

**DRAFT MINUTES  
ALL BOARDS MEETING  
June 15, 2016**

**1. Welcome—Chair Julie Gilman, Vice Chair, Selectboard**

The session was called to order by Chair Julie Gilman at 6:35 pm.

Introductions were made: Julie Gilman, Vice Chair of the Board of Selectmen, Chairing this meeting; Nancy Belanger, Board of Selectmen, Virginia Raub, Conservation Commission; Bill Campbell, Conservation Commission, Pete Cameron, Planning Board, Langdon Plumer, Planning Board, Kathy Corson Planning Board, Beth McDonald, Vice Chair of the Economic Development Commission; Curtis Boivin, Historic District Commission; John Merkle, Heritage Commission; Patrick Gordon, Chair of the Historic District Commission; and Laura Davies, Chair of the Zoning Board of Adjustment. [Other board members arrived after member introductions were made, hence may not appear on this list, with apologies-DPP.]

Staff present were Russ Dean, Town Manager, Doug Eastman, Code Enforcement Officer, David Sharples, Town Planner, Darren Winham, Economic Development Director, and David Pancoast, Recording Secretary.

**2. Recap of meeting of February 10, 2016**

Ms. Gilman thanked everyone for their time and volunteerism. She said the purpose of the meeting tonight was to catch up with all the boards present and address the goals of that prior session to the extent they can do that.

**3. Reports/Updates from Land Use Boards'/Other Boards' Representatives**

Pete Cameron of the Planning Board said that board has a wide variety of skills. He recommended all boards being careful that the decision-making is not too emotional regarding the matters the boards face, so the boards don't miss things.

Langdon Plumer, also of the Planning Board, addressed the Master Plan status and progress. The Planning Board is looking to employ a different format for the Master Plan, one that is more "user friendly." Mr. Sharples has been looking at other towns' Master Plans and has utilized a spread sheet approach on comparing them, to track the process. The notes of Master Plan meetings will be posted and available to the Community. He agreed with Mr. Cameron that it's important not to "get ahead of ourselves." The Master Plan and its development process will help keep town folks aware.

Bill Campbell of the Conservation Commission then stated that since last fall, that board has had some tough losses in the chair stepping down and the death of a key member. They've

got two new members which helps. Carlos Guindon's chairmanship has been good. The commission still needs a couple of alternates.

Virginia Raub, also a Conservation Commission member, added that Trails Day went well, the commission adopted the use of a children's book with enlarged pages posted along the trail and put out some seed balls made of clay at a meadow-the children threw the balls of milkweed seeds to sprout them and had a lot of fun doing it. Some seeds have already germinated. The Commission tries to do at least one outreach program per year. Folks don't know about a lot of the activities and things it does and the amenities it offers through its property management efforts.

John Merkle of the Heritage Commission said it was an advisory board, and that it had certified the local government so it has access to grant money that is not accessible by other government entities. They were involved in the mitigation of the impacts of some projects and have been trying to restore headstones at cemeteries. The commission has a concern about neighborhoods that are vulnerable, it wants to make sure all the other boards are aware of them so the issues they face are understood. The commission could use more members. Mr. Merkle closed by saying that neighborhood quality is important.

Patrick Gordon, Chair of the Historic District Commission said that two members had stepped down from the commission, but Curtis Boivin had joined, so the commission is doing all right. Good strides are being made and they are preparing some use guidelines for the community that will provide great value to Exeter. They still need new board members, but that is somewhat of a challenge. The Town might need a volunteering campaign to get the board memberships up. Even people that live here don't always know all that's going on.

Beth McDonald, Vice Chair of the Economic Development Commission ("EDC") stated that since the last All Boards Meeting the commission changed to another meeting night to accommodate its members' attendance. It had been decided at the February All Boards Meeting that the various boards all working together would be a very good thing. The EDC is looking for opportunities for economic development in Exeter to meet the goals of the Town and the Selectboard. She said that Economic Development Director Darren Winham will address that progress later on. They are trying to find places in Town where economic development can be suitably enhanced.

