

# **CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**

## **Form Based Codes**

**July 13, 2020 @ 6:30pm via Zoom**

Mayor Hilliard announced that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting. All members of the Council have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously watch by way of our local public access Comcast channel 22 or via live streaming available at our City website Somersworth.com.

Mayor Hilliard opened the workshop at 6:30pm by welcoming Shanna Saunders, Director of Planning and Community Development.

The presentation is on file. Following the presentation, Council had the following questions.

City Manager pointed out that this is a proposed amendment that has been in the works for over 18 months. This has gone back and forth between the Council Standing Committees. We had a few informational sessions at the Council level as well. This Ordinance has not yet been viewed by the City Attorney, so there may be some tweaks or modifications to the language. If so, they will be introduced at the next Council meeting.

Councilor Witham stated that as a member of the Historic District Commission this has caused him to reflect a little bit on how this district would overlap with the Historic Overlay District. He doesn't see that this would be diminishing the value of their work; this would stand on its own.

Director Saunders answered that every sub-district sheet does refer to the Historic District under other standards. It is very clear from the beginning that this is overlapping districts so to speak. In reviewing she doesn't think there is anything that would but heads with the Historic District Ordinance, but as is standard across the board the strictest Ordinance will prevail. She has worked with the Historic District Commission through this and she doesn't see anything in the Form Based Codes that would lead to an issue.

Councilor Witham stated that as he thinks of issues that may arise is it fair to say that there may be more dialogue between the Planning Board and the developer with a process of Form Based Codes.

Director Saunders stated that in the early phases of implementation of this there will be back and forth which lead to more discussion. The more that this is used she thinks will lead to less discussion. The one that befuddles staff the most is the "New England style architecture," she has had numerous conversations with her staff as to what sort of roof line that means. This Ordinance along with the definitions provided are a little bit more clear which will provide for possibly less conversation. During her tenure 90% of developers may not ask for a formal request. That early conceptual meeting is going to be the key in helping the project move forward.

Councilor Paradis questioned the section about conditional use permit that was pointed out section 19.32.e.4. She has seen this used in other Municipalities. Does somebody have to meet all five requirements to get a conditional permit or can they meet some of the requirements. Director Saunders stated that all five are to be met. It is ultimately up to the Planning Board and what they want.

Councilor Gerding asked that after looking at the definitions of the district boundaries and looking at the sub-districts can those images be included in the Ordinance. Director Saunders stated that it is not a bad idea and will speak with City Manager and Legal Counsel.

No Public Comments were submitted.

With no further questions or comments from Council, the Workshop adjourned at 6:49 pm

Respectfully submitted,

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Jonathan Slaven, City Clerk