

**FRANKLIN PLANNING BOARD
PUBLIC MEETING
July 22, 2020
6:00 p.m.**

****Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Planning Board Meeting met remotely via Zoom at:**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87130908377>,

Minutes

Call to Order: Meeting called to order by Chairman Liberatore at 6:00pm.

- ☐ Reading of the Virtual Meeting Authorization by Planner Richard Lewis
- ☐ Roll Call: **Members Present** – Mayor Anthony Giunta [home alone]; Library Director Robert Sargent [library alone], Council Jo Brown [home alone], Christine Dzujna [home alone], Chairman David Liberatore [home alone], Kathy Lauer-Rago [home alone], David Testerman [home alone], Donna Tully [home alone], and Council Ted Starkweather [home alone]. **Absent** – Tim Flaherty
- ☐ Pledge of Allegiance
- ☐ Approval of June 24, 2020 Planning Board Minutes – A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ted Starkweather and seconded by Jo Brown. There were no changes or amendments and the motion passed by a roll call vote of **7-0-2** with Mayor Giunta and Member Lauer-Rago abstaining.

Old Business: None

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

Planner Richard Lewis said that this was a follow-up to the general discussion at the June 24th meeting. Planner Lewis reminded the Board that the language under discussion was created in 2007 and since then there have been changes; design and development approaches have shifted and there has been a lot of work on the redevelopment and revitalization of the core downtown area in Franklin. The White Water park has received two important permits from DES. Some of the other development has either come about or will come about largely because of the White Water Park. The recreational opportunities that will be created, the new economic development, i.e. restaurants, the Brewery, the biggest of which is the Stephens Mill, which was purchased about three years ago by Eric Chinburg company out of New Market, New Hampshire. Chinburg builders is the premiere mill redeveloper in New England. They've done work in several communities in New Hampshire and Maine. In looking at some sections of the Downtown Revitalization District, there are several areas that could use some updates.

Amendment 1 talks about the amount of total square footage of commercial space that needs to be created in three separate parcels: The Stanley Mill, The Stephens Mill and The Forester Mill which is now the CATCH building. The requirement was for 40,000 square feet, but the CATCH building has been turned entirely into residential units, the Stanley Mill building has deteriorated into a condition that makes redevelopment impractical. It will be torn down and the area cleaned up due to Brownfield issues. Therefore, the only mill that can be developed is the Stephens Mill. In discussions with Chinburg, they are intending to develop approximately 32-34,000 feet of commercial space. Taking the required square footage down to 30,000 sq. feet seems appropriate and gives the developer more flexibility.

With no questions from the Board, Mr. Lewis moved onto Amendment 2. Amendment 2 relates to the size of residential units. As has been seen in Manchester, Concord and New Market, the existing language of saying that no more than 33% of the units can be under 720 square feet in size, has become a bit outdated. In Concord and Manchester there are studio units that are in the 300-350 sq. foot range. The Chinburg plan calls for multiple studio units, so going with the trend, to allow additional units above the 33% to be less than 720 sq. feet in size seems to make sense given the current norms. By adding a new paragraph 5 that reads, *the provisions of Section 4 above notwithstanding, the Planning Board may authorize a multi-unit project with units less than 720 square feet, providing that the project satisfies the parking requirements, and the requirement in Paragraph 5.d below for the creation of appropriate common community space*, the burden will be on the Chinburg team when they come in to talk about their site plan and special use permit to talk about how smaller spaces work, what sort of experience they've had, are there problems, how does this fit into smaller communities in New Hampshire.