Doug Eastman, Code Enforcement Officer, said that the Zoning Board has a new Chairman, Laura Davies, and he is very encouraged by the board's efforts and what is going on with it. Laura Davies, Chair of the Zoning Board of Adjustment ("ZBA") added that its membership was fully staffed but for one alternate position. As for coordination with other boards, the ZBA will look into it and its past chair wants to address a couple of related things at its next session. They also want to create a packet for ZBA submissions and would like to hear a brief presentation from other boards, perhaps they could send a representative to do that, to help the ZBA get such coordination and communication going.

Chair Gilman thought that was a very good idea. She said that joint board meetings are really too difficult to accomplish frequently. The Heritage Commission is a little unknown so it is trying to do outreach to other boards to let them know what it does. All boards should think about having a representative that can go to the other boards and update them on what their board does. She would also like to have a mentor set up in each board for newer members, to initiate them to that board's rules of procedure and process. That would also go into a packet for each board. One thing to address is when members can speak publicly on matters before the boards and how to not get into trouble over doing it. One of the biggest stumbling blocks to getting new board volunteers is that they fear having a lack of knowledge about what to do and what they don't know. She said that Pete Cameron had attended a recent Office of Energy Planning ("OEP") Conference that addressed some of those issues he will speak to.

Mr. Cameron then explained that the OEP Conference was useful. He had attended the breakout sessions on planning board issues and got several documents relevant to planning board responsibilities and roles of the members, but he thought much of it could apply to other boards also. Ms. Gilman suggested that all board members look at them, as it's a good package. She suggested that it be put on the Town website.

Ms. Gilman then reiterated that it's best to remove the emotion and make decisions accordingly. There was some discussion about the ZBA decisions affecting the other boards that deal with the same project. Doug Eastman, CEO, said that the ZBA is more about variances and such and the use of properties. Laura Davies, ZBA Chair, briefly discussed the overall ZBA process, regarding the various types of decisions it has to make in order to approve projects. Ms. Gilman added that the ZBA is a quasi-judicial board that is creating law and it must follow those laws as to conditions being met. There was some more discussion on the effect of its decisions on the other boards.

#### **4. Town Planner - Planning Process Update**

Dave Sharples, Town Planner, stated that he had created a project flow chart for planning but did it as a project that might go to all land use boards for input. The ZBA is the initial stop-it's premature to go to the Planning Board first when the plan might need conditional approval on zoning before that. The Historic District Commission and Heritage Commission is at the same early position as the Zoning Board, so that applicants can find out early in the process about historic issues. Then the matter goes to the Technical review Committee ("TRC"), if applicable. The TRC generates comments before any Planning Board submission. An applicant can respond to those comments, which all go into a memo to the Planning Board with the submission. Then the Conservation Commission gets it for review and recommendations. The Planning Board final vote is the last step-the applicant can get building permits after that. The whole process takes about 90-180 days for a project to get complete local review. There are some things that can influence that timeline-such as plan revisions, other permits needed, abutter concerns/opposition, etc.

Russ Dean, Town Manager, added that he is happy about this flow chart process-as it shows the TRC piece, which was new, so now all the “pre-process” is properly included. Predictability is the overall goal in the process.

There was discussion about the Master Plan Steering Committee perhaps having someone on the TRC. Ms. McDonald, of the Economic Development Commission, asked about the Master Plan being a Planning Board document. Mr. Sharples said it’s a guideline, not a regulatory document. The TRC is just advisory to the Planning Board, it’s not a regulatory committee. It raises issues and makes relevant recommendations only, it has no actual authority. How it works is that a development plan is submitted to the TRC, which generates comments and those comments are sent to the Planning Board. The applicants address the comments during the process.

