

City of Rochester Planning Board Retreat
Monday November 15, 2021
City Hall Annex Conference Room
33 Wakefield Street, Rochester, NH 03867
(These minutes were approved on November , 2021)

Members Present

Nel Sylvain, *Chair*
Mark Collopy, *Vice Chair*
Mark Sullivan
Dave Walker

Members Absent

Robert May, *excused*
A.Terese Dwyer, *excused*
Peter Bruckner, *excused*

Alternate Members Present

Keith Fitts
Paul Giuliano
Donald Hamann

Others Present

Michael Scala, *Economic Development Director*
Jennifer Marsh, *Asst Economic Development Director*
Gary Boudreau, *Deputy Chief of Police*
Perry Plummer, *Interim Fire Chief*
Tim Wilder, *Assistant Fire Chief*
Peter Nourse, *Public Works Director*
Blaine Cox, *City Manager*
Paul Callaghan, *Mayor Elect*
Amy Malone, *City Councilor Elect*
Tim Fontneau, *City Councilor*
Steve Beaudoin, *City Councilor Elect*

Staff: Shanna B. Saunders, *Director of Planning & Development*
Crystal Galloway, *Planner I*
Ashley Greene, *Administrative Assistant II*

(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.)

I. Call to Order

Nel Sylvain called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Roll Call

The recording secretary, Ashley Greene, conducted the roll call.

Mr. Sylvain introduced Mayor Elect Paul Callaghan. Mayor Elect Callaghan discussed how excited he was to be sworn into Mayor and to help the Land Use Departments in any way that he can.

Mr. Sylvain introduced Blaine Cox, City Manager. Mr. Cox discussed how hard the Planning Board works at developing the Master Plan. Mr. Cox stated the Council has made the redevelopment of downtown a priority. He offers his support to the Planning Board in the efforts to revitalize downtown. Mr. Cox discussed wanting to create a Parking Committee for this coming year.

III. Presentations from Land Use Departments

Shanna B. Saunders thanked everyone for coming to the Planning Board Retreat. Ms. Saunders discussed the purpose of the retreat. She explained that she had asked that the Land Use Departments come tonight and discuss where the development trends are at within the City. What did development do in 2020, and where do they see it going in the future.

i) Planning and Development – Shanna B. Saunders

Ms. Saunders discussed that the Land Development does not fall on just the Planning Board, although it has a major roll. Ms. Saunders stated that the Zoning Board of Adjustments deals with appeals. Conservation Commission reviews any conditional use permits because of wetland buffer encroachments or shoreland protection overlay district encroachments. The Historic District Commission has jurisdiction over the exterior of buildings and land layout in the Historic District which is mainly downtown.

Ms. Saunders discussed how the Technical Review Group (TRG) reviews applications prior to the Planning Board Meetings twice a month. TRG puts together their recommendations for the Planning Board, including conditions.

Ms. Saunders stated the Planning Department had a busy year in 2020, with 3 Lot Line Revisions, 13 Subdivision Applications (which resulted in 101 lots), 15 Site Plans, 6 Amendment Applications, and 83 Minor Applications which consisted of Project Narratives, Lot Combinations, Home Occupations, and Special Downtown Committee Applications. Ms. Saunders discussed the applications submitted to the Planning Department that were approved by the Planning Board in 2021. There were 11 Lot Line Revisions, 11 Subdivision Applications (which resulted in 30 lots, 12 Site Plans, 6 Amendments, and 75 Minor Applications. Ms. Saunders discussed the plans for the Planning Department for 2022, including the Master Plans. Ms. Saunders stated that all of the developments should be looked at in all aspects including 1) the natural resources and where development should go around these natural resources. 2) transportation - making sure the streets can handle the development that is coming into the City, complete streets concept; making sure the streets are designed for all types of transportation. 3) City Resources to support the development that we want throughout the City, for example, enough Police Department and Fire Department coverage and the appropriate equipment, and road maintenance by the Department of Public Works.

ii) Building and Licensing – Jim Grant

Ms. Saunders spoke briefly on behalf of Jim Grant. Ms. Saunders stated that the Building and Licensing Department is very busy. Their permit numbers are through the roof.

iii) Fire Department – Perry Plummer & Tim Wilder

Perry Plummer, Interim Fire Chief, discussed the current Fire Departments response districts and the demands for service. Mr. Plummer stated Rochester Fire Department has two (2) stations, one in downtown Rochester and the second on in Gonic. Mr. Plummer stated that the demand for Fire assistance continues to increase. Within the current fiscal year, the FD will reach over 3,000 calls.

Mr. Plummer stated that when looking at the Planning and Development side of the Fire Department, they think about the Community Risk standpoint. There are four (4) aspects that are looked at: response time, the resources that are available to mitigate an emergency, deployment time, and the impact of the incident. Mr. Plummer stated that response times are the major performance indicators. Currently the response times are increasing as we continue to develop the City, but if a third fire station is added then the response times will decrease. Continued traffic preemptions help to keep response times down and increasing staff to help combat the simultaneous calls.

