

**SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
September 25, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ron LeHoullier, Chair, Chris Horton, Jeremy Rhodes, Bob Belmore, City Manager, David Witham, City Council Representative, Paul Robidas, Keith Perkins Alternate and Jason Barry, Alternate.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Harold Guptill, Vice Chair

STAFF PRESENT: Shanna B. Saunders, Director of Development Services and Dana Crossley, Planning Secretary.

The workshop meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

1) PUBLIC MEETING

A) THIRD PARTY REVIEW

Saunders provided copies of RSA 676:4 and 676:4-b for discussion of acceptance of applications and third-party review.

Saunders stated in the Site Plan Review Regulations Section 11.18 addresses Third Party Review. She noted that it allows for the SRTC or the Planning Board to require third party review.

The board discussed the conflict between SRTC and PB both being able to request third party review.

Saunders reviewed the staff process when a third-party review is requested. She explained that it is difficult to complete and get the information to the board in the one month between meetings.

The board held a brief discussion on third party review and the time length of getting an application to the point of approval.

Robidas asked Saunders what her advice to the board would be.

Saunders stated her recommendation would be to not have third party review hold up the acceptance of the application as complete. She stated she could recommend the Planning Board decide to move forward with the review but wanted them to know they would not make a decision until the review was completed and information provided to the board.

The board held a brief discussion on what merits a complete application and how third-party review is a part of that.

Belmore stated he would like to know how other communities address the third-party review and to whom they charge the responsibility for the determination if one is required.

Saunders stated that she reviewed Durham, Dover, Portsmouth and Rochester's regulations concerning third party review. She noted for the most part the communities remain vague on the subject. She reviewed the language from each community. Saunders noted Rochester and Durham leave the decision making to the Planning Board solely and Dover and Portsmouth allow the Planning Board or the Technical Review Committee/Staff to make the third-party review determination.

Belmore suggested that third party review could be mandated in the regulations and the developers/applicants could submit a waiver to the Planning Board from the requirement. He stated he felt it should be solely under the Planning Board's purview for Somersworth.

Witham stated he agreed that a requirement for third party review or waiver from the requirement would be a good clear course of action.

The board held a brief discussion on the granting of waivers and requiring third party review with a waiver request.

The process of Minor Site plans was discussed by the board. Saunders noted that there are criteria that the application must meet to be considered minor site plan. She explained that one of those criteria's is that there shall be no waiver requests.

Rhodes stated that getting the information to the applicants that third party review must be done or a waiver request is required upfront is vital.

The board discussed the different aspects that would generally require third party review. The typical aspects that are reviewed are traffic, drainage, full review of the plans to ensure the submittal matches the City's code.

Horton stated he felt that it should not become a burden to the developers and wants to ensure the board stays in line with the Master Plan to be business friendly.

The board discussed being business friendly and the Master Plan. The board noted that it is also the Planning Board's responsibility to protect the community, as well.

Belmore stated he did not think they needed to rush to any decisions and suggested making no change other than having the responsibility of requesting a third-party review under solely the Planning Board's discretion

Barry stated that he agrees it is important to be business friendly but to protect the City. He noted that sometimes the requirement of a third-party review can be the breaking point of a project but putting the knowledge out in the application from the start would allow applicants to put it into their budget.

The board held a brief discussion on potential changes to their regulations. The board determined they would make no changes at this point and encourage applicants to utilize the conceptual review process.

B) TRADITIONAL NEW ENGLAND STYLE ARCHITECTURE

Saunders stated she has brought copies of the language that addresses traditional New England style architecture from the Site Plan Regulations.

Horton stated he felt they should hold this discussion until the Form Based Codes comes to fruition since the survey was strongly based on visual preferences.

The board discussed how the Form Based Codes will be enforced in a specific district area.

MOTION: Witham motioned to open the floor to allow the public to speak.

Barry SECONDED the MOTION.

The MOTION CARRIES by a 6-0 vote.

Richard Brooks, 18 Linden Street, questioned if in the implementation of Form Based Codes there would be a scale back on the restrictions of use for that district since the specifications of the look of the building will be much more specific and stringent. He stated he feels it will be

restrictive and wants to ensure it will not conflict with the Historic District that is already in place. He suggested that when it comes to put the Form Based Codes in place work together between the Planning Board and Historic District Commission.

Rhodes stated he agreed that they have a very diverse historic district and stressed that there should be a more specific definition which would allow for the waiver request easier.

Robidas stated he would like to take up the discussion after the Director has a chance to do more research on the subject.

Witham noted that architecture can be very grey rather than a black and white subject.

The board discussed working with the Historic District Commission in the future for more discussion on traditional New England architecture.

The board determined they will discuss further when more research has been done.

Motion: Belmore MOVED to adjourn the meeting.

Barry SECONDED the MOTION.

Meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Dana Crossley, Planning Secretary
Somersworth Planning Board