

**FRANKLIN PLANNING BOARD
WORKSHOP MINUTES
June 24, 2020
6:00 p.m.**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the workshop for the Planning Board was conducted remotely. The computer link was <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88108800679>

MINUTES

Call to Order: Meeting called to order at 6:01 pm by Chairman Dave Liberatore

- ☐ Reading of the Virtual Meeting Authorization by Planning Director Richard Lewis
- ☐ Roll Call: Present-Chairman Dave Liberatore [home alone], Jo Brown [home alone], Christine Dzujna [home alone], Tim Flaherty [home alone], Rob Sargent [Franklin Public Library-alone], Ted Starkweather [home alone], Dave Testerman [home with wife coming in and out] and Donna Tully [home alone]. Also present: Planning Director Richard Lewis [Planning Office]. Absent-Mayor Anthony Giunta and Kathy Lauer-Rago
- ☐ Pledge of Allegiance
- ☐ Approval of February 26, 2020 Planning Board Minutes: Member Jo Brown motioned to approve the minutes as written. Motion was seconded by Member Starkweather. The motion carried by a roll call vote of 8-0-0.

Old Business: None

New Business: Discussion on Amendments: The Redevelopment of the Steven's Mill

Planning Director Richard Lewis presented some background information about the downtown revitalization zoning ordinances adopted in 2007. The reason for the adoption of the zoning language was to encourage and facilitate economic redevelopment in the downtown. Since that time, there has been recalculations modifying development options and looking at different ways the properties can be developed in a cost-effective manner both for residents and developers. The current economic development in Franklin began in 2015. In the Spring of 2015, the City put together a multi-day event called "Franklin for a Lifetime". Out of that event, the City learned of the availability of a grant from the USDA Rural Development agency. A \$40,000 grant was the result and Niel Cannon was hired as a consultant in economic development. He has brought in \$1.75 million dollars in grants, loans, etc. The first initiative was the opening of Jo Brown's Franklin Studio, followed by Marty Parichand's idea of developing a White Water Park on the Winnepesaukee River. Just recently the park received the DES wetland permit for the work in the river. Above and beyond all the work Todd Workman and others did for PermaCityLife, the next big 'prize' was getting Eric Chinburg involved in the acquisition of the Steven's Mill on Canal Street. The Chinburg development company has a lot of experience in mill redevelopment in New Market, and other locations in New Hampshire and southern Maine. Since Chinburg's purchase

of the Stevens Mill in December 2017, he and his team have been exploring concept plans, possible loans and grants and putting all the project elements together. They are now working toward having hearings for required special use permit and site plan application for a mixed-use development in the mill. They are proposing 140 residential units with about 20% being two-bedrooms and 80% being one bedroom or studio apartments. Once they settled on some of these numbers it became apparent that they needed to look at some of the current zoning/parking issues downtown.

Planner Lewis mentioned the two memos he sent out in preparation for the night's meeting. About a week and a half ago he had a discussion with one of the primary team members from the Chinburg operation, talking about all the steps in the process necessary for the development of the site. A lot of things have changed since the revitalization district was created over 13 years ago. At that time, there was some thought that Stevens Mill and Stanley Mill and what is now the CATCH building could make up a collection of commercial/retail space. With the CATCH building being completely converted into apartments and Stanley Mill falling apart, the only mill building left is the Stevens Mill. The zoning language from 15 years ago requiring 40,000 sq. feet of commercial business/retail type of space is no longer a useful number. Planner Lewis's suggestion to the Board is to drop that minimum square footage from 40,000 to 30,000. The game plan Chinburg is focusing on is to continue to use the front building and the 1-story building to the west for commercial use. That amounts to about 32,000 square feet. The back five-story building would be converted into residential units.

The existing zoning in the parking section calls for 1 parking space for every 250 square feet of commercial area, however, between 2007 and 2020 it has been recognized that there is more parking than these offices have needed, especially with the move to so many people working from home. The second proposal is to change the 250 square feet to 350 square feet. Member Brown asked if Planner Lewis was suggesting a reduction of 2 parking spaces for residential use to one parking space for these one-bedroom/studio apartments. The Planner answered that this would be another proposal to present. Member Dzujna asked how the parking spaces would be designated for the people in the building. The Planner said this is something that will need to be fleshed out more by the Chinburg team. The existing language allows for some shared parking between the commercial and the residential components. About 55 of the total calculated spaces that Chinburg will need will be share with the assumption that the larger number of residents will be going off to work. Member Sargent asked if it proves that more people are working from home at the same time that the City is trying to draw people into commercial enterprises within the same building, couldn't the potential exist for two needs for the same space at the same time. Planner Lewis agreed that there could be such a situation, but based on his discussion with the Chinburg team member, and their experience with other mill developments is that there is actually only the need for one parking space per apartment since most of the proposed units will only be one-bedroom or studio apartments. Only 20 percent will be multi-bedroom units. Chairman Liberatore added that Chinburg has enough experience that he wouldn't put in a \$30,000,000 investment in this building and not have enough parking. The Chairman suggest that the Board trust in Chinburg's experience. Member Sargent asked if there wasn't public transportation available at Chinburg's other projects and stated that this isn't an option in Franklin. Planner Lewis admitted that the Greater Laconia Transit that ran through Franklin and over to Hannafords and the outlet mall in Tilton shut down due to low ridership. Based on the Planner's conversation with Chinburg's team, he feels comfortable with their estimate of needs regarding parking. Member Starkweather said he believes that

