

Draft Minutes

Derry Downtown Committee Meeting held Oct. 22, 2009 7:30am
2nd Floor Derry Municipal Center

Meeting came to order at 7:35 am with Diane Arrato Gavrish, Gordon Graham, Michael Gendron and George Sioras, Derry Planning Director in attendance.

The meeting began with a discussion as to the disappointing attendance at these morning meetings and that holding them at 7:30am was perhaps not a more convenient option for most. It was agreed by those in attendance that the issues pertaining to the downtown were far too important to let interest begin to wane at this time.

Mr. Graham observed that Michelle Gagne from UNH (who has been facilitating our Civic Profile since our first meeting in April) would be returning to the Derry Municipal Center on Tuesday, Dec. 8, 2009 at 7pm to get our final recommendations from our committee. He stated that it was his understanding that the findings that we present at the Dec. 8 meeting would be incorporated into our updated master plan and that we would need to summarize our efforts succinctly and soon.

Based on the importance of making a comprehensive recommendation resulting from the work of our committee over the past several months, it was decided to hold our next meeting on **Monday, Nov. 16, 2009 at 6pm** in the 2nd Floor Meeting room of the Derry Municipal Center and that **dinner would be provided for those who attended**. It was felt that it was critically important to have improved attendance at this meeting by all those folks that have been so helpful along the way. It was hoped that everyone would encourage each other to attend this particular meeting. Ms. Arrato Gavrish agreed to email all members of the committee and attempt to get verbal or email commitments from committee members.

Derry Planning Director, George Sioras echoed the committees feeling that it was critically important to keep focused on the issues of developing the downtown and noted that many significant events were currently underway that he felt complimented our efforts to improve the downtown. Among them were:

1. The development of the old Dandi-lyons property into municipal parking coming this spring.
2. The acquisition by Benson's of the McGillen Gas Station property on which they plan to build a 3-story Victorian Style building that will be used for retail/office/residential purposes.
3. The acquisition by the town of Derry of the DiFeo Oil Property.
4. The recent completion of a downtown feasibility study conducted by RKG.
5. The upcoming transformation of the China Express Building on the corner of Broadway & Birch to an updated storefront done with the assistance of an accredited architect.
6. The purchase and re-opening of the Firehouse Restaurant by seasoned and capable owners.
7. The hiring of Arnett Development Group LLC by the town of Derry to provide assistance with economic development.

Mr. Gendron reiterated his desire to see the town acquire the vacant lot next to the Adams Memorial Opera House to serve as “in plain sight” parking for both attendees at the AMOH as well as for patrons of downtown businesses. He asked if Mr. Sioras had any discussions with Mr. Stenhouse on the subject or if he had been in contact with the property owner to gauge his willingness to negotiate with us (the town). Mr. Sioras agreed to attempt contact the principals of Red Oak Properties, the owners of said property and report back to us at the next meeting.

Ms. Arrato Gavrish asked Mr. Sioras if he knew the status of the Masonic Lodge property as she would like to see the town purchase that property along with the Shugrue property to make additional parking available for the public library. Mr. Sioras did not think the Masonic Lodge was for sale at this point in time.

Mr. Graham stated that he hoped that, once our directive as the Derry Downtown Committee (to make recommendations to the Derry Civic Profile effort) was completed, that a new “Main Street Corporation” would be created that would include members from this committee, Derry business owners, property owners (Harold Gross, Peter Kachavos, Mark Cooper, Red Oak Properties were named as some of the downtown property owners), landlords, economic development consultants, Greater Derry Chamber of Commerce, Town Council members, Planning Board members, DEDC, library trustees, Greater Derry Arts Council, the Housing authority and concerned citizens. He envisioned that this committee would develop an updated CIP (Capital Improvement Project) outline to create specific recommendations to improve the downtown.

Mr. Sioras agreed to the following action steps in advance of our next meeting.

1. Contact Red Oak Properties to discuss the property adjacent to the Adams Memorial Opera House.
2. Invite Mr. Stuart Arnett of the Arnett group to attend our Nov. 16 meeting to provide us with an update of his study.
3. Acquire a copy of the feasibility study recently conducted by RKG to report to us at our Nov 16 meeting. It was noted that this document has yet to be approved by the town council.
4. Secure a map of the downtown (showing town owned properties) from Derry IT/GIS Doug Rathburn.
5. Contact Michelle Gagne

From this meeting, a preliminary agenda was created for the Nov. 16. meeting.

- A. Review Map of Town Properties, Dates of Acquisition and current status of parking.
- B. Update on RKG feasibility study.
- C. Update on discussion with Red Oak Properties management.
- D. Presentation from Mr. Arnett of Arnett Group.
- E. Develop and finalize presentation for Downtown Civic Profile on Dec. 8.
- F. Discuss plans for future community profile group.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35am.