Mr. Plummer stated that currently there are 40 Firefighters on staff, which equals 4 shifts which is 1 Captain, 1 lieutenant and 8 firefighters, which is fully staffed at 10 per shift. We currently have 3 firefighters deployed with the military, which results in the Fire Department not being fully staffed once this year.

Mr. Plummer went over the five (5) E's of Community Risk Reduction: Emergency Response, Engineering, Education to the Public, Economic Considerations, and Enforcement.

Tim Wilder, Assistant Fire Chief, discussed the code development of the Fire Department and how it relates to the Planning Board. Mr. Wilder stated that the Fire Department utilizes the NH State Fire Code. Mr. Wilder stated the current Fire Code being used is the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 2015 Code. The state tries to stay one code behind the current code that is out. Mr. Wilder stated that the NH State Fire Code is used by all persons constructing or reconstructing, modifying, maintaining, or updating any structure. Mr. Wilder stated that the State adopts the Fire Code, and a municipality can adopt a more strict code, but they can't adopt a code that is less stringent. There are currently 25 codes that have been adopted by the State of NH.

iv) Police Department – Gary Boudreau

Gary Boudreau, Deputy Chief of Police, talked about the Police Departments (PD) role in the Planning and Development stage. Mr. Boudreau stated that the PD has no regulations regarding the planning and development review. The PD looks at traffic, accidents, and what the new development would mean for the PD. Mr. Boudreau stated the residential and retail have the biggest impacts on the PD. Commercial and Manufacturing have the least impact on the PD. The more people that are brought into the City, generally the more complaints that are called into the PD. Mr. Boudreau stated that a dense location that is further from the center of the City stretches the PD and their response time. Mr. Boudreau stated that when a property is managed well, the less calls that they experience. In the retail aspect, PD receives calls regarding theft, and parking lot accidents. When the PD looks at planning and development designs, they specifically look at the parking lots, the layout, lighting, and the types of landscaping that goes into the islands.

Tim Fontneau asked how the PD can enforce proper management in new developments. Mr. Boudreau stated that we must work with other departments in the City; fire and codes, to find other avenues and go into the building to find out the issues going on. Ms. Saunders stated that the City has adopted the Property Maintenance Code which deals with trash, debris, shutters falling off, rotten porches, etc., which assist with proper management in developments.

Mr. Boudreau stated that the PD is constantly battling with having a full staff. The PD has struggled with hiring and keeping staff on for the last five years. Mr. Boudreau stated that within the City of Rochester their call volume and amount of work can be much higher than other municipalities, but the benefits are equal across other municipalities, therefore a police officer could go work at a different municipality for the same rate of pay with less work. Mr. Boudreau stated that the training process takes about a year before a police officer can be out on the streets on their own. Mr. Boudreau stated the Police Commission just recently changed the training agreement for new police officers, which entails them staying on the force for two years after they complete their training, so they get at least three years out of a new police officer.

v) Public Works – Peter Nourse

Peter Nourse, Director of Public Works, started off with good news within his Department; they have hired a Part-Time Construction Inspector who will help assist the Assistant City Engineers and hopefully allow things to run more smoothly.

Mr. Nourse talked about solar energy and the plans that the City Manager has for the future of the City. Currently the plan is to install solar panels, that is 406,000 kilowatts, onto the new Department of Public Works building located on Chestnut Hill Road. The solar panels will be able to power majority of the facility's needs. The City plans on doing a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA), an investor comes in and owns it, sets it up and the host pays a fee per kilowatt hour generated, and by year six the City has the option to purchase it. The next project DPW is looking into is a field located off Pickering Rd to set up a solar farm. They are considering doing a PPA on this location as well. The last solar panel project DPW is looking into is the Community Center. Mr. Nourse stated that they could put a large array of solar panels on the roof, although the Community Center has not had any updates to their roof in twenty years.

Steve Beaudoin asked what the life expectancy is of a solar panel. Mr. Nourse stated that it is 40 years for one (1) solar panel.

Mr. Nourse talked about transportation and safety improvements up on Route 11. A signal would be put in place at Nashoba Drive (Cocheco Estates) and there would be sidewalks put in place all the way down to the overpass and eventually there would be sidewalk down all the way to North Main Street. Mr. Nourse stated that there have been nineteen (19) accidents in the last ten years leaving Cocheco Estates. This project exists in the DOT 10-year plan and if it is signed by the Governor within the next year construction could start in 2026. Mr. Nourse stated the other issue is capacity in that area. Currently there are 25,000 daily vehicles, and 1,600 per peak hour. In the DOT 10-year plan, we want to widen the lanes, and if that is signed by the Governor that would occur in 2032. Mr. Nourse stated that these plans are beyond the City's means, and we are currently looking into other funding.

Mr. Nourse talked about the 10-year plan to put in 6,500 ft of brand-new sidewalk on Portland Street.

