



**TOWN OF NORTH HAMPTON, NEW HAMPSHIRE
NORTH HAMPTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

SEPTEMBER 2, 2020 5:00 PM

**NORTH HAMPTON TOWN HALL
and VIA ZOOM**

APPROVED MINUTES

EDC MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Richard Luff, Select Board Rep Larry Miller, David Ciccalone, Jonathan Pinette

VIA ZOOM: Vice-Chair/Planning Board Rep Phil Wilson, Heritage Commission Rep Nancy Monaghan, Leszek Stachow, Glenn Martin, Renee Locke-Business Associate Rep, Jeff Hillier

EXCUSED: Gary Stevens

ALSO PRESENT: Town Administrator Michael Tully, Jeff Hyland of Ironwood Design Group

AGENDA

Chairman Richard Luff welcomed everyone to the September 2, 2020 North Hampton Economic Development Committee Meeting and called the meeting to order at 5:04 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Luff said the main focus of the meeting is to review the Conceptual Plan from Jeff Hyland of Ironwood. He said nearly 2 years ago ECDC came up with a vision statement centered around a Village Center, and recognized what they have on Route 1 is a product of existing Zoning Laws and lack of a cohesive vision. Ironwood Design was hired to help develop a visual of an improvement plan in collaboration with residents, business owners, and property owners, and has come up with a plan based on that collaboration.

Jeff Hyland of Ironwood to Review Key Points of Conceptual Plan

Jeff Hyland said they have gone through a lot of steps to date, have reached out to the public for feedback, and now is the time for EDC comments and review to finalize the Master Plan and pull everything together. He said Chairman Luff went through the Vision Statement, but it is also important to talk about the Seacoast Region as well as the corridor that runs through the Village District. The Route 1 Corridor is under

NHDOT jurisdiction and averages approximately 16,000 vehicles/day which fluctuates seasonally. He said some businesses and developers rely on heavy traffic volume, but traffic congestion can also be a problem.

Mr. Hyland said they discussed the Route 1 Corridor as a critical component of the Village District and a conduit for movement in the area. He said there are positives and negatives to NHDOT jurisdiction as they have their own ideas for Route 1 improvements, and said it is important for North Hampton to make their thoughts and opinions known to help influence and set the tone for any future NHDOT improvements, and said DOT ultimately listens to what the community wants.

Mr. Hyland said within the project area are both opportunities and constraints, and said either end of the project area could be considered a gateway or arrival zone. He showed graphics of what changes in the roadway could look like including possible treatments for a median in the middle of Route 1 as a signature element or a multi-use path parallel to Route 1; roundabouts can transform the district and make it more pedestrian friendly particularly at gateway entrances. He said North Hampton needs a signature element that identifies the Village District, and signage can be coordinated to create a cohesive visual which helps visitors navigate.

Mr. Hyland said the Route 1 Corridor is in the public domain but the Town does not have control over private property except by dictating certain land-use regulations. He said economic goals in other communities have been realized through a variety of approaches, some with public and private partnerships. He said they need to start a discussion of how investment in infrastructure goes hand-in-hand with private development as a visual aesthetic drawing people to a community and creating vibrancy and successful businesses, also looking at development trends and the trend right now is mixed use.

Mr. Hyland said when a developer decides to invest in a community they need a sizeable piece of land. He showed a graphic of the area with low, moderate, and high value properties from a developer's standpoint. Based on the Town's current zoning, low value properties have small lot sizes and are grandfathered into current regulations; moderate value properties have a fairly valuable current use but are challenging due to wetlands or not enough road frontage; high value properties are the most desirable and more doable from a redevelopment standpoint, such as corner lots with high visibility. He then showed multiple examples of towns in the region.

Mr. Hyland said for North Hampton they designated 3 concept areas within the corridor with a high probability of redevelopment, areas that might benefit, and generated some rough concepts of what could occur. Area A north of Shaw's Supermarket encompassing LL Bean and Brew Pub; Area B incorporates the old Philbricks Plaza and extends down; Area C encompasses the gas station and the parcel behind. He said some assumptions were made as we developed the concepts: some zoning changes would be made, particularly relating to mixed use; public sewer not necessary but limiting as septic systems take up area and green space.

With *Development Area A*, they looked at the age of buildings and their desirability in the current market; currently small storefronts which are hard to fill; looked at Seacoast demand for residential and started moving toward mixed use. He said resident apartments could take the place of the large section of empty storefronts and back up to conservation land, LL Bean could be moved as a free-standing store, and restaurant elements and small office/retail could be added; showed visual examples of potential buildings.

