

**SOMERSWORTH PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES OF WORKSHOP MEETING
JANUARY 16, 2019**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ron LeHoullier, Chair, Harold Guptill, Vice Chair, Bob Belmore, City Manager, Dave Witham, City Council Representative, Jeremy Rhodes, Paul Robidas, Chris Horton, and Jason Barry, Alternate.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jameson Small.

STAFF PRESENT: Shanna B. Saunders, Director of Planning and Community Development and Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

1) PUBLIC MEETING

A) Discussion on Form-Based Codes.

Saunders began a PowerPoint presentation and stated that the City has hired a consultant to create form-based codes for the downtown. Stated that the definition of form-based codes is very fluid and can change based on the community's needs. Stated that traditional zoning codes have to do with uses and charts that separate them. Stated that not all uses are allowed everywhere and you group, for example, industrial uses in an area, residential uses in an area, etc. Stated that in Somersworth, residential uses are not allowed on Route 108 and commercial uses are not allowed in the residential zones. Stated that this can create "use neighborhoods" that are separated from each other so one must travel to get to a different use. Stated that this can affect transportation, road infrastructure and the feeling of community. Stated that form-based codes don't just look at uses but the actual structure. Stated that form-based codes determine how the community wants structures built, how they look, where parking can be, etc. Stated that if it is built out as determined in the form-based code then the uses will come and different uses can co-exist. Stated that it is the form that is important. Stated that to create this the community has to find out what it wants-what characteristics the community wants in the form. Stated that the consultant will do surveys, host public meetings, meet with the community and business owners to define the form. Stated that once that information is collected, it is put into data points and parameters of what the community wants are created. Stated that comprehensive data sheets with building form standards and a regulating plan is created. Stated that the code has to be regulatory and use the word "shall" so there is no wiggle room that would allow the form to gravitate in different directions. Stated that form-based codes are graphically heavy since they tend to be very technical so graphics and pictures make things clear. Stated that the City of Dover adopted form-based codes for their downtown area.

LeHoullier asked if this would apply to the downtown setting.

Saunders stated that it can apply to where ever they want it. Stated that if they wanted it for the entire community then she would suggest at least three different codes for Somersworth.

LeHoullier stated that sometimes people like to live in separate, small communities that aren't connected.

Saunders stated that the definition of form-based codes is different from one community to the next.

LeHoullier stated that Somersworth seems so far along with development that this may be more valuable for a growing community.

Saunders stated that Somersworth still has a lot of undeveloped space. Stated that she thinks that Council's intent is to try it in the downtown and see how it works. Stated that she thinks this would be good because of the redevelopment potential.

Witham stated that it would focus on the downtown "triangle". Asked if form-based codes allows for more or less flexibility with development.

Saunders stated that they can write it however they want and allow for a lot or a little flexibility. Stated that many developers like to know what the community wants and what they will be looking for.

Rhodes stated that flexibility can help with redevelopment because they don't want to look like there are too many hoops to jump through. Stated that the codes have to be written well.

Saunders stated that this type of code is relatively new to planning. Stated that she's not sure they would just do away with the use table. Used the mill as an example of how uses are blended.

Robidas stated that this would be an opportunity now for how they want Main Street to look. Stated that there is a lot of potential here and he doesn't want to lose the opportunity here. Asked how long this process will take.

Saunders stated that it would probably be a year before the codes are implemented. Stated that it would need to be presented to the Planning Board then the City Council.

Robidas asked if there is a way to get ahead of this.

Saunders stated that the Council has put the Plaza RFP on hold for this process. Stated that they can get an idea of what the community is going to want as the process gets started.

Horton asked how this would affect other boards like the HDC.

Saunders stated that they would invite the HDC to join the process and that the consultant will work with them. Stated that not all of the area for this new code is in the Historic District.

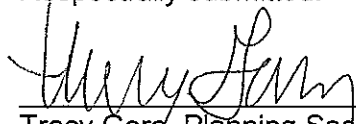
Witham mentioned that there have been discussions to amend the Zoning Ordinance regarding parking requirements in the downtown.

Motion: Witham moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Robidas. Motion carried unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary
Somersworth Planning Board