Mr. Nourse discussed the stormwater and nitrogen permits. In May of 2021, the Great Bay General Permit for Nitrogen was released, twelve (12) communities are subject to this permit and Rochester is one of them. A loading limit of the amount of nitrogen that can go into the Cocheco is at 198 lbs./day. This is based upon our average flows between 2012 and 2016, since then the City of Rochester has grown.

Mr. Nourse discussed the Union Street Parking Lot project where they will maximize stormwater treatment, along with a place setting, green area, and better parking. DPW is currently working on Economic Development and Planning on this project.

Mr. Nourse talked about the Infiltration and Inflow (I&I) that is currently a huge problem everywhere that has old infrastructure. Infiltration is water coming into old sewer pipes. Inflow is illegal dumping of stormwater into the sewer system, it is against our ordinance. Mr. Nourse believes 50% of what we treat here in Rochester is stormwater. Mr. Nourse stated we spend about a half a million dollars on chemicals and electricity treating this. Mr. Nourse stated that within our sewer system master plan we have 25 catchment areas.

Mr. Nourse stated that Round Pond Reservoir is our largest drinking water reservoir out in Barrington. It holds 390 million gallons. Mr. Nourse stated that the water audit and demand study concluded what was already known, and that is in ten (10) years the water demand is going to eclipse what we can get out of our water shed. Mr. Nourse stated they started a campaign about eight (8) years ago to examine the environmental impact of raising the level of the water in Round Pond by ten (10) feet.

Mr. Sylvain called a 5 minute recess at 7:30 p.m.

Mr. Sylvain called the meeting back to order at 7:34 p.m.

vi) Economic Development – Mike Scala

Mike Scala, Director of Economic Development, talked about the current plans that are going on at the Granite State Business Park. Three new buildings totaling over 200,000 square feet; Pella Windows, Prep Partners, and LDI. Mr. Scala also discussed the Scenic Sallinger project, done by Chinburg, that will bring 50 market rate units right to the Downtown and revitalize two of Rochester's historic buildings. These units are slated to prelease starting in December 2021, with a move in date of February 2022. Mr. Scala talked about the Ainslie building at 10 South Main that will have four market rate units with more commercial units available, which will be completed mid to late spring 2022. The Bennett Building located on the corner of N. main and Union Street, which has been paused due to the COVID pandemic, but they are now back to work. Mr. Scala also touched base on Sig Sauer with a plan to open in Spring of 2022.

Mr. Scala discussed the development projects for the future. 38 Hanson Street will have commercial space which would include a tap room. The Old Hoffman building, 45-55 No Main Street, is waiting approval for a 79E and then approval from the Planning Board for 50ish apartments and first floor commercial space. Mr. Scala stated that Economic Development is looking to pursue the redevelopment of Water Street and to provide a pedestrian/vehicular way.

Mr. Scala stated the State has agreed to do the design and engineer work for a new 15,000 square foot, four (4) court-room, Court House on a site out on the Granite State Business Park. This would allow Rochester to take back the cases that they have been sending to Dover. Mr. Scala stated the goal would be for the City of Rochester to get control of the old Court House for redevelopment.

When looking towards the future and moving forward, Mr. Scala stated that all of the Land Use Departments and Boards all seem to share the same vision for redeveloping the City. Mr. Scala touched base on the need for a parking strategy. Mr. Scala stated that we are at a point in our development that we need to start charging for parking to limit the time people spent in a parking space. Mr. Scala stated that housing shortage still exists no matter how many new developments we have. We are working with developers who develop it all. Continue to revitalize the downtown area, business parks, and utilize TIF, 79-E, and the O-zones (opportunity zones).

Mark Collopy asked if there were any plans for between the bridge and Strafford Square. Mr. Scala stated this is called "the gap" and that once the Strafford Square is completed, he believes we will be able to extend our downtown to the circle.

V. Master Plans

Ms. Saunders went over the Master Plans. Ms. Saunders stated that in 2018 the Housing Master Plan was updated and the Economic Development Strategic Plan. In 2020, the Transportation and Downtown Master Plans were updated. This year we have budgeted for the Natural Resources and Cultural Resources Master Plans. In the future we will have to update the Land Use Master Plans which was last updated in 2001. Also, our Recreational Master Plan that was last updated in 2011. A Master Plan that has never been done are Municipal Facilities and Services Chapter that is allowed under the State RSA which looks at City Services and City Capacity and helps to define how the future growth can work throughout the City.

VII. Board Elections

Mr. Sylvain announced on December 6, 2021, it will be his last meeting.

Mr. Sylvain made a motion to nominate Mark Collopy as Chairman of the Planning Board. David Walker seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Sylvain opened the floor to nominate Vice Chair.

Mr. Collopy made a motion to nominate Robert May as the Vice Chair of the Planning Board. Mr. Sylvain seconded the motion. The motion carried by a unanimous voice vote.

Mr. Cox, City Manager, thanked Mr. Sylvain for his many years of service on the Planning Board.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Walker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Motion seconded by Mr. Collopy. The motion carried by a unanimous voice vote.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ashley Greene
Administrative Assistant II

&

Shanna B. Saunders
Director of Planning & Development