SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF MEETING
APRIL 17, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT:	**William Sweeney, Chairman, Anthony Delyani, Vice Chairman Bob Belmore, City Manager, Ron LeHoullier, Paul Robidas, Erwin Grant**
MEMBERS ABSENT:	**Dave Witham, City Council Representative, Dan Proulx, Ernest Gallant, Chris Cortez Alternate and Paul Maskwa, Alternate.**
STAFF PRESENT:	**Dave Sharples, Director of Planning and Community Development and Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary.**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

1) APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Robidas moved to accept the minutes of the meeting of March 20, 2013. Seconded by LeHoullier. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

2) COMMITTEE REPORTS

A) ZBA Report

See attached report.

B) City Council Report

None.

C) Site Review Technical Committee Report

No meeting was held, see attached report.

D) Minor Field Modification Report

None requested.

E) Strafford Regional Planning Commission Update

Robidas stated that he has not attended a meeting yet but there is one scheduled for this Friday. Stated that he will update the Planning Board at the next meeting.

F) Vision 2020 Report

None.

3) OLD BUSINESS

A) Kenneth Faucher is seeking a conditional use permit and minor subdivision approval for a three lot subdivision on property located on Green Street, in the Residential Single Family (R1) District, Assessor's Map 08, Lot 79, CUP #01-2013 and SUB #01-2013.

Sharples stated that the applicant has requested to remain on the table to submit a NHDES Dredge and Fill permit application.

B) Any other old business that may come before the Board.
None.

4) NEW BUSINESS

A) Any new business that may come before the Board.
None.

5) WORKSHOP BUSINESS

A) Discussion on a Table of Uses amendment.

Sharples reviewed his memo (see attached) and stated that this proposal is a result of the recent City Council goal setting session. Referred to the original memo that had been submitted to Belmore. Stated that the Council examined the uses in the Business (B) District and felt that some uses are not appropriate for that district. Stated that the intent is to prohibit these uses in the B District only. Stated that a Laundromat/dry cleaning service is allowed now but would be prohibited.

Robidas asked why the Council wants these uses excluded.

Sharples stated that they didn't feel they were appropriate used in the downtown.

Belmore asked if gas stations are allowed.

Sharples stated that gas stations are allowed now but they want to prohibit them but not convenience stores. Stated that he split the use up with definitions to distinguish a convenience store from a gas station. Stated that a convenience store would still be allowed but a gas station would not.

Sweeney asked if they would want a retail store where the existing gas station is.

Sharples stated that that would be a higher and better use of the property but that what is existing doesn't need to be torn down. Stated that if the Council adopts this amendment and the gas station use is abandoned for 12 months or more, then the use would need to conform.

Belmore stated that if you look at surrounding communities, there aren't a lot of Laundromats in a vibrant downtown. Stated that he supports moving forward with this.

Delyani asked, regarding abandon uses, if the 12 month timeframe has started for the gas station on High Street.

Sharples stated that it is on a case-by-case basis but that he feels that the 12 months haven't started for the gas station.

Sweeney stated that the City is encouraging a more walkable community and having people live and work in the downtown, then a Laundromat might make sense.

Grant asked about having a place were you just drop off and pick up your clothes.

Sharples stated that laundry and dry cleaning are in the same use category.

Delyani asked if they can be separated.

Belmore stated that there is a Laundromat and a dry cleaner in the downtown now.

Sweeney asked about other businesses such as a tattoo parlor.

Sharples stated that it would be considered a personal service establishment.

Robidas stated that he feels that with the amount of changes coming to the downtown and the push toward more foot traffic he is in favor of the amendment. Stated that they need to change the image and make Somersworth a place people want to be.

Motion: Robidas moved to have a public hearing on the proposed amendment to the uses in the Business (B) District.

Seconded by Delyani.

Belmore asked if it makes sense to talk about splitting up the Laundromat and dry cleaning uses.

Robidas asked about a drop off location.

Sweeney stated that he feels that a dry cleaning service would be an attraction for people living and working in the downtown.

Sharples stated that if you are talking about a place where the clothes are dropped off and taken somewhere else then he would classify that as a personal service.

LeHoullier asked what is wrong with having the dry cleaning done on site. Stated that people would drop off their clothes and someone else does the cleaning.

Sharples stated that there is leeway with the classification of a personal service establishment but that he feels that if the cleaning was done on-site then it would be a laundry service.

Sweeney stated that he would be in favor of allowing a dry cleaner.

Robidas stated that he is willing to amend his motion to allow a dry cleaner but not a Laundromat.

Delyani stated that he is fine with the amendment.

Sweeney asked if a motor vehicle service is like an auto parts place.

Sharples read from the Zoning Ordinance.

Belmore stated that he is not sure about the dry cleaning and that he is not sure if they should include it or not. Stated that he doesn't want to have to go through the process twice.

Robidas suggesting letting it go to the public hearing and see what happens.

Sharples stated that if there is an amendment to the proposal after the public hearing then there would need to be another public hearing.

Robidas stated that the motion he made is what he supports.

Sharples explained how he would separate the two uses in the Table of Uses so there would be one for dry cleaning and one for laundry service.

Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

Motion: Belmore moved to amend Section 25 of the Zoning Ordinance as presented by Director Sharples.

Seconded by Robidas. Motion carried with a 6-0 vote.

B) Discussion on the creation of a Central Business District.

Sharples reviewed his memo (see attached) and stated that this was also brought up at the City Council goal setting session. Stated that this would carve out a central area called the Central Business District (CBD) and regulate the uses in the downtown central area. Stated that this has been discussed in the past and is mentioned in the City's Master Plan. Referred to the area on the map and stated that the rest of the Business (B) District would stay the same. Stated that he went through the entire Table of Uses and made a draft and put the CBD in the columns. Stated that the Board would need to review each use and determine if it should be permitted, permitted via a special exception or prohibited from the CBD. Stated that he would like to know how the Planning Board would like to move forward with this.

