

These minutes were approved at the June 8, 2022 meeting.

DURHAM PLANNING BOARD
Wednesday, May 18, 2022
WORKSHOP
Town Council Chambers 7:00 p.m.
MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Rasmussen, Chair
Heather Grant, Vice Chair
Lorne Parnell
Emily Friedrichs(alternate) (arrived late)
Barbara Dill (alternate)
Nick Germain (alternate)
Sally Tobias, Council Representative to the Planning Board
Chuck Hotchkiss, Council Representative to the Planning Board (alternate)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill McGowan
James Bubar, Secretary
Richard Kelley

I. Call to Order

Chair Rasmussen called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. Roll Call & Seating of Alternates

A roll call was taken.

Chair Rasmussen appointed Ms. Dill in place of Mr. Kelley and Mr. Germain for Mr. McGowan.

Chair Rasmussen stated that he would like to look at past projects and see whether things are working well or not. He would like to determine how future projects might be affected.

Town Planner Michael Behrendt gave a presentation of five past projects in chronological order: The Lodges, Orion, Madbury Commons, Mathes Terrace and Riverwoods.

Lodges: Approved in 2012. Good design except for one flaw – the view from Mast Road is not well buffered.

Orion: Approved in 2014. In the Historic District. Two of the existing buildings were preserved. Two buildings designated for commercial use have never been occupied.

Madbury Commons: Approved in 2014. There was an architectural committee that worked with the developer.

Mathes Terrace: Denied in 2014. One of only three Planning Board denials in the last 10 years. It was denied based on the Architectural Regulations.

Riverwoods: Approved in 2018. There was community support because a lot of Durham residents were interested in living there.

Chair Rasmussen asked the Board which projects they would like to discuss first. It was determined to start with the newest project and work back.

Riverwoods – Chair Rasmussen asked if the building should have been oriented towards Route 4 rather than Route 108? Ms. Grant mentioned that she believes it just needs more trees for a buffer. There was discussion on buffers using trees. Mr. Parnell feels it is completely out of scale for the Town of Durham. Councilor Tobias mentioned that the Town didn't get as much financially due to the Pilot program. Chair Rasmussen asked Mr. Behrendt his views on the architecture. Mr. Behrendt feels the massing of it is pretty good, but over all it could have had some more variety and color.

Chair Rasmussen asked if they were to see this project come through again, would they do anything different? Ms. Grant mentioned that she would have like to have seen more done with the landscaping. Mr. Parnell mentioned that he would like to put a curb on the size of the building. Mr. Germain asked if this size project sets a precedent for future projects. Mx. Friedrichs stated that you can still look at the cumulative impact to a Town for future projects. Mr. Parnell mentioned that there is flexibility when you're dealing with conditional use. Mr. Behrendt stated that you can take into account what you've learned from previous projects so there is flexibility with new development.

Madbury Commons - Council Tobias mentioned that the placement of the garbage pick-up area is in a poor place. She said that the commercial space was not fitted out for the type of business that is good for Durham. Ms. Grant stated that a marketing plan is needed from future commercial developers. Mr. Rasmussen stated that he feels that bike racks are obsolete for future developments.

Orion - There was continued discussion about the lack of desirability of the commercial space in this development. Mr. Parnell stated that some sort of plan for commercial spaces is important going forward. There was lengthy discussion on the challenges for new commercial tenants in Durham including parking, rents, etc. Mr. Behrendt mentioned that some of the issues with Orion were discussed by the Planning Board at the time, but there weren't always good alternatives available.

Lodges – Councilor Tobias mentioned that this is what you would see as a normal housing development. She stated that it has the best opportunity for transitioning to non-student tenants at some time. Mx. Friedrichs mentioned that Riverwoods brings in more of the native elements, but this project feels like it could be from anywhere. Ze asked Mr. Behrendt if he would change any of the architectural elements. Mr. Behrendt stated that he likes portions of it, but it isn't indigenous architecture. He mentioned that the green area between the buildings was encouraged by the Planning Board. There was additional discussion on the lack of buffer on this property along Mast Road. Mr.

Behrendt stated that now the Board asks for views which did not happen with the project. He mentioned that the Board later asked the Lodges to put in more supplemental planting in exchange for the Lodges' request for additional units. Mr. Parnell spoke about the walkway to the University of New Hampshire. Mr. Behrendt mentioned that the walkway was a good example of an off-site improvement that was required by the Board. There was discussion on encouraging pedestrian connectivity in future projects.

Mathes Terrace – Ms. Grant mentioned that the buildings down in that area are not in the best of shape. Councilor Tobias mentioned that she would love to see someone with a vision develop that area. She stated that there is quite a bit of commercial potential there. Mr. Parnell asked if all the buildings are owned by the same person. Mr. Behrendt is not sure. He stated that there are five buildings. He stated that the Heritage Commission was strongly opposed to it. He stated that the project was denied based on mass, and the developer appealed the denial to court. However, the owners of Madbury Commons ended up buying the property from Matt Crape. Therefore, the appeal was dropped. Ms. Grant asked how long the review process had been. Mr. Behrendt stated that it was at least six months.

Chair Rasmussen asked where the Board would like to go from here based on this evening's discussion? Are there any Zoning Ordinance updates needed? He suggested that a requirement for a commercial management plan be placed within either the Conditional Use ordinance or within the Site Plan Regulations. He also suggested bike storage be inside rather than utilizing bike racks. There was discussion about trash policies for future new developments.

Ms. Dill stated that the Board needs to be tougher on landscaping. Mr. Behrendt stated that the Town has good standards, but there could be better monitoring. Mx. Friedrichs stated that there needs to be someone on site who could monitor whether trees are planted correctly.

Councilor Tobias mentioned that good pedestrian connectivity also needs to be looked at for future projects.

Chair Rasmussen thanked everyone for their time and stated that he felt this had been a very productive discussion.

VI. Adjournment

Lorne Parnell MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Nick Germain SECONDED the motion and it PASSED unanimously

Adjournment at 9:49 pm
Karen Edwards, Minutes taker

James Bubar, Secretary