

Special Planning & Zoning Commission  
7:30 p.m., Wednesday, March 2, 2016  
Julian B. Thayer Auditorium, Coginchaug Regional High School

Meeting Minutes

1. **Call to order**

Frank DeFelice called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

2. **Roll Call**

**In attendance:** Alana Adams, Campbell Barrett, Lisa Davenport, Frank DeFelice, Dick Eriksen, Dave Foley, Dan Melnik, Jan Melnik, Joe Pasquale, Will Spooner

**Absent:** Chris Flanagan, Ed Fronc

**Others in attendance:** Geoff Colegrove, about 55 members of the public

3. **Seating of Alternates** – Campbell Barrett was seated for Chris Flanagan

4. **Approval of Agenda**

MOTION BY DAVE FOLEY, SECONDED BY JAN MELNIK, TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PRESENTED. ALL AYE

5. **Presentation of Results from Visioning Charrette and On-Line Survey**

Frank DeFelice opened the meeting and introduced Kenneth Livingston, Vice President Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.

K. Livingston opened by stating the FHI (Fitzgerald & Halliday, Inc.) has worked in a variety of communities around the state and Durham had the highest participation rate of a Visioning Charrette. He noted there were 230+ attendees, 190+ visual preference survey responses and 552 participants in the on-line survey, 457 of which completed the survey. He then proceeded with a summary presentation, visual preference survey presentation, and on-line survey.

6. **Public Comment**

Norm Hicks came forward to serve as moderator for public comment. He first asked if the members of the Commission had any questions.

***Member:*** could the online survey be taken multiple times by the same person?

***KL:*** yes, and noted that FHI has the ability to track IP addresses; he talked about situations such as multiple users of a library or household; there were no major concerns due to the low number of repeat IP addresses.

***Member:*** bicycling and walking map; what do we make of this map?

***KL:*** talked about core destinations

**Member:** what is the next step of interpretation of data?

**KL:** suggested highlighting a couple of key items (topical areas). Due to the large number of responses the next step is for the planning and zoning commission to look at the responses.

**The meeting was then opened up to the public.**

**Public:** observation; talked about desirables (pictures) but never asked where they would be desirable. What is to be done with the information if it was gathered in an invalid way; accumulative disadvantage.

**KL:** felt the information was not invalid; many insights, ideas; will give a perspective to understand.

**Public:** when the survey was developed was it specific to commercial design to Main Street?

**KL:** no, this was not. The intent was desires and perspectives for Planning & Zoning to think about.

**Public:** Will raw data be available? Why weren't comments included that were in the survey?

**KL:** did not know how to provide for the presentation. Interpretation from a lot of people, not easy to summarize. The raw data includes the comments for the towns use.

**Public:** comment; three pictures were shown of an industrial building, particularly a blue building. The group she was in unanimously said no to the building. If the same picture had a sign in front of it stating "industrial park" there may have not been such a negative response.

**Public:** felt it wasn't just the industrial building, most all pictures. Location was what was important to him; skews data.

**KL:** reiterated that this was a visual preference survey. Maybe the next step would be to ask "if this building was in another location, would it be desirable".

**Public:** how many comments were received on the on-line survey?

**KL:** 552; comments will be submitted to the Town Clerk to put online tomorrow morning.

**Public:** Who first approached your firm and what was the cost?

**Frank DeFelice:** stated he approached the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments and they suggested two firms. One was not available and the other was FHI who responded immediately. The cost is \$8,000.

**Public:** what was the methodology in picking the pictures presented?

**KL:** no direction. The firm has a variety of standard pictures that are used for similar communities. Understood and observed Durham and what they are known for. Also, used the towns 2003 Plan of Conservation and Development as a tool.

**Public:** complimented the presentation; quite impressed. Thanked everyone who made it available.

**KL:** unprecedented turnout and participation. Expected about 60 participants and 100 online surveys.

**Public:** how did they interpret two references to history? History didn't mean historic district?

**KL:** District; place. Continuum of uses and types of structures. History; agriculture. Did not lump the two together and would not say incorrect. Historic district contains historic houses.

**Commissioner Comments**

Jan Melnik noted the volume of participation at the Charrette and online survey spoke volumes. This was a great first step and noted that there was a lot of information presented that the commission would need to absorb in order to understand what the predominate directions to take and noted that it will take some time.

Joe Pasquale stated he was greatly impressed with the turnout.

Lisa Davenport stated she took one important thing out of the survey; residents are very passionate about their town. The commission is here to explore and listen to what everyone has to say.

Frank DeFelice stated that the results presented spoke volumes. These results will be incorporated with data from a prior visioning session and the commission will take a good look at them. He felt the town was fortunate to have so many passionate residents and thanked all in attendance for turning out for the presentation and appreciation of their input.

F. DeFelice thanked Ken Livingston and announced that this presentation will be held again, Wednesday, March 9<sup>th</sup>, at the Durham Fire House, 7:30 p.m.

#### **Public Comment to Commission**

**Public:** comment; Congratulations, big effort. People want more open space, bike paths. Do they want to pay more taxes?

