

These minutes were approved at the January 24, 2018 meeting.

DURHAM PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, November 8, 2017
Town Council Chambers 7:00 p.m.
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Rasmussen, Chair
Barbara Dill, Vice Chair
Lorne Parnell
Carden Welsh, Alternate Council Representative to the
Planning Board
Nathaniel Morneault, alternate

MEMBERS ABSENT Bob Brown, Secretary
Bill McGowan
Andrew Corrow
Councilor Jim Lawson, Council Representative to the
Planning Board

I. Call to Order

Chair Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

II. Roll Call and Seating of Alternates.

The roll call was taken.

III. Approval of Agenda

Lorne Parnell MOVED to approve the Agenda. Councilor Welsh SECONDED the motion and it PASSED unanimously 4-0.

Chair Rasmussen appointed Mr. Morneault as a voting member for the meeting in place of Mr. McGowan.

IV. Public Hearing - Riverwoods Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC) – Stone Quarry Drive. Site plan, lot line adjustment, and conditional use application for CCRC to be located on a vacant 11.3-acre site in the northeast quadrant of the junction of Route 108 and Route 4 (one lot in from Route 108). The project will contain 150 independent-living apartments, 24 assisted-living apartments, 24 memory-care units, and 24 skilled-nursing units. Applicant - The RiverWoods Group, c/o Justine Vogel, CEO. Property owner - Rockingham Properties, c/o Dave Garvey, partner. Engineer – Jeff Clifford, Altus Engineering. Landscape architect – Robbi Woodburn. Architect – AG Architecture (Milwaukee). Attorney – Sharon Cuddy Somers, DT&C. Map 11, Lots 8-1 through 8-15. Office Research District

Postponed

V. Future Land Use Chapter

Mr. Behrendt read some comments from Mr. Brown, the Chair of the Future Land Use Committee, which thanked all those who'd participated in developing the chapter in one way or another.

SRPC planner James Burdin provided a slide presentation. He said the Future Land Use Committee was formed in 2016. He thanked the committee members and others who'd contributed to the process of developing the chapter, including the businesses and community organizations that had participated. He explained the various ways that outreach was done so ideas and opinions from as many Durham residents as possible could be heard.

- A forum attended by over 100 people
- interviews conducted by Durham resident Mark McPeak with some of the Town's oldest residents
- interactive posters put up in buildings around Town, which resulted in a large number of comments
- outreach at the Music on Main and Durham Family Camping events
- input from the Business focus group on their particular issues
- input from various Durham boards and commissions

Mr. Burdin said the Existing Land Use and Future Land Use chapters as well as the Vision chapter were the only required Master Plan chapters according to State statute. He said in developing the Future Land Use chapter, the committee looked back at all of the information that was included in the 10 other chapters the Planning Board had adopted in 2015. He noted the significant role the recommendations in the Existing Land Use Chapter, the previous 2011 survey and the Vision chapter played in developing the chapter.

He said the FLU chapter was supposed to be a culmination and integration of all of those other chapters and information. He explained that some new GIS mapping was done, and also said some additional research was done on communities similar to Durham to consider possible implementation strategies.

He said the Committee wanted to hold true to and be as consistent possible with the guidance provided in the Vision Chapter. He said to do that, there were 4 themes that were used as guidance: Community; Connectivity; Balance; Quality of Place. He spoke in some detail on each of these themes and what they entailed for Durham, using the slides he'd provided.

Mr. Burdin next spoke about the concept of an urban transect, and explained how it had been applied in developing the chapter, in a way that reflected Durham in particular. He walked the Planning Board through the thought process the Future Land Use Committee went through in developing the transect with SRPC, using feedback received from the forum, etc.

He said one of the issues looked at was areas outside of the downtown where there could be a market for commercial development. He noted that residents at the forum had been asked

where, if there was going to be additional commercial development, it was likely to be accepted by the public. He said people placed stickers on a map to indicate this, and also indicated where they didn't want to see development. He said Route 108 south was one of the least popular options, and said portions of Route 4 and Route 155A were also unpopular. He said there was less opposition to commercial development on Technology Drive and West Edge, and expanding upon what was currently along Route 108 near the interchange with Route 4. He noted that if the Riverwoods project was approved, it would take up about a third of the land available near the interchange.

Mr. Burdin spoke in some detail about the updated GIS mapping that was done, using the GIS layers used in the Existing Land Use chapter GIS mapping and analysis done in 2015. He said some developable land had been identified, noting that it was somewhat of an overestimate, and that there was very little difference between it and what came out of the GIS analysis of developable land in 2011. He said one of the differences was that the Durham Business Park had now been developed.