There was discussion about the consideration of the Master Plan during Planning Board deliberations. Master Plan sections are not cited in the applications. It was suggested that it might be useful to reference the Master Plan in development applications to the ZBA as well as the Planning Board. Russ Dean, Town Manager, said that they had considered having a member of Planning Board sitting in on TRC sessions, but it was not recommended by MRI or the Town Attorney due to the resulting conflict of interest in the Planning Board regulatory role with approvals coming later in the process. The member would then have to recuse themselves from decision-making in that project.

Mr. Sharples said that all this is just one phase of development applications-there is a whole other process that occurs after approval. Code Enforcement and Certificate of Occupancy processes come in. He said that how to be sure all requirements and limitations are applied and followed throughout is important and he will modify the flow chart later.

## **5. Economic Development –Economic Development Strategic Plan Update**

Darren Winham, Economic Development Director, spoke about the Economic Development Strategic Plan (“EDSP”), and gave an update as to what was worked on over the past months. He acknowledged receiving much help and input from others on staff and the boards. He handed out the draft EDSP summary documents. EDSP is meant to customize the development approach to assure that an economic development strategy is effectively accomplished. Many factors are involved, as listed on the documents. They broke the town up into six corridors, all with a lot of information on them. The draft plan includes fact sheets, maps for all corridors, and a questionnaire. They need and want input on the questionnaire, and responses can address just part of it.

The Epping Road corridor was a challenging area, has wetlands, so site work can be prohibitive, but they have one project proposal there that was exciting but the development costs came in at \$10 million over what was expected. It’s not dead but it is slowed down. As to the King property, one or two developers were interested, but not moving fast. Large tracts to be developed there would be fantastic for the town. There is much work being done

and all in good directions. For that corridor, the public wants to see some specific things and developers differ somewhat, so there is that challenge there.

The Train Station area of town had some significant developer interest. Lexie's is a huge benefit and expansion has been discussed. Young folks want to be located near the train. The neighborhood is "bohemian" in flavor. They call themselves "West Ex" which is a nice concept. He relayed that all corridor discussions revealed residents want more pedestrian-friendly development throughout town.

The Downtown corridor revealed a strongly identified need for more "lingering" there by visitors/residents. The Town controls Town Hall and there was discussion on how to use it more often. There's a plan afoot to do that, he said, hopefully coming within a month. Both the EDSP and Master Plan need to address getting folks downtown to linger there and utilize the amenities that exist or to be provided. That notion kept coming back up in all EDSP sessions. "Way-finding" signs in Downtown are of great interest to the residents, useful for finding things and providing walking directions for visitors/residents.

The Portsmouth Ave corridor is more or less built out, redevelopment is the only real likelihood there. Traffic flows are acceptable. There was discussion of sites not being utilized, like the vacant parcel next to Exeter Lumber. Some goals there are for increased commercial infill and beautification of both sides of the road, over time.

The Holland Way/Hampton Rd corridor session led to an identified need for more restaurants, so folks can eat right there and not have to go downtown. A Tax Increment Financing ("TIF") arrangement might work there, all that is a prime example of a public input session's importance. The TIF possibility will go into the EDSP as an option. Another idea was to do nothing there-most neighborhood residents didn't want it "messed with."

The Kingston Rd session had many ideas come out of it. The 73 acre Fraumeni piece was discussed and developers are interested. Those developers plan to meet with planning and zoning staff soon to move their proposals forward.

Economic Development will seek more input and hold more public meetings later on. They are creating a 'baseball card' style system to help track these things-using informational stat sheets. Getting input on the uses that folks want will allow them to go to developers with it. Mr. Winham also said they are going to integrate EDSP with the MP. Action steps are being developed so that it's all coordinated. They most need to get the plan to the public and get its input on this draft and then revise it to move the process forward. He again asked all the attendees to please fill out the EDSP questionnaire, or as much of it as they would, and get it back to him soon for the draft plan.

Mr. Dean, Town Manager, added that all this work was very good, very educational and informative. They had learned more about all these parcels than they ever knew before and they are still learning about area viability and such. They are looking into general trends and

specific possibilities as this process unfolds. Mr. Plumer of the Planning Board added that it was very important to see so many land owners at the EDSP sessions which he had attended.

