noted that 2d, “Support continued efforts to encourage Mill Plaza development” could be in direct conflict with protecting the Chesley Drive neighborhood.

He also said one of the ways to address the problem of parents buying houses and making them into apartments for their college kids was to work with the University and develop Leawood Orchard. But he said that brought up the issue of the need for water and sewer out there, and that this could lead to possible further development out there, and that all of these things could change one of the Town’s gateways.

Administrator Selig said that was where Core Values and having a fair and open-minded approach to issues came in. He said there would be proposals that would require Councilors and members of the Planning Board to make value judgments, and said this had to be kept in mind. He said they couldn’t create goals that anticipated every contingency, and said the intent was to look forward over the next 1-3 years to look at the things the Council wanted to spend its time on.

Councilor Van Asselt said what he had thought Councilor Needell had said was that the role of the Council was to make the judgment about how to proceed concerning development, and to let the market take it from there.

Councilor Needell said it was important to make choices about the direction they wanted to go in, and said the manifestation of this was the ordinances that were approved. He said that was why the Zoning Ordinance wasn’t written to address one particular location.

He said what he had been concerned with in the past was tweaks to the Ordinance to address one local problem, and said the problem with this was that this same language could have a tremendously different impact someplace else. He said they needed to be able to see those linkages upfront. He said he thought he agreed with what Councilor Van Asselt had said.

There was discussion that the Council had to make conscious choices.

Councilor Van Asselt said an issue was whether professional help was needed to look at all of this.

Councilor Needell described the importance of doing the homework upfront, and said it wasn’t easy.

Councilor Clark said what Administrator Selig had put together was a great list. But he said he worried that it was too broad. He said the only way around a no-win discussion was to focus on an area that allowed a broad enough discussion for the integration of all the ideas into one project. He said #2 was a way to get things started on something they could put a comprehensive plan together for. He said he had to believe they would be better served by finding one theme and one project and creating a comprehensive plan around it.

Councilor Van Asselt said perhaps some priority should be put on the goals. He provided details on this.

Chair Niman said if they were going to do this, they needed to set the list. He suggested that instead of using numbers, they could ask Councilors to arrange them in the order in which they would like to prioritize them.

Councilor Carroll said she liked the idea of using stars rather than numbers. She also said some of these goals had a reality base to them, noting two plans before the Planning Board for the downtown. She said she thought it behooved the Council to pay attention to the downtown area, and bring planning together so that the projects were the best that they could be, and that there were plans for the area around them. She said the Townspeople were excited about development of the downtown, and said they should use this excitement.

She also said things that didn't get starred would still get attention over the course of the year, but just wouldn't be worked on in as focused a way as the higher priority items.

Chair Niman suggested that they could agree to focus on the downtown, and then see what else was on the list. He said they could also choose the top 3 or 5 things, starred, with everything else equal after that. He said they could agree on how many goals to focus on.

Councilor Needell said having 13 goals was unwieldy, also noting that some of these goals were huge. He said a strategic plan would cover a number of the goals. He also spoke about his disappointment that the core purpose and core values had been taken out the previous year, and said they were the reason he was on the Council.

He gave examples of goals on the list such as maintaining the integrity of Durham neighborhoods, and expanding recreation opportunities, which he said he thought fell under the Core Purpose statement. He said perhaps it was time to take some of them off the list.

He said it was time to be more focused, and set in place a strategic planning process for the downtown. He said if they were also at the same time trying to update chapters of the Master Plan, there wouldn't be time for the Council to do much else.

Chair Niman said Councilor Clark had come up with a real example of strategic planning, which he thought was a comprehensive, integrated plan. He said he personally would feel comfortable with what Councilor Clark had articulated, and said if Councilors wanted to adopt just this, he would be fine with that. He asked how Councilor Needell felt about this.

Councilor Needell said it would be good to pick goals #1 and #2 from Administrator Selig's list, in either order, as the focus of the Council's efforts, and the Town's efforts for this year. He also said he was fine with working with the strategic planning process Councilor Clark had outlined. He said it was most important that there be a 2-3 year time horizon.