A trail could be introduced and possibly a multi-use path along Route 1 connecting in future to the East Coast Greenway.

With *Development Area B*, the Philbrick building would remain, adding some infill in underutilized areas. Behind Philbricks there is room for a small incubator space by creating low-cost square footage to add vibrancy and set this area apart from others on the Route 1 Corridor. Toward the roadway could be a 6,000 sq ft retail/restaurant creating a signature element and identifiable landmark in the corridor that architecturally defines the Village District. The area shows some mixed use office/small retail, some townhomes and visual examples of buildings that might fit.

With *Development Area C*, where the gas station currently is on Lafayette Road, is a high-value property and corner lot on a fairly large parcel of land that may lend itself to a more traditional development; a small boutique inn or hotel with some retail, as high visibility is important for small businesses. A building out front that is noticeable and identifiable is a good idea, with more residential apartments behind, and farther back wetlands for a bungalow-style subdivision. He said all development scenarios show septic as part of a community septic system.

Mr. Hyland said incremental change is necessary to get from the vision to reality: (1) alter the way we look at development; (2) focus on form/appearance, scale, architectural quality to ensure harmony with community core values and vision; (3) encourage greater economic opportunity through flexibility, higher density, and diversity of use. Enhancements to the Village District include creation of consistent, cohesive Town development standards for the district, both public and private, and working with NHDOT to add amenities and street treatments to transform the Village District without impacting private property.

Mr. Hyland said the private side requires some level of regulatory oversight, and the current zoning regulations do not really jive with the Master Plan vision and effort. He said there needs to be more consistency and flexibility in Zoning Regulations for an end product that is really achievable. He said they basically regulate what they don't want rather than what they do want.

Mr. Hyland said next steps for the EDC and North Hampton are to build on the zoning analysis conducted for the Village District Master Plan and possibly conduct an audit; perform a Developmental Analysis including a TIF District evaluation; promote Economic Development using District Master Plan graphics; start a discussion with NHDOT, a critical partner in the corridor; consider applying for TAP (Transportation Alternatives Program) or CMAQ (Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality) Grant Funding. He said all grants have a matching component and they need to look at how to pay for that.

EDC Members to Provide Feedback to Ironwood on Conceptual Plan

Mr. Wilson said he has some pretty serious reservations about the concepts Mr. Hyland presented: (1) plan does not square with what residents want; (2) call it a Village District which emphasizes changing zoning when we asked for a Village Center doable in 10 years; 3 specific districts were presented; disagree it could be done without sewers; some of your areas are wetlands and questionable for development; (3) question whether this is doable within the Town's current zoning and land-use regulations without significant changes to what we will allow with respect to wetlands.

Mr. Wilson said Liz's analysis of zoning and land-use regulations was extensive but based on several misconceptions or wrong assumptions. He said there is encroachment on the wetlands in the areas described which is problematic from a DES standpoint; median improvements and gateways are great ideas, but the plan presented is not appropriate for North Hampton. All the examples provided were of towns much larger and very different, and high-density in North Hampton is not the same. He said he felt Mr. Hyland missed the mark because he did not present a coherent plan for a Village Center characteristic of North Hampton which expresses the desires and expectations of residents.

Chairman Luff asked Mr. Wilson to go over the 3 points he raised so Mr. Hyland can respond. Mr. Wilson said: (1) plan does not express the desire of residents and therefore does not serve best interests of North Hampton; (2) plan not doable in a 10-year timeframe as prescribed by EDC and Vision Statement; (3) plan runs counter to many fundamental zoning and development review regulations that residents have consistently supported for decades.

Mr. Hyland said they did a lot of outreach and people wanted more walkability, and more vibrant and less auto-centric developments. He said it will probably take longer than 10 years to complete the Village Center because the Village District is linear in nature and more challenging with a lot of property owners. Mr. Wilson said each of the 3 properties is in the hands of one owner and they do not have the problem of trying to aggregate property.

Mr. Hyland said those areas were high on the developmental scale because of their size and he used them as an example of what might happen, showing some sort of re-development potential on existing lots that are currently underutilized but highly desirable; other lots are more challenging. He said it is correct that they do not reflect the current zoning, but very little meaningful change can happen under current zoning, He said Ironwood was under the impression there would be tweaking of zones to allow more flexibility, and said a lot of businesses and properties are not being invested in because there is no clear roadmap.

Mr. Stachow said he agrees with a lot of what was said in terms of the current situation and expectations of the Town. He said one of the things he had hoped under Village Center was a pedestrian-friendly area to allow people to move from one set of buildings/residences/businesses to another relatively freely, and not necessarily along Lafayette but also to embrace Route 111 more extensively and to think of something that had a "heart" for the Town. He said they are replacing buildings here but retaining the strip-mall character along Lafayette; maybe the medians, a rotary, or signage would help alleviate that, but said he is missing the heart here.

Mr. Hyland said that is a very important point and the challenge is you are talking about private properties. He said what they have provided to this point is very conceptual and did not go far enough to show pedestrian circulation on private property. He said they are hoping to go further with development scenarios. He said the challenge is you are taking away from development opportunities and taking away from the economic reality of that development, and a subtle balance of all of that is beyond the scope of what we are doing here.

Mr. Hyland said somewhere in the zoning regulations it has to say you want open space, pedestrian sidewalks, and circulation within private development, otherwise it is up to the Planning Board to dictate. He said you can achieve many of the EDC goals in a relatively easy way along Lafayette but it is challenging

with private property. Mr. Wilson said with a good plan we could develop an access management program for the Town and make the Village Center the starting point. He said Lez's plan was very good but was unsure how to get it down Atlantic, but starting on Route 1 it would be a beginning. Mr. Hyland said they talked about shared services and amenities, and can go beyond between lots to curb cut consolidation on Route 1, which is also part of access management.

Ms. Monaghan said her concern from the beginning is that they started this by doing a survey of residents to determine what they want for Economic Development on Route 1, and developed the Village Center concept based on that. She said Mr. Hyland's plan has a few of those things but most of the plan is very far from what residents want with focus on high-density residential development and attracting tourists. She said the other issue is the differences of opinion on this Committee. She said her biggest concern is the issue of maintaining the rural character of the Town, and said our zoning ordinance was designed to preserve that.

Ms. Monaghan said she personally feels they set the boundaries too wide for a Village Center based on what residents want, and asked if the Committee is looking to develop Route 1 or looking for a conceptual design for a Village Center, and urged consideration of a scaled-down version of the plan. Mr. Martin said he disagrees on percentages, and he thinks Parcel A would be doable in a 10-year timeframe and is a start for mixed-use zoning. He said it does not have to be high density, just a little higher for our Town, with some residential mixed in as well.

Mr. Martin said he likes the Parcel A program and feels it is something to start with and go from there. He said there are wetlands there but some of the mapping is inaccurate; they can require a developer to do wetlands mapping and the new septic systems can greatly reduce discharge. Ms. Monaghan said they paid \$8,000 to Survey Professionals to do the survey and they should pay attention to what residents want more than anyone else; residents will use this Village Center and vote to approve the zoning changes. Mr. Martin said mixed use is something they definitely need to do to improve anything on Route 1.

Chairman Luff said he liked the way Mr. Hyland broke out the public domain part of the improvements that can happen along Route 1, especially partnered with DOT, and the gateway and median concepts are critical to attracting better development. He said people do not know what town they are in on Route 1 and it is important that North Hampton create that uniqueness. He said he thinks it will come down to zoning, and he likes the way Mr. Hyland proposed the form-based code for what the Town wants to see, and said he is extremely hopeful about an approach to development in North Hampton.

Mr. Hyland said with form-based code you dictate what you do want rather than what you don't want and flip the code. He said you can define architectural styles, building scale, building placement along the property line, and the relationship of buildings to public infrastructure, usually a roadway, and said it helps to tell a developer what you do want. To Ms. Monaghan's comments he said the plan does have a lot of residential, but could be something else, and mixed use is important as well as market viability. He said the examples he showed were not to say that is what North Hampton should do, just that a mixture of uses is being proposed in about 75% of all developments now.

Chairman Luff said we hired Ironwood to come up with a picture to support this vision. He said there are roadblocks right now but he is hopeful they can strike a balance here where they can still create that

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picture and make recommendations to the Select Board. He said this has gone on long enough and EDC has some decisions to make here. He suggested they hold a Work Session before their October 7th meeting and get together as a Committee and hash out their differences. He said he would email dates to Committee members to meet in a week or two, and the Committee was in agreement.

Any other Item that May Legally come before the Committee – Period of Public Comment

Next Meeting: The next regular Economic Development Committee Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 7, 2020 at 5:00 pm.

Adjournment

Ms. Monaghan made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Mr. Hillier. The motion to adjourn was approved by a vote of 10-0, and the meeting was adjourned at 6:36 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Denmark, Recording Secretary