**Laura Francis:** Thanked the commission for taking this step. She stated her office sent out 200 invitations for a local business networking event held on March 1<sup>st</sup> at the Fire House and thirty business owners attended. She noted these business owners voiced that they want to gather more frequently. Since then she has had three businesses contact her to say they could not attend. She also stated that a 2016 Business Questionnaire is currently being mailed to the towns existing businesses to gather information in efforts to make the town more business friendly. She will keep the commission posted on the results of the questionnaire.

**Public:** comment; found the presentation vague, not statistically valued. Images were vague, unclear what was being commented on. Not very helpful or useful, could have been done at public hearings. Cannot see how the commission can move forward with it.

**Public:** Plan of Conservation and Development should be a blueprint of the next ten years. Presentation very myopic, many other issues that need to be discussed. Does the commission hire a consultant to help with this? Chapter discussions? Hopes that the commission is not just focusing on one issue.

**D. Foley:** the commission spent four hours on agriculture chapter at Monday night's workshop. Taking Chapter by chapter; a lot more involved than just pictures. This is not about Main Street; it's about the town. The commission needs to sit down as a committee to talk about survey results.

**Public:** how are you going to deal with the Plan of Conservation and Development timeline?

D. Foley: there has been a lot of discussion regarding the schedule. He noted that the commission made a formal request to the Board of Selectmen as to where the deadline came from and what the ramifications of not meeting the deadline would be.

**F. DeFelice:** recognized that there is a time issue. He stated that commission members have been meeting twice a week and are doing the hard work. Sections are being updated and will have the basics to assemble draft in a couple of weeks. He noted the importance of complying with the State, but also the vision of the town.

**Public:** what is schedule? When it goes to the Selectmen does it go to public? Unfair to public if no meetings are held.

**F. DeFelice:** the deadline date for submission is June 30<sup>th</sup>. Statutorily required.

**Public:** comment; not about Main Street, about the whole town. Main Street has become a distraction. Keep the PoCD the same as the prior version it would free up time to work on other items.

**Public:** does not see how the commission can make changes on vision statement and historic chapter. You have no hard data. Can you assure there will be no changes such as mixed use?

**F. DeFelice:** Cannot assure; statutory requirements include mixed use.

**Public:** would like the community to prosperous and health. Does not want to be over regulated. Strongly encouraged the commission to look at what fits where; not to exclude mixed use or be exclusionary.

**Public:** Thanked the commission for all their hard work. Reiterated requesting an extension and what the repercussions of not meeting the deadline would be.

**Public:** stated that he sat through some of the commissions' workshops over the last week noting there were very intense. He questioned if bikeways and pedestrian walkways are a requirement of the PoCD. Encouraged the commission to keep an open mind, to take a hard look at everything that is going on in town.

**G. Colegrove:** stated that the town does have a bike/pedestrian plan that was created with the help of RiverCOG. He noted that it behooves the town to have this in the plan noting that the Selectmen have applied for a grant for sidewalk improvements on Main Street.

**Public:** has the commission looked at what other towns have done with mixed use; definition of, interpretation?

**F. DeFelice:** yes, looked at many plans. Serves on the Regional Board of RiverCOG.

**J. Melnik:** noted that the commission will be presenting a PowerPoint presentation on mixed use and asked all in attendance to attend to safely dispel any concern. No preconceived notions, this is the beginning of a process.

**Public:** asked if the commission has talked to other towns similar to Durham that has mixed zoning; does it work?

**F. DeFelice:** being on the Regional Board he regularly hears successes and war stories of 16 other towns. Some have similar likes.

**J. Pasquale:** comment; for me the answer is no. The commission has not had discussions about other communities PoCD's. The commission was put on notice in December that this had to be done by June with no community input.

**F. DeFelice:** the process started in March 2014 with the first vision session. At that time all boards, commissions were asked for their input and it was not received by the commission. He agreed the commission is up against a deadline and felt they were doing a remarkable job.

**Public:** the State does not require mixed use in residential zones; only need to look at mixed use.

**F. DeFelice:** required to identify a transit oriented, pedestrian assessable place for mixed use.

**L. Davenport:** invited public to attend March 16<sup>th</sup> meeting to see presentation and opportunity for discussion and exploration. The conversation is just starting.

**Public:** does the town just have a residential zone?

**G. Colegrove:** Main Street residential and Farm residential.

**Public:** the FHI presentation was not statistical research; pretty much validation of what Durham has now. Hate to lose anything that defines Durham; Main Street historic, Durham Fair. Felt the commission should concentrate on developing on strengths. There was an initiative a while ago to designate more land to industrial use; should never stop looking. Cautioned commission to be very careful to not hurt things that affect Durham.

**7. Payment of Bills**

MOTION BY DAVE FOLEY, SECONDED BY JAN MELNIK, TO APPROVE THE FOLLOWING: ALL AYE

- Prentis Printing Solutions, 2/12/2016, \$200.00

**8. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)**

Tabled

**9. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Moncata