Councilor Sievert said he disagreed regarding not including the recreation goal, stating that there weren't enough recreation opportunities in Durham. He reviewed other goals that were on the list and said these things were understood, and said some were part of the Council's core purpose.

He said the numbering of the goals didn't matter, and also stressed that it was the Council that was setting the goals.

Councilor Mower asked that they fold sustainability issues into the strategic planning process, and not forget about them. There was discussion that this would be embedded in the strategic plan.

Councilor Clark said he hadn't been thinking of doing an entire strategic plan. He said what he had been thinking was that they should look at the Master Plan, pick some themes out of it, and put a more comprehensive, long term plan in place, instead of doing shorter term tactical planning. He said this was a good time to think more strategically because of what the School Board and the University were undertaking, and said it was good for the Council to be in sync with that.

He said any project the Council picked could hit on a number of the goals. He suggested that they at least think about two goals, because they might find that one of them might not be such a good idea next year. He said one project would probably get more momentum than the other, and said his sense was that the CBD was something they ought to take on.

Councilor Clark said he also thought there were a lot of opportunities to integrate the ideas behind the Town center, Library, and recreational opportunities. He said his hope was that this would become one big project, and said he thought it would be another good project to put on the Council's list.

Councilor Van Asselt said he wouldn't take anything off the list Administrator Selig had developed, and said sustainability principles and a housing authority were goals that could be added. But he said goals 1 and 2 were the things the Council should be working on. He said 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8 were goals that staff would continue to work on. He 7, 10 and 11 were just there, and should be worked on at some point.

He said regarding the Budget goal, Administrator Selig had always figured out how to address the Budget issues. He said he would therefore be happy to see a five page document from him on the Budget, and would probably approve it. He also said that however the list of goals got revised, any Councilor could bring forward an idea at any time.

Chair Niman summarized that they would use stars, for # 1 and #2, and that Councilor Clark's idea for a town center/library/recreation would become another star. He said the rest of the goals from Administrator Selig's list would be unnumbered. He said he and Administrator Selig would combine notes on other ideas that Councilors had provided into an unnumbered list, and then would see if anyone wanted to kick anything off the list.

Councilor Clark said that was a great way to proceed, He said if people had ideas as to how to accomplish anything on the list, they should bring them up at meetings and the Council could tackle them.

Councilor Needell asked if this approach would fold into a strategic planning approach for achieving the goals.

Councilor Clark suggested that part of the job of updating the Master Plan was to update the strategic process for how to accomplish this. He said perhaps the consultant could help them with this.

Chair Niman said he agreed they needed to address what Councilor Needell had said. But he said he wanted to get the list of goals done as soon as possible. He said they could tackle the strategic planning process after that.

Councilor Mower asked if they should be considering UNH's strategic planning process as well. She spoke in some detail on this.

Administrator Selig explained that this was already being done.

Councilor Mower asked if there was the opportunity to provide feedback on this.

Chair Niman said there was the University's strategic planning process and the master planning process, which were two different things. He said in the University's strategic planning to date, there was the recognition that more revenues needed to be generated. He also said their focus right now was on graduate and non-degree programs. But he noted that the dean of the Business School wanted to grow it by 40%, and was hoping that a new building would create the physical plant that would allow him to do this.

Councilor Needell said there was very little growth planned for the student population of the University, in its 2004 Master Plan, except for the graduate programs. Councilor Needell said there had been, at the Town's request, a significant movement to put more beds on campus. He noted some recent shifts as to whether the Town wanted the University to have all the beds, and said it was important to discuss this.

It was agreed that Councilors could email minor changes they would like to recommend to the goals.

Administrator Selig said the next draft would be forwarded to Councilors the Friday before the next meeting.

Councilor Sievert MOVED to adjourn. Councilor Clark SECONDED the motion, and it PASSED unanimously 8-0.

Adjournment at 9:18 pm

Victoria Parmele, Minutes taker