

**City of Rochester Planning Board**  
Monday March 18, 2019  
City Council Chambers  
31 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH 03867  
*(These minutes were approved on April 15, 2019)*

**Members Present**

Nel Sylvain, *Chair*  
Robert May, *Vice Chair*  
Matthew Kozinski, *Secretary*  
Terry Dwyer  
Tim Fontneau  
Donald Hamann  
Mark Sullivan  
David Walker

**Members Absent**

Mark Collopy, *excused*  
Joyce Bruckner, *absent*

**Alternate Members Present**

James Gray

Staff: James Campbell, *Director of Planning & Development*  
Crystal Galloway, *Planning Secretary*  
Seth Creighton, *Chief Planner*  
Michelle Mears, *Senior Planner*

(These are the legal minutes of the meeting and are in the format of an overview of the meeting. A recording of the meeting will be on file in the City clerk's office for reference purposes. It may be copied for a fee.)

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Mr. Sylvain called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

The Planning Secretary conducted the roll call.

**III. Seating of Alternates**

The alternate wasn't present.

**IV. Communications from the Chair**

There were no communications from the Chair.

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**V. Opening Discussion/Comments**

**A. Public Comment**

Councilor Tom Abbott of Railroad Avenue spoke about the proposed amendments to density and development standards in the downtown commercial district. He said is not opposed to people that own property in the downtown commercial district developing their property for residential uses first floor to the point that they are

providing all of their own parking. However, he said his concerns are that it's going to compete with bringing developers in the area of downtown; another concern is the proposal of reducing the commercial space down to as little as twenty square feet. He said he'd like to see the commercial spaces as large as possible, not make them smaller.

## **B. Discussion of general planning issues**

There were no issues to be discussed.

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## **VI. Approval of minutes**

*A motion was made by Mr. Walker and seconded by Ms. Dwyer to approve the March 4, 2019 meeting minutes. The motion carried unanimously.*

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## **VII. Review of City Council questions for proposed downtown commercial density and development standards amendments in the Zoning Ordinance**

Mr. Campbell explained the comments from Councilor Abbott. He said the City Council was deliberating the proposed changes however, with the questions from Councilor Abbott they wanted the discussion to go back to the Planning Board for further review and discussion.

Mr. Fontneau said he is in full support of making some changes however, this needs to be looked at very closely because once the changes are made it will be hard to unchanged them. He said allowing residential units on the first floor on main thoroughfares will change the downtown forever.

Mr. Fontneau went on to talk about parking, saying in some cities parking isn't an issue because there is public transit however, Rochester is a long way from people not needing cars to get around. He went on to say that a lot a development in the downtown to date has not been high end units and the residents are not high end and he is afraid that it will deter people from coming to the city.

Mr. Walker said if you're a developer and you want to build a new building, where are you going to look at first? He said you're going to look at the areas you don't have to have commercial space on the first floor. Mr. Walker said Councilor Abbott had a good suggestion of taking the street names out of the ordinance.

Mr. May said he sees first floor residence as an incentive to developers because it will increase the projected return on investment and getting people into the downtown for further investment. He went on to say he is convinced if you get more people living and walking in downtown you will get more people staying, eating, and shopping.

Mr. May discussed allowing the front have of the ground floor for commercial and the back half for residential.

Mr. Sullivan said he recently visited the town of Derry and said it is quite similar to Rochester. He said he saw one vacant commercial building but they have a lot of housing.

Ms. Dwyer asked what Rochester's vision is, what type of businesses are the City trying to attract? She said we need to know who we are as a community.

Senior Planner Michelle Mears informed the Board that the Downtown Master Plan is out to bid right now and they will be looking for members of the Board to serve on the Committee.

Mr. Sylvain asked if there was any input from Rochester Main Street, Chamber of Commerce, or the Rochester Economic Development Committee gave any input or recommendations. Mr. Campbell said they were part of the process that lead up to this point.

Mr. Sullivan asked if BendonAdams suggested any phasing. Chief Planner Seth Creighton said not officially, saying it's planning as a whole.

Mr. Hamann said developers are more likely to develop downtown if there's public transit. He said the trend is young people don't want to have cars, they want to use transit or be able to ride a bike or walk.

Mr. Kozinski said there could be a stipulation if there is no commercial aspect the developer must have adequate parking on site.

There was discussion about density requirements, parking, and parking management in the downtown commercial district.

Mr. Campbell said he recommends going forward with what was proposed with the addition of a couple areas.

The Board went through Councilor Abbotts questions and suggestions.

*A motion was made by Mr. Hamann and seconded by Ms. Dwyer to remove Item 11B which states "buffers from single family. Except for parcels within the Downtown Commercial Zone District, a 100-foot buffer shall be established adjacent to any existing single-family house or any vacant lots less than 3 acres that are zoned residential. This buffer shall not be required for parcels in the DC Zone District". The motion carried. Mr. Walker opposed.*

The Board further discussed the questions and suggestions. Councilor Abbott said he misunderstood item D and is comfortable removing his comment.

The Board went on to discuss item E, Downtown Commercial District. Mr. Campbell said the language was an addition from the Board. Mr. Campbell said he recommends keeping with the first fifty feet.

The Board will further discuss changes at its April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting.

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## **VIII. Review of February 2019 Surety and Inspections**

Mr. Campbell told the Board there haven't been any changes from last month.

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## **IX. Other Business**

### **A. Recommendation of Barbara Holstein to Strafford Regional Planning Commission**

Mr. Hamann told the Board Ms. Holstein has been attending meetings for over a year and is very excited about becoming a member.

*A motion was made by Mr. Walker and seconded by Mr. Hamann to recommend Barbara Holstein to the Strafford Regional Planning Commission. The motion carried unanimously.*

## **B. Other Items**

Mr. Campbell informed the Board that both the Assistant City Engineer Owen Friend-Gray and the Economic Development Manager Karen Pollard will be leaving their positions at the end of March.

Mr. Campbell told the Board Chuck Marohn, founder of Strong Towns will be speaking April 1<sup>st</sup> from 6:30pm to 8:30pm at the Performing Arts Center.

April 4<sup>th</sup> will be the first public input session for the Transportation Master Plan. Mr. Campbell announced the City is looking for two citizens to take part in the steering committee.

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## **X. Adjournment**

*A motion was made by Mr. Walker and seconded by Ms. Dwyer to adjourn at 8:56 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.*

Respectfully submitted,

Crystal Galloway,  
*Planning Secretary*