



Somersworth Historic District Commission

One Government Way Somersworth, NH 03878

Minutes of Workshop Meeting on creating Home Owners Association in the Historic District on 30
March 2017: Adopted as Submitted

Present:

Martin Dumont, Chair
Richard Brooks
Pius Charles Murray, Secretary

Guests present:

Shanna Saunders, Director of Planning and Community Development

Workshop Agenda & Minutes

Call to Order: At 3:15 pm by the Chair.

Workshop Business:

The Chair introduced the Workshop's purpose. Using the Hilltop as the center, the Chair would like to investigate establishing up to four neighborhoods for each of which Home Owners, or Neighborhood, Associations could be created. Given the demographics of that section of the city, each neighborhood would probably be diverse ethnically. The purpose of the HOA would be self-policing and self-managing through association bylaws of the upkeep of property in the specific neighborhood. This could be a way to insure the proper maintenance of historic properties and contribute to higher property values citywide. In order to avoid include too many non-historic homes in the HOA, the Workshop could recommend to the City Council the establishment of a single neighborhood which would follow the historic district boundary.

Mr. Brooks stated his concern that absentee landlords who owned multiple properties in a particular neighborhood would have a weighted vote in the association. According to the Chair, one way to avoid the issue of absentee landlords monopolizing power would be to exclude them from association

membership. Mr. Murray was concerned that association dues would turn some property owners off and they wouldn't join. Ms. Saunders said that another issue is that some home owners wouldn't join because they would think that they might automatically benefit from some types of neighborhood improvements. Ms. Saunders said that, on the other hand, developing some benefits (e.g. an interest free loan pool, negotiate its own waste management contract, etc.) for association members only could serve as an enticement to join.

The Chair said that it was too much for one city Code Enforcement Officer to monitor all the historic buildings in the city. Ms. Saunders recommended the inclusion of absentee landlords in any neighborhood erected because their support would be vital to the success of the project. The Chair informed the Workshop that he had spoken with Dan DeSantis who would be willing to do any legwork necessary to drum up support and/or participation in an HOA.

The Chair asked Ms. Saunders if she had the time and would be willing to assist the Workshop in mapping out potential neighborhood boundaries in the Hilltop area, to which request she agreed. Ms. Saunders recommended developing a short *raison d'être* describing reasons why home owners should want to join a newly formed association. Ms. Saunders explained that leadership is very important; a weak association leadership can lead to acrimony among neighbors and association standards failing to be enforced thus reducing property values. Establishing an HOA is a difficult sales job, said Ms. Saunders. The Chair confirmed what Ms. Saunders said by stating that there is no instant gratification and that it is a long-range project. Furthermore, the Chair explained that the Workshop could recommend identifying a neighborhood (or neighborhoods) to the full HDC, which would then if adopted forward the recommendation to the City Council. If the Council adopted the HOA recommendation then it would be responsible for holding the community meetings to launch the HOA initiative.

Another meeting will be held but is as yet TBD.

III. Adjournment:

The Chair adjourned the Workshop at 4:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Pius Charles Murray

(Mr.) Pius Charles Murray, MLS, MPA
Secretary