He said based on this mapping and analysis, 6 land use designations were designated for the Durham transect. He said this was not intended to replace the Zoning map or to identify any overlay districts, and was simply intended to look at the different parts of Durham and how they functioned. He said the transect was a planning tool to inform discussion going forward.

- **Rural designation** – largest area, consisting of conserved land, agricultural areas, low density residential development.
- **Rural to Town core transition area** - a blend between denser areas in the core, closer to transit access, perhaps bikable to Town
- **Main Street west area** - connects a variety of ideas about UNH's future development and the Town's development in that part of Town. Possible future research/business park, with good access to Route 4 and Route 155; area has water and sewer.
- **Town core area** - walkable area into downtown; some of the development there is less intense than the downtown, but is building toward greater intensity
- **Campus core** – the heart of UNH
- **The Downtown core**

Mr. Burdin noted the recommendations table in the Existing Land Use Chapter, which came out of the other 10 Master Plan chapters. He said some additional recommendations were developed for the Future Land Use chapter, and said these were not meant to replace the previous recommendations. He also explained that the committee didn't want to duplicate recommendations that already existed, and also tried to find ways to fill gaps, integrate a number of recommendations into a single recommendation, and develop a physical representation of the recommendations.

Councilor Welsh said he appreciated the work that had been done on the chapter. He said a problem he had in reading it was concerning the discussion on housing options. He said he agreed with the conclusion that there should be different housing options near the developed areas in Town, but said he thought the evidence concerning housing provided in the chapter was incorrect.

He first said the school population was increasing, not decreasing, so it didn't seem that housing prices were keeping families out. He spoke about the inaccuracy of predictions on population over the years. He also noted information provided by Councilor Lawson on how much affordable housing there was in Durham, and asked Mr. Burdin to look at it. In addition, he said the chapter spoke about the increase in housing prices since 1990, but he said mortgage rates then were 10% as compared to now, when they were 4%. He said it was therefore cheaper in 2010 to buy a house compared to in 1990, if one looked at interest rates, inflation, and taxes. He said it therefore didn't seem like expensive housing was causing the housing problems in Durham.

Councilor Welsh said he therefore didn't think the evidence provided in the chapter on housing was needed, and said the issue was the need for more housing options. He said of course in Durham the problem was that although they all would like to see other demographics living downtown, whenever market rate housing was put in, it was student housing.

Mr. Parnell said a general comment about the chapter was that it was somewhat confusing. He said the presentation this evening on what was in the chapter was easier to comprehend than the chapter was. He recommended avoiding buzzwords, and suggested editing the chapter to make the wording more straightforward. He also asked what the purpose was of having the transects, and said it wasn't clear what the Planning Board was supposed to do with that information and with the chapter in general concerning future land use in Durham. He said perhaps there needed to be some conclusions presented.

Mr. Morneault said he was interested to see the information Councilor Welsh had on housing costs, interest rates, etc. He said as a real estate broker, he saw that 99% of buyers he dealt with couldn't afford to live in Durham at a \$300,000 median purchase price. He spoke about the debt/income ratio people were expected to have these days, and also spoke about the property taxes for a \$300,000 house. Carden said they were 3%.

Chair Rasmussen said while the cost of housing might be the same, disposable income needed to be factored in, and said salaries had been flat over the last 15-20 years compared to what they were before that. Mr. Morneault spoke about the importance of debt/income ratio in being able to purchase a house, and noted that people had higher debts these days.

Councilor Welsh said that was a choice. He said what really affected the affordability of housing in the 1990s was 10% mortgage rates. He spoke further on this, and there was discussion. Councilor Welsh noted concerning housing affordability that taxes hadn't been rising in recent years, because of a flat tax rate. He said he'd send Mr. Morneault the information.

There was discussion about Mr. Parnell's comments that the chapter was somewhat unclear, but the slide presentation was constructive. Chair Rasmussen said the question was how to make the chapter clearer to someone who would be looking at it for the first time. Mr. Behrendt spoke about identifying smaller themes within each of the 4 larger themes, using headings. Mr. Parnell agreed, and also said the building block idea Mr. Burdin had used was helpful. Mr. Burdin said he could make the building blocks clearer in the

narrative.

There was discussion about working some of the information on the slides. into the chapter. There was also discussion about the photos in the chapter and whether they were simply placeholders. Administrator Selig asked Mr. Burdin to let him know what kinds of photos were needed.

Chair Rasmussen noted that the chapter currently introduced the transect concept and supporting information, but the transect itself came at the end. He said perhaps this should be reversed.

Mr. Behrendt said in a lot of communities, the zoning ordinance/map was old and didn't reflect what was on the ground. He said Durham's Zoning Ordinance was quite good, and there wasn't that much of a gap between the Zoning map and the Ordinance itself. He said a key piece of future land use chapters was often a map that showed desired future land uses in a town, and said this map was used to overhaul the zoning map. But he said he didn't think it was necessary to do such a map for Durham. He said the transect map was a planning tool that was illustrative, and said it could be referred to when a Zoning change was planned.

