

Derry Downtown Committee Meeting Minutes
September 16, 2010
7:00PM
Room 207, Derry Municipal Center

Roll Call-The meeting came to order at 7:02pm. In attendance were Gordon Graham, Dave Nelson, George Sioras, Michael Gendron, Bob Cavanna, David Milz, John T. O'Connor, Sue Kopetz, Kaitlyn Woods, Jim DeStefano, Jack Roche. Stuart Arnett & Brenda Willis.

Approval of Minutes-A motion was made by Sue Kopetz to approve the minutes of July 15, 2010. The motion was seconded by Michael Gendron and was passed unanimously.

Chairman's Comments-Gordon began by introducing himself to new attendees and discussed his passion for the downtown. He asked that each attendee re-introduce themselves and discuss their affiliations and reasons for being involved in the Downtown Committee. Gordon suggested that we continue to work towards identifying action steps that will improve our downtown.

Old Business-

A. Planning Department-Central Business District Parking Survey Presentation and Discussion-Gordon reminded everyone that investing and purchasing property in our downtown as well as resolving parking issues were identified as the two most important issues to come out of the town wide civic profile of March 2009. He requested that Dave Nelson discuss the real data as to whether we have enough (or not enough) parking spaces in the downtown. Gordon wondered what the parking requirements were for any new business coming into town. George Sioras of the Planning Dept. stated that, in the past, the town had allowed flexibility to businesses to meet the parking criteria requirement by allowing them to reference a combination of their own on-site parking, available nearby on-street parking and nearby municipal parking. David Nelson cautioned that analyzing the data alone would not help us solve the parking issue as an overlap exists from different businesses referencing the same on-street and municipal spaces. Also, he stated that, currently, the parking regulations indicate that the number of spaces a business is required to have was a function of the businesses' square footage. He stated that, in some cases, this was not a valid representation. Gordon referenced the example of Derry Feed which the LDCR parking requirement document suggests should have 46 parking spaces based on the square footage of their building. However, it is widely known that a majority of that building is considered warehouse for the often bulky items that this company sells. In reality, the business probably requires one-quarter as many spaces. Gordon Graham requested that each committee member review the Central Business District Parking Survey and identify similar irregularities between the actual amount of parking spaces each downtown business should have and the LDCR parking requirement. Gordon then suggested that signage for parking in the downtown was not sufficient and that it was confusing as to where municipal parking was actually located (and where private property began). He suggested that a small committee participate in a "walk-around" to determine where our committee feels parking signs should be located and suggest simple improvements that could assist citizens in locating parking. John O'Connor hoped that a discussion of appropriate lighting would also take place during the walk-around. John suggested that we invite Chief Garone or Capt. Feoli to participate in the walk-around to discuss safety issues as well. It was agreed to conduct the walk-around within the next two weeks. It was determined that we needed to come up with a clearly defined recommendation to give to the town council to either approve or disapprove.

B. "Moving Derry Forward" Committee Meeting-Gordon stated that he represented our committee at a meeting that was held at Sanmina Corp in Derry and that the Moving Derry Forward committee was given a complete tour of their facilities. He stated that the principles at Sanmina were thrilled to be located here in Derry. It was learned that many of the assembly jobs that existed elsewhere throughout the world were recently "brought back" to Derry. He stated that good information came out of the meeting. Jack Roche wondered what the difference between this new Moving Forward committee and ours was. Town Councilor David Milz stated that there was not much difference other than it was a town-wide initiative created by the Town Council to promote economic development in all parts of Derry and to consider potentially appropriating funds towards economic development. Gordon indicated that Mr. Jaffar Salimi of Sanmina had stated that he and his company hoped they could assist us in growing economic development in Derry.

Committee Updates-

- A. **NEIMT Update**-Jack Roche stated that he was thrilled that the New England Institute for Medical Technology had just received their tax-exempt status. He indicated he was currently soliciting grant proposals and that he needed only to acquire a state license. Jack stated that the college would still be utilizing available space in the 6 West Broadway Building, but now will occupy the former Sublime Engineering space located on street level as opposed to the basement originally proposed. He was pleased that this space was located directly on the street level and that we would all soon be seeing NEIMT students walking throughout the downtown (dressed in required lab coats). He indicated that he was seeking funding to provide scholarships to the first group of students attending NEIMT and so as to get the college “off and running” right away in January. He stated that the schedule had been designed and that all of his needed professors and instructors were “lined up”. He felt confident that the NEIMT would receive accreditation just in time for the first class of students to receive their diplomas. He stated that Parkland Hospital has been extremely cooperative throughout the whole process in partnering with his new college. He indicated that the initial phase of funding will go towards scholarships. All at the meeting agreed that Jack’s accomplishments in such a short amount of time were nothing short of amazing. Everyone congratulated him on a great job.
- B. **Merchants Association Update**-Gordon stated that he received an exciting email from Tom Hankins of Backmann Florists (who was unable to attend tonight’s meeting) agreed to spearhead the organizing of an effective and proactive Downtown Derry Merchants Association. Tom’s email to our committee stated that he was committed to devote the necessary time to make the new Merchants Association successful. We all agreed that we needed to facilitate Tom’s efforts as much as possible. A discussion took place concerning strategies for engaging absentee landlords. Dave Nelson stated that we needed to learn what we have the power to do and what we cannot do. Dave suggested that there were two methods for engaging landlords. One is by using the “carrot” method to entice landlords to act or the “stick” method to legally enforce certain action. It was suggested that we invite code enforcement officers and police & fire department officials to explain to us what can and cannot be done to compel landlords to “act”. Gordon suggested that creating changes in various ordinances might be one of the possible ways to compel changes. It was agreed to invite the fire chief and code enforcement officer attend our next meeting.
- C. **Updates for UNH Coop Extension on Downtown Profile Committees**-George Sioras indicated that, unfortunately, Tracy Love needed to resign from both the Friendship Center Committee as well as the Improving Facades Committee due to health issues in her family. George indicated that he had spoken with the principles at the friendship center concerning assisting them in finding a new “home” and stated that he would now take the lead on continuing the discussion. The Pedestrian Friendly Committee and Downtown Parking Committee issues were addressed above in the CBD Parking Survey presentation.

New Business

- A. **Selection of spokesperson/spokespeople for the Downtown Committee**-Gordon nominated Mike Gendron as spokesperson for the committee. Mike accepted the nomination.
- B. **Staying Positive in the Face of Community Losses**-Gordon stated that he was truly upset by the closing of the Depot Steakhouse. He stated that he felt that if there was a downtown economic development group currently in place, perhaps this restaurant closing could have been averted. He stated that he was also upset at the “punch in the stomach” the Derry News Editorial Dept. had given our committee and our town officials. All agreed that staying positive in the face of these setbacks and continuing forward to improve our downtown was our best course of action.
- C. **Brainstorming on How To Engage Absentee Landlords**-This was discussed under Merchants Association update under Committee Updates
- D. **Open discussion**-Gordon stated he was confounded as to why the property adjacent to the Adams Memorial Opera was still not being used and has been an eyesore in the town for many years. A discussion took place pertaining to the leasing proposal that the owner of this lot had offered to the town. All agreed that the proposal was unacceptable. Mr. Arnett stated that negotiations with this owner would be ongoing.

Jack Roche wished to thank the committee for allowing him to pursue his “Big Dream”. He also wished to thank Stuart Arnett, Craig Bulkley and Gordon Graham (among others) for their support.

**The next meeting of the Derry Downtown Committee will be held at 7pm on
Thursday, Oct. 21, 2010 in Rm. 207 of the Derry Municipal Building.**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15pm