Ms. Davies of the ZBA said she was curious about the downtown component and asked for more information. Mr. Winham clarified that it included the river, the eastern side of downtown, the promenade, the island [with some plans coming later for that piece], and along the waterfront, which has a lot of parking back there. Research showed that the parking is owned by the condo owners above it. Those owners need a strong incentive to move those spots out to allow for anything else to go in there. That's very difficult to do. One piece of that area is being looked at for specific repurposing.

Mr. Dean added that the "to do list" for Darren Winham is to come back to all these things and advance them. He asked that if anyone present knew any of the landowners, to please talk to them to help things move forward as they continue to work on these issues.

Town Manager Dean stated that there are a variety of folks here at the meeting, and the town is trying to be active and very proactive as to updating and clarifying its regulations. There are no major roadblocks per se. particular issues can be looked at as they come up over time.

## **6. Town Planner–Master Plan Update**

Dave Sharples, Town Planner, said the Master Plan process is well underway. The Master Plan Steering Committee has 25 members, and it has laid out the process to keep it all on track and moving forward. Visioning sessions will be held later this year. There was a recent meeting to develop the scope of services for the Plan consultant. An RFQ went out last month on that. The response deadline is 6/30-and the hope is to get a lot of interest back. A five member panel is in place to interview the consultant applicants. The visioning sessions will be important and everyone will get noticed on those for their participation. They have developed a pre-visioning questionnaire for input, with only two questions on it: first: list the five topics of most importance for the Town's future; and second: what three words would you use to describe Exeter to someone who hasn't ever been here? So far the responses are good. It will be online too for all public input.

## **7. Board/Committee Representatives' Comments:**

As board comments had previously been made, Mr. Dean stated that the 'All Boards' process started with big picture items, especially in Economic Development. They have developed the planning process chart and EDSP in response to identified needs.

## **8. Next Steps:**

Ms. Gilman outlined her assignments to the group: first: identify what opportunities are out there for land use programs and seminars, etc.; and second: before the next meeting, have your boards designate representatives to go to other boards and explain your boards' roles.

Mr. Dean clarified that since the land use boards essentially all go through the Planning Dept, all those boards should evaluate relevant dues and memberships and reevaluate them as to how helpful they are/useful, so that those funds are expended most judiciously.

It was stated that the Downtown issue is a 'sleeping giant.' Movies at the IOKA Theater were once a huge draw. Many folks would love to see it revived. Any additional energy expended there would be great. In response, Mr. Winham said that Economic Development is in a good place on that location right now as to progress, so they don't want to interfere or spoil it. People here tonight are working with that owner and hopefully it will bear fruit as it progresses. IOKA and some sites on Portsmouth Ave are the ones discussed most often with him.

Mr. Dean added that the process results in many various interests all coming out, and that the Town is facing some things that they need to address and then the rest will naturally follow, like a pedestrian-friendly downtown and a parking garage. There was some discussion on the roads downtown and ownership of them and their maintenance; and also on adding lockable bike rack facilities in town, and the other potential uses of sidewalks.

Ms. Davies asked about the timeline on dam removal. Mr. Dean said it would begin the last week of June and it's a two month project, so into September maybe, before completion. There was some discussion on how to memorialize the dam. Ms. Gilman revealed that Public Works will do that, but, since the Army Corps of Engineers ("ACOE") is in charge of that removal, the Town can comment but not control it. Mr. Dean announced that there is a River Committee meeting tomorrow morning. He said that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration ("NOAA") is expecting a gathering of some sort about the dam removal, so something will take place.

Ms. Gilman then announced that the next All Boards Meeting would be in September 2016 and that the 7<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> dates were all open Wednesdays. Hearing no limiting concerns on the dates, she set the date for September 7, 2016 at 6:30 pm for the next session.

## **8. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Gilman adjourned the session at 8:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by David Pancoast, Recording Secretary