

**FRANKLIN PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC HEARING MEETING
JUNE 28, 2017
7:00 P.M.**

Minutes

Call to Order: 7:05 p.m.

☐ Pledge of Allegiance

☐ Roll Call

Present: Tim Stangroom, Mike Freeman, Jo Brown, Ted Starkweather, Tim Flaherty, Scott Clarenbach, James Wells, Planning Director Richard Lewis

Absent: Brian Colburn, Brian Sullivan, Anthony Giunta, David Veysey, David Testerman

Acting Chair: Scott Clarenbach. Jim Wells is seated for City Councilor Anthony Giunta.

☐ Approval of Minutes from March 22, 2017: Member Brown motioned / Member Starkweather seconded to accept the minutes as presented. No errors, omissions or corrections were identified and the minutes were approved by a vote of 7-0-0.

Old Business: None

New Business: Discussion of the Master Plan Draft and Zoning Issues

Director Lewis reminded the board that updating the Master Plan started in 2013. In 2014 there was a public meeting on the vision section and the board adopted that draft document. A second public meeting on the public infrastructure, utilities, and capital projects followed that and a draft was prepared. The Planning Office was busy with Franklin for a Lifetime, the downtown revitalization project, and various brownfield projects. Meanwhile Director Lewis took the draft format from 2014, modified it a bit and put the focus on the two required sections--Vision and Land Use. The Director stressed that Master plans are not an all encompassing plan for a community; its focus should address those things that the Planning Board can control. What he is looking for tonight is feedback so that a new draft can be sent to the City Council for consideration.

Member Brown said that the approach is good and that she is in favor of making the Master Plan as succinct as possible. She added that the vision section is key. It is necessary to know where the city is going in order to get there. She felt that the focus on land use is sufficient because the City Council addresses those kinds of things. Finally she asked if there was any value in combining planning and zoning boards.

Director Lewis stated that by statute you have to have two separate boards. Almost all of the modifications to the zoning ordinance start with the Planning Board; the ZBA responds to requests for variances from the ordinance.

Member Flaherty suggested that the trails at the Franklin Dam be considered as one of the city's assets.

Member Freeman applauded the new Master Plan draft. He added that when Northern Pass comes the city will change and grow. He recommended that a study be conducted looking at what will happen in 10 years, how the city will be impacted, for example road conditions, traffic problems, population changes, potential for new businesses and industry and the need to have quick access to I-93. A short discussion of the pros and cons and the possibilities of new access to I-93 followed.

Chair Clarenbach stated that a major hurdle to getting the Master Plan accepted is getting the City Council engaged since they determine what is ultimately done.

Member Wells' concern was the socio-economic situation in Franklin. Others added that the transient, low-income population puts a burden on the schools and the non-enforcement of city codes results in the dissolution of once nice neighborhoods. It was noted in discussions during the Franklin for a Lifetime, that there was a need for the city to have a healthy mix from all sections of the population, that Franklin shouldn't become so gentrified that the people who work in the city can't afford to live in its environs. Two of the major stumbling blocks highlighted in the discussion were the quality of the school system and the lack of parking in the downtown area.

Member Brown inquired if there was some sort of incentive the city could offer to encourage people to buy into the older buildings in the city, for example regarding sprinkler systems which can be extremely expensive to install in pre-existing structures. Chair Clarenbach stated that sprinkler systems fall under state code and that the City of Franklin is only enforcing the minimum allowable standard at this time. Director Lewis noted that PermaCityLife is investigating bringing in a design professional to see how third-floor living spaces can be created in a cost effective manner and in compliance with the applicable codes. Such a report could then serve as a template for similar projects.

George Dzujna, a member of the public, added that these are all the things talked about at the city council meetings. He urged all aspects of the city to work collectively towards the goal of revitalizing Franklin. Several board members echoed that thought and Director Lewis suggested that he take some of these ideas and incorporate them into a separate section that encourages a community dialogue over the issues that aren't within the purview of the Planning Board. A community forum was suggested; a joint meeting of the city council, the school board, community leaders and the public.

Director Lewis thanked everyone for their input. The task now would be to integrate these ideas into the existing sections of the draft.

Member Freeman recommended that care should be taken in pointing out a lot of problems without recommendations. It is essential to provide a path to the solution.

The discussion returned to the issue of the schools. Chair Clarenbach presented figures of other communities and how much of their tax revenues go toward the local schools. In a number of cases, nearly half the amount taken in by taxes is targeted for the school systems. Member Flaherty suggested that a study be undertaken that would look at the best school systems in the state to see why they are better than others. Chair Clarenbach added that Franklin is predominately a blue collar community. The school board

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stated that standardized testing takes place in the 4th, 8th and 10th grades. Only 27 percent of the students stay in the school system to take all three tests. Families move in and move out. As a result 73% of the students aren't here over that 6 year window. He added that if Northern Pass goes through as planned, Franklin will have the opportunity to put some money toward critical issues.

Director Lewis suggested that the Master Plan be presented in a public hearing in either September or October. He will take the comments and suggestions from this discussion and incorporate them.

Member Stangroom asked about the previous Planning Meeting since he wasn't in attendance.

Director Lewis informed the board that additional brownfields assessment work will soon be performed on the former Ciao Pasta property; the Lenny Birke property will also see some assessment work as well. The first ADU application was approved by the Zoning Board even though the unit was detached from the main residence. He added that historically carriage houses were used as accessory dwelling units for staff or out of town guests.

Member Brown asked about the Crowley property that received approval for school bus maintenance and storage and Director Lewis stated that the project fell through and that First Student was still operating out of Tilton. He added that Mr. Crowley was looking into turning the building into condos where small businesses could be set up. Director Lewis said that someone has expressed interest in purchasing and upgrading the Syndicate Block building. Member Wells mentioned a rumor that Irving Oil was going to buy the Soda Shop. Member Starkweather asked about updates to Eversource's Daniel Substation and Mr. Lewis stated that work was to start in earnest in October and he expected to see the landscaping to be undertaken in September or October.

Other business:

In response to the letter from the Lakes Region Planning Commission office, Jo Brown, Jim Wells, and Tim Flaherty all put their name into consideration to sit on the LRPC Board.

Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was approved at 8:35 pm.