Mr. Parnell said the text on multiunit housing in the chapter would be advocating for some zoning changes, which would be controversial. He asked if the Future Land Use committee was suggesting changes in regard to this, or was just opening up the discussion. Chair Rasmussen said the chapter was meant to say what it was envisioned the Town would look like in 2025. Mr. Behrendt said multifamily housing was a big challenge for the committee, also noting that affordability and diversity and how to achieve this were big themes. He spoke further on this, and said the committee didn't come up with a great answer. Mr. Parnell said there was an objective without a means to address it.

Ms. Dill asked how Councilor Welsh's information, if available, would have affected the writing of the chapter.

Mr. Burdin said it appeared that the committee was struggling not with the information at its disposal (from the other Master Plan chapters), but with finding consensus about what should go where. He said residents on the whole were open to different types of housing, but there needed to be various conditions, concerning possible impacts, etc. He said it wasn't clear to the committee what the community wanted, and said to determine this, a lot more time would have been needed. He said that was why one of the recommendations was to do a residential housing model. He said the transect served as a Future Land Use map in terms of showing functions and interactions but not specific uses, and he spoke further on this.

There was discussion on the degree to which different demographics were represented in the comments received from residents. Mr. Morneault said it was important to get a variety of opinions. Chair Rasmussen provided details on the forum, community events, and other means for getting input from residents for the chapter.

Councilor Welsh asked if the committee found differences between responses received at

the forum and responses received through other means. Mr. Burdin said they didn't hear about the gateway idea outside of the forum. He also said the business group focused on some distinct issues, including infrastructure resources.

Ms. Dill said she didn't know of any other places in Town that had the restrictions on it that the Durham Business Park had. She said the draft of the chapter implied that there might be more places in Town like that. There was discussion on this.

Mr. Behrendt spoke about the fact that some of the Master Plan chapters, and the recommendations in them were so thorough that the committee hadn't been sure what could be added for the Future Land Use chapter, how much overlap/repetition of recommendations there should be, etc. He said he wasn't sure that this was ever clarified. Mr. Burdin said he thought the committee was pretty comfortable that it was trying to integrate what had already been done and wasn't trying to redo or replace this, and instead was looking at what was next. He spoke further on this.

There was discussion about whether the chapter was ready to go to public hearing, or if some significant changes needed to be made first. Mr. Behrendt said there was more that could be done to organize the chapter more clearly, and said this could be done before or after a public hearing.

Ms. Dill said she valued the discussion tonight but was sorry there weren't more Planning Board members present, as well as members of the Future Land Use Committee. She said she didn't think the chapter was ready for the public hearing. Mr. Behrendt said the chapter could be revised based on the comments this evening, or the Board could discuss it further first.

Councilor Welsh said some of the big comments had to do with factual things, concerning housing affordability. He said there was also the question of whether the chapter provided enough guidance. He noted that the last Master Plan was more detailed than this one concerning future land use.

Ms. Copeland said the comments from Mr. Parnell and others had been very helpful, and she explained how the chapter could be reorganized. She also said they would correct the data as necessary. She said the transect approach with the six designations brought some real value to the Town, in that it provided forms for people to start looking at. She spoke further on this.

Councilor Welsh recommended laying things out as they were presented this evening. There was further discussion on ways to organize the chapter, and Mr. Burdin summarized for the Board how he would proceed. He said he thought he could have a draft back to the Board by November 22nd.

Ms. Dill asked Mr. Burdin if he thought the discussion in the chapter on floor to area ratio was helpful. Mr. Burdin said it was a concept that allowed one to think about density in a different way. Ms. Dill said she found the discussion to be out of place, and said she didn't think it would be a loss if it was removed. Mr. Burdin said he would do a better job of

connecting it to surrounding text or would take it out. Mr. Morneault suggested that a better way could be found to fit the concept in. Chair Rasmussen suggested that it could be tied into the transect discussion, or attached to recommendations.

Mr. Burdin said floor area ratio was something that could go into the Zoning Ordinance as a tool, and said it was directly related to the residential zoning audit discussed in the chapter and was why it was on that page. He said he'd put more text in to connect them better.

Chair Rasmussen said the plan would still be have the public hearing on the chapter on November 29th. He asked Mr. Burdin to get the revised chapter back to the Planning Board by November 21st.

VI. Adjournment

Lorne Parnell MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Welsh SECONDED the motion and it PASSED unanimously 5-0.

Adjournment at 8:43 pm

Victoria Parmele, Minutes taker

Bob Brown, Secretary