Member Testerman asked if Planner Lewis has discussed any of this specific wording with the Chinburg team. Mr. Lewis answered that he sent them a copy of this memo, but that he hasn't had any discussions with them about it. Code Officer Steve Reale and Mr. Lewis met with the Chinburg team a couple of weeks ago to discuss fire safety/life safety code issues as pertains to their redevelopment of the mill complex. Mr. Lewis feels that Captain Reale was happy with the Chinburg members answers to code issues. They seem to be taking a very professional attitude to developing this site. Chinburg purchased this building almost three years ago. A year and a half ago Mr. Lewis and Mr. Aberg went down to New Market to talk about different specifics. Since then Chinburg has put in a lot of work in designing parking, lighting, landscaping, and community spaces. Mr. Chinburg has been very supportive of the White Water Park and Mill City Park and has given some money toward that project. He sees it as a big game changer for the City and the State and it seems he wants to fit in well with the positive economic steps occurring with the White Water Park.

Amendment 3 relates to parking. The Downtown Revitalization District has some specific language regarding the amount of parking spaces for residential development. The experience that Chinburg has had in nearly all his mill redevelopment projects is that they do not need the number of parking spaces that Franklin's code calls for. Downtown Franklin has some constraints for residential parking, but Eric Chinburg has been working on designing a building where parking won't be as critical as it was fifteen or twenty years ago. Smaller units mean fewer people so the

proposal for this amendment is to give the Planning Board through the Special Use Permit process, the ability to reduce the minimum number of residential parking spaces. The test that Chinburg has to successfully pass is to present historical evidence from his other projects regarding parking needs. If the evidence suggests that they don't need the 1.3 spaces per unit and can get by with 1.2 spaces per unit then the Board can approve that. The language of the Downtown Revitalization District also states that similar to parking language in many other communities, when you have a mixed use residential/commercial development, some of the parking can be shared during the work day. The City is working with Chinburg on some parking options. The City purchased some property on Canal/Memorial Street where new parking spaces can be put in. Parking will also be available on the Keagan block on Central and more up on Church Street where an old Victorian house was demolished.

Chairman Liberatore feels that the changes in the language offers more latitude to developers and with this wording the City has the final say.

Amendment 4 relates to the number of parking spaces for retail/commercial use. Existing language says 1 parking space per 250 sq. feet of commercial/business activity. The proposed change would make that 1 parking space per 350 sq. feet. The Parking Ordinance does not recognize that in any office space you have office space that is storage, bathrooms, hallways, conference rooms, breakrooms, etc. There is a question of gross space versus net space.

The land use statutes of the RSAs call for a public hearing for any amendments to the zoning ordinance in any community. For the last 22 years, the Planning Board has been the home for those public hearings. Following the public hearing, a vote is taken to the Board, and if everyone is in agreement with the changes, the next step is to send a positive recommendation to the City Council for their approval. The next City Council Meeting is August 3rd. Chairman Liberatore asked for a motion for the proposed changes. Member Starkweather made the motion which was seconded by Member Dzujna. **The motion passed by roll call vote of 9-0-0.**

Public Comment: Carolyn Hurst was present for the meeting, she said she was just interested in what was happening at the Stevens Mill.

Other Business: none

Planner's Update: Planner Lewis said that the Peabody project has been moving more slowly than expected, but because of the type of use of that structure, the State Fire Marshall and the Department of Health and Human Services are involved and need to sign off on the project. Peabody Home is very close to getting their building permit.

Cumberland Farms project has a lot of players including the Birkes, the Ciao piece and the City Parcel. Planner Lewis anticipates an application coming forward late September, early October. The same with the Stevens Mill time line. Planner Lewis is working on an application for a grant with the Department of Environmental Services for a Brownfield cleanup at the Stanley Mill site. The grant award could be in the neighborhood of \$200,000.00 and that money could get

Approved 08-26-2020

linked to an application to the USEPA in December or early January for a \$500,000.00 grant on additional cleanup on that site.

Mayor Giunta thanked the Board for sending these amendment changes onto the City Council. He feels it is so important for the Board to show that it is willing to work with developers in this public/private partnership.

Adjournment: Motion to Adjourn made by Member Starkweather and seconded by Member Brown. **The motion carried by a 9-0-0 roll call vote.**

- The next Planning Board regular meeting is scheduled for August 26, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. and the application dead line date is August 5, 2020.