Sweeney stated that all the Board members need to review it and then discuss it. Asked the secretary to email all Board members who are not present asking them to review the draft and be ready to discuss it at the next Planning Board meeting. Stated that the Board will review the table line by line.

Sharples mentioned that a lot of the uses are defined in Section 25 so that can also be reviewed if needed.

Robidas asked if there are downsides of doing this down the road.

Sharples stated that, in general, he doesn't see a downside but that they have to be careful with limiting businesses in this area. Stated that they need to be thoughtful about the uses up front.

Belmore stated that he's not trying to mirror Somersworth to other communities but asked Sharples if he has looked at what other communities have in their central districts.

Sharples stated that he worked with planning consultants on this draft and that they have familiarity with other communities so he relied on their research.

Sweeney stated that the plaza is a good sized lot and asked what would happen if someone wanted to put something else there, like gaming.

Sharples stated that the use isn't allowed currently but that it is something to think about for the future.

C) Any other workshop business that may come before the Board.

Sharples stated that he got updated advertising language from COAST Bus and that he will put this on next month's agenda. Stated that there may be a buyer of the Sunningdale property and that there may be a subdivision moving forward this year. Stated that he has talked with the developer and that he is interested in a conservation subdivision and that he is disappointed that Somersworth doesn't have one. Stated that this may be a good time for the Planning Board to discuss having one again.

Sweeney stated that they should have a separate workshop for that, maybe in June or July.

Sharples stated that he would bring forward a model ordinance for review and discussion.

Grant asked if he is talking about cluster housing.

Sharples stated that they are similar. Described a conservation subdivision using one-acre examples. Stated that a conservation subdivision takes the natural features and the environment into account. Stated some of the land can be conserved that would have been developed under a regular subdivision. Stated that properties in these types of subdivision tend to keep their value longer.

LeHoullier stated that the wording of the original ordinance had issues.

Sharples stated that the old ordinance had issues and didn't define things well.

Belmore stated that he would like to begin this sooner rather than later. Stated that there was a budget workshop and that they need to be talking about revenue as well as expenditures. Stated that he would like to get a conservation subdivision back on the books as long as it is done right.

Robidas stated that most of the Board knows what they want to see and know what to look for. Stated that they have the opportunity to do this right and feels that they should do it sooner rather than later.

Sharples stated that conservation subdivisions look at the land differently and don't just look at getting the most homes in. Stated that regular subdivisions just look at how many units they can get.

Robidas asked if they should plan a workshop meeting.

Belmore stated that he would like to avoid July and August workshop because of vacations.

Grant asked if there is a lot of detail involved.

Sharples replied yes and stated that it is very dense. Stated that there are different forms of ownership for the open space but he suspects that it would be a homeowner's association.

LeHoullier left the meeting.

Robidas stated that they should look at what other communities have done and what works.

Sweeney asked if the Board should put the CBD on the backburner for now.

Belmore asked if there is a nearby community that has a conservation subdivision that he could visit and see what it looks like.

Sharples stated that Epping, NH has a good draft ordinance but that he is not sure if they have adopted it.

Grant asked if the development across from the Weathervane restaurant in Dover is cluster housing.

Sharples stated that he is unsure but in the Somersworth example there couldn't be townhouses because the property is in the R1 District. Stated that he has never envisioned anything other than single family homes. Referring to a timeline for the Planning Board, next month there is a public hearing for the Table of Uses in the B district; they will have more discussions on the

CBD and can have a sample conservation subdivision for the next meeting. Stated that he would like to get the ball rolling. Stated that he will supply a draft and go from there.

Sweeney stated that diagrams would be good to have.

Sharples stated that he has some good examples.

Robidas asked if there is anything happening with the old Breton Cleaners property.

Sharples stated that the City has gone down the road of looking at taking the property but that available grants have changed. Stated that the City has been working with the NHDES and that they may but Breton Cleaners on their forefront. Stated that they would help to determine if there would be funds available if the City got the property. Talked about the contaminants on the property and stated that they seem very concentrated. Stated that he doesn't see it as a big issue.

6) COMMUNICATION AND MISCELLANEOUS

Belmore stated that he received an email from Witham and apologizes for not being able to attend tonight's meeting. Stated that at the last meeting the Council approved the first RSA 79E application for the property at 44 Market Street. Stated that they approved a seven year tax relief. Stated that there will be a restaurant downstairs and a residential use upstairs. Stated that the Council reviewed lots of scenarios for the downtown improvement project. Stated that they will pursue one-way traffic on Constitution Way and a portion of Main Street. Stated that the final design presentation for the Somersworth/Berwick Bridge project is scheduled for May 8, 2013 at the Berwick Town Hall.

Sweeney asked if that meeting can be recorded for the Somersworth residents to watch.

Sharples stated that he will look into that.

Sweeney asked if there is any activity with the old police station on Main Street.

Sharples stated that there isn't much activity but that the owners are looking into having the building sprinklered.

Belmore stated that some City Councilors have talked about wanting to see if the owners will sell the property back to the City. Stated that there has also been talk about what the gas station is going to do but there is a long-term lease on it. Stated that it is a key spot.

Robidas asked if the gas station is closed.

Sharples stated that it is vacant.

Robidas asked what the City would do with the old police station if they bought it back.

Belmore stated that the idea is just in its preliminary stage.

Motion: Robidas moved to adjourn the meeting.
Seconded by Delyani. Motion carried with a 5-0 vote.
Meeting adjourned at 7:30 pm.
Respectfully submitted:

Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary
Somersworth Planning Board