

**TOWN OF FARMINGTON
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, January 14, 2014
356 Main Street, Farmington, NH**

Board Members Present: Paul Parker, Charles Doke, David Kestner, Glen Demers, Martin Laferte

Selectmen's Representative:

Board Members Absent/Excused: Charlie King

Town Staff Present: Director of Planning and Community Development Kathy Menici,
Department Secretary Bette Anne Gallagher

Public Present: Jack Mettee

BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD:

- **Pledge of Allegiance**

At 6:06 pm Chairman Parker called the meeting to order and all present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

- **Review and approve Meeting Minutes of January 7, 2014**

Martin Laferte motioned to approve the minutes of January 7, 2014 as written; 2nd Glen Demers. Motion carried with four in favor and one abstaining.

Chairman Parker said Planner Menici was upstairs at the Board of Selectmen's meeting for a short time and would join the Board as soon as she was finished.

- **Discussion with Jack Mettee, Consultant, on Design Guidelines for TIF, Outreach and Development Plan Voluntary Lot