with the potential of parking on the Stanley Mill project and other spaces available where two buildings were demolished on Canal/Memorial Streets, along with other parking areas, there shouldn't be a parking problem. Planner Lewis mentioned three other possible parcels, one was the ambulance building on Memorial, the Keegan Block next to the gas station at Central and Prospect and the lot on Church Street behind the Post Office. Providing some flexibility to Chinburg from the existing Zoning language will help facilitate their development. Look at any town like Franklin and the issue of economic redevelopment from repurposing old mill buildings has to be a public/private partnership.

Item C on the June 16th memo mentions the trend toward smaller apartments. Chairman Liberatore mentioned an Elmgrove project in Concord where the largest apartment is 500 sq. feet. Planner Lewis brought the attention to the Board to the bold section in this Item that contains the suggested language change which would authorize the creation of units less than 720 sq. feet. He went on to add that Chinburg is designing some community space into his development for both the future residents and the commercial employees. The proposed location of this area would mean the demolition of an old cinder block addition to the mill. Although this would need to go before the Heritage Commission, there is no historical value to this addition and it shouldn't be an issue with granting permission to take that portion of the building down.

Member Testerman said that going back to the size of the units, due to the pandemic, the legislature has tabled the tiny home bill, but that it should be coming back up. The Planner said that allowing flexibility to housing sizes, shapes and designs will help attract new and interesting people to the city.

Moving onto the memo dated June 24th, Planner Lewis said that paragraph 3 contains the old and new language regarding the number of parking spaces. Chinburg will need two permits, one the site plan permit with the site design issues, and because he is building a multi-unit residential project with more than ten units, he'll need a Special Use Permit. These two permits work together requiring just one hearing with two components. There will be specific things he will need to address, such as landscaping and lighting.

Chairman Liberatore suggested moving forward with the amendments, using the July 22nd Planning Board Meeting to vote on the recommendations to the City Council for their meeting on August 3rd. Planner Lewis said that there would be a legal ad in the paper advertising the July 22nd public hearing with the proposed changes in the Zoning language.

Public Comment: None

Other Business: None

Planner's Update: Planner Lewis said that as part of the Cumberland Farms project, the City was going to purchase the old Lennie Birke property and the cost of that acquisition would be paid for by Cumberland Farms. The City would then lease that property along with the Ciao piece to Cumberland Farms. Before the City could acquire the Birke property, a new Phase One assessment needed to be done. That assessment revealed the fact that there were two underground oil storage tanks there. Those tanks were empty and the City had them removed. There should be a signed P&S on the Birke

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property and the lease language to Cumberland Farms has been finalized. It looks like the project might get underway in early or late fall.

The Peabody Home has submitted plans for the demolition and building permit. The plans are being reviewed by a third party who is working with the State Fire Marshall's office and the State's Department of Health and Human Services. The new Peabody Home, being built in two phases, will be fully code compliant.

Member Flaherty asked about the old apartment building next to Benson Auto that has been demolished. Planner Lewis said that Benson may only be using it for additional parking after it has been graded. There was a second house that was removed over at Beauchine Auto.

Planner Lewis mentioned the Condo arrangement for the top two floors of Toad Hall. The condo docs have been completed and building permits have been submitted for turning those floors into residential units. For the White Water Park, the City is pursuing additional funding for adding more features in the river.

Member Brown asked about the house on Pleasant Street that burned back in January. Planner Lewis said it is being handled by the courts.

Lastly, due to some difficulties with the Solar project on Industrial Park Drive, it has been decided that a third-party review of the building permit applications and the inspections during construction would be beneficial. A Request for Qualifications has been sent out and one firm has already applied.

Member Testerman asked about the status of the junk yard on Prospect Street and the Planner referred him to the Code Office for information.

Adjournment: Member Flaherty motioned for adjournment at 7:33 pm. Motion was seconded by Member Brown and carried by an 8-0-0 roll call vote.

Minutes recorded by Cheryl Y. Fisher, Administrative Assistant Planning & Zoning.

- The next Planning Board regular meeting is scheduled for July 22, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. and the application dead line date is July 1, 2020.