

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL WORKSHOP
HELD BY THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
JANUARY 29, 2009**

ROLL CALL:

Members Present: Eugene Sierakowski, Vice Chairman
Joseph Diminico
Kevin Dougan
Salvatore Mancini
Andy Kidd

Alternates: Matthew Galligan
Adam Gootkin

Absent: Eric Prause

Also Present: Mark Pellegrini, Director of Neighborhood
Services and Economic Development
Renata Bertotti, Senior Planner
Gary Anderson, Senior Planner

Time Convened: 6:40 P.M.

Commission Chairman Eugene Sierakowski opened the meeting by explaining that a six-month housing moratorium was adopted because the Planning and Zoning Commission had concerns regarding the ratio of multi-family vs. single-family as well as the ratio of owner-occupied to rental housing units in the Town of Manchester. Mr. Sierakowski said he would like to take some time and review the density maps and discuss if there should be a density reduction in some areas of the town.

Mr. Diminico said he would like to discuss the mechanics of the moratorium process, i.e., how many workshops will the Commission hold, whether or not public participating will be allowed and if so, at which point. Mr. Sierakowski said the Commission should first discuss what their ideas are and then allow public participation. Mr. Diminico said he would welcome public participation throughout the process.

Mr. Pellegrini suggested a different approach. An analysis of the scope of the work could be done first through a brainstorming session with the Commission. He asked what research about multi-family housing the Commission would like staff to conduct. Mr. Sierakowski said the first goal would be to review the amount of owner-occupied vs. rental units in the Town. Secondly, the developed and vacant residential land should be mapped and categorized by the zoning district. Mr. Pellegrini said staff will compile an inventory of single-family vs. multi-family units and the amount of vacant land in various zoning districts. He also said staff will categorize data by zoning district and the percent of single-family to multi-family.

Mr. Mancini said he is concerned with the number of "for rent" signs in Manchester. He said he would like to see how many empty mill or other commercial buildings could be converted into residential/businesses. Mr. Sierakowski said staff should also include duplexes into this research

and see how many rental duplexes are in town. Mr. Diminico suggested staff use the landlord registration lists in this research.

Mr. Sierakowski said rental units are less desirable in Manchester because they are associated with problems such as absentee landlords and increased crime rate. Mr. Diminico explained there are different underwriting requirements for non-owner occupied as opposed to owner-occupied properties. He said for an owner-occupied unit the banks charge a 5.8% interest rate with a 3% down payment; and for rental units 7.8% interest and a 20% down payment.

Mr. Gootkin asked staff to explain what a healthy ratio would be between multi-family and single-family units. Mr. Pellegrini asked the Commissioners how they would define healthy. He said the staff is working with the Housing Commission to determine what factors make a successful community. Mr. Diminico asked staff to look at the percent change in multi-family to single-family units over time. He explained that old housing stock is tougher to maintain, generally rent to lower income families and are more difficult to sell. He said a logical market solution for the old housing stock would be to provide incentives to encourage the division of duplexes along party walls and encourage homeownership. Mr. Pellegrini said the zero lot line duplex lots are already allowed in the zoning regulations.

Mr. Gootkin said he lives in an area that is not what he would consider healthy, and then talked about the area along Main Street which also, in his opinion, is not what a healthy community would look like. This criteria for healthy communities would include attractive interior and exterior property maintenance, well maintained roads and sidewalks, low crime rates and good access to services including shopping, recreation, transportation, etc.

Mr. Sierakowski said the second issue he would like to see addressed was apartments above commercial properties. Recently there was an application for apartments above self-storage units, and an application for a residential use above the offices on Center and Alexander Streets. He feels that residential uses above commercial uses should be a special exception use and not a permitted use so the Commission has the ability to analyze whether or not the use fits the business zone. He asked staff to research how other towns regulate mixed uses. He would also like staff to research whether the combination of residential and business zones produces an economic benefit. He felt commercial uses generally produce enough tax revenue and that adding residential use above commercial does not add much.

Mr. Diminico said it is very difficult to get financing for commercial and residential mixes and there must be a reason for that. Mr. Pellegrini asked the Commission if they would like him to invite some speakers who could talk to the Commission about some new trends in planning, such as new urbanism and smart growth, which address mixed uses and the issues that surround them.

Going back to the relationship between owner-occupied and rental units, Mr. Mancini noticed in neighborhoods that are predominately rental there are drug related issues and increased crime rates. While he would like to give low income people a second chance he feels that the more expensive rental areas cost less in the long run in terms of infrastructure and services.

Mr. Gootkin said he would like to hear a smart growth expert. Mr. Sierakowski said owner-occupied units above a business could be permitted, but they should be examined on a case by case basis to see if they are a good fit. Mr. Mancini asked if under special exception criteria the Commission can ask whether or not the property is going to be owner-occupied or for rent, and what amount the rents would be. Mr. Pellegrini said he did not believe the ownership and the economic levels of potential renters could be regulated through the zoning processes. He

cautioned that the regulation cannot have an exclusionary or discriminatory effect. Mr. Sierakowski said owner-occupied residential units located above business offices could perhaps work well in areas such as the central business district. He asked staff to look at other towns and examine in which areas they allow mixed uses like that.

Mr. Gootkin asked how much vacant land Manchester has. Mr. Pellegrini said about 1500 acres of underutilized or vacant land remains but not all of it can be developed.

Mr. Sierakowski asked that staff conduct an inventory of all the buildings that are located in odd places and are problematic, scattered, or blighted properties. He suggested that for the Broad Street Parkade the Commission may consider creating a new zoning district that would perhaps allow mixed uses. Mr. Diminico suggested the Commission invite the Redevelopment Agency for a discussion on this matter.

Mr. Sierakowski asked if the elderly housing zone and a portion of the Planned Residential Development zone that allows age restricted housing should be combined into one zone that would be called planned residential development zone, 55 and over. The purpose of the change would be for better and easier identification of such properties on the zoning map. He said combining this into one zoning district would allow the Commission some control over whether or not these properties can be converted into a lower age limit or non-age restricted communities.

Ms. Bertotti said recent studies have found these types of developments were over-built in the State. Mr. Pellegrini also said he was not sure it was even advisable to provide age-restricted communities. He suggested the market should decide whether to restrict housing, not zoning. both the PRD and EHD are floating zones and the Commission has full jurisdiction over any application for a zone change.

Mr. Sierakowski said the town should examine the situation of new State Road as to whether it should remain industrial, what it would take for it to become a green industrial, or if it should be converted into residential. He asked if the Commission should hold a separate workshop. Mr. Pellegrini advised the Commission to hold a separate workshop and talk about this matter after the pending application for this area has been acted on.

Mr. Sierakowski suggested the Residence B zone be eliminated from the map, suggesting instead that the Commission consider bigger lots with a zero lot line type of development. Mr. Pellegrini said if the goal is to increase home ownership the elimination of the RB zone would not, in his opinion accomplish that. He said the RB zoned land is almost entirely built out and there is very little value in eliminating it now. Such an action would create many non-conforming uses.

Mr. Dougan asked if the zoning regulations could be changed to only allow owner-occupied housing stock. Mr. Pellegrini said staff will look into it, but he did not believe that it could be done. Mr. Sierakowski said decreasing density and the number of multi-family units being built will result in increased owner-occupancy. His idea would be to redevelop existing properties as single-family rather than increase the building of multi-family.

Mr. Pellegrini asked if the Commission had concerns about the design of multi-family buildings, whether they had concerns or thought application designs coming before them were attractive. Mr. Sierakowski said in the most recent applications the buildings are more architecturally pleasing. Mr. Gootkin said the Commission should avoid permitting a development that is not aesthetically pleasing and should be involved in architectural design standards so that any development built in a certain neighborhood fits within the context of that neighborhood.

Mr. Diminico asked if staff could conduct research on school children in relationship to multi-family units, and fiscal impact of school age children by housing type.

The Commission decided to meet on Thursday, February 19, at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Pellegrini indicated that he will attempt to get experts on smart growth and new urbanism to come and present to the Commission on Thursday, February 12.

Ms. Bertotti asked the Commission to add an agenda item to accept the extension request from Evergreen Crossing LLC, application E-46, for a nine-day extension.

MOTION: Mr. Dougan moved to add the Evergreen Crossing LLC extension request to the agenda. Mr. Mancini seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

MOTION: Mr. Dougan moved to approve the nine-day extension to Evergreen Crossing LLC, application E-46. Mr. Mancini seconded the motion and all members voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

March 2, 2009
Date

Eugene Sierakowski, Chairman

NOTICE: THE CASSETTE TAPE RECORDING OF THE BUSINESS MEETING CAN BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT.

OFFICIAL TAPE NO. 1016