

## Minutes – Derry Downtown meeting – Tuesday, July 14, 2009

The meeting was called to order at 7:10. Present were Gordon Graham, Cheryl Lynch, Shannan Graham McKenna, Jim Brown, Deb Paul and Diane Arrato Gavrish.

The group began by discussing what the mandate was for the downtown group following our charge from the April meeting. Since developing the downtown was the second or third most popular item on the list, the group decided to delve into what we should do, how we should do it and where we should go with the vision we come up with. Deb Paul reinforced the idea that Derry needs to be a destination and that is what we should focus on. Gordon Graham discussed the fact that we are reporting for the Master Plan and not necessarily for the Town Council.

Deb Paul also reminded the group that Derry is said to be the exact center of New England and that along with Londonderry, it might be wise for us to use this type of info for marketing. Perhaps, “take a stroll around Derry” would be another theme to use. Other ideas that were battled around included adding more “bumps” in the widened road to cause drivers to slow down and look around while they are driving thru town, a campus style setting, similar to Phaneuil Hall, putting “pretty” drawings of what Derry downtown could look like in strategic places like the library and Town hall so that people would be energized about this project and helping these projects come to fruition.

The property near the Opera house was discussed; it was found that the property is worth \$147,000. Deb brought up different grant monies that might be available to use for property that would need revitalization. There is blight money, Brownfield money and So. NH planning money that might be considered appropriate. Since money was not granted to the Floyd School building, it was felt that perhaps the downtown project would be in line for some of this money.

It was decided that there were three main things that should be done to help the group formulate a plan. The first is to find out what happened to the Strategic Planning group that had been in place. Gordon said that he would look into getting old drawings and info from this study. The second item was to look back into the Main Street Community plan that had been in place. Perhaps Jack Dowd would be willing to help with that element. The third area to investigate was previous parking studies. Cheryl Lynch had two studies that have been put into the library's collection, one from the DEDC and the other from the Town Planning dept.

Cheryl said that the library would be willing to go around and pick up these various studies once we were told where they were. Shannan offered to look into neighborhood revitalization money.

Areas like "Lovers Leap Bridge were brought up in an effort to spread the town out in a more north to south direction rather than east and west. Such a design would be something like an "emerald necklace" featuring the parks, trails, ponds, etc available in Derry. HealthyNH.org was another possible place for the group to look for assistance in this project. Shannan also brought up the idea of continuing the look of downtown toward McGregor Park in order to encourage people to walk toward the library and the park. Other ideas discussed included lighting the trees downtown all year long for safety and decoration, lighting trails, creating coalitions with the other groups working on similar projects for the town and keeping the village mentality. Cheryl brought up the theme from the book, *Bowling Alone* where mall like areas are entered thru the backs of the buildings rather the front and parking is accessible, well lit and inviting.

Diane also recapped the minutes of the previous meeting for the group so we would be reminded of what had happened at the June gathering. She also read Jona Bostwick and Michael Gendron's emails to the group and mentioned that Dave Nelson had emailed about not being able to make this meeting. Their comments will be attached to these minutes.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 19 at 7 pm at the Derry Public Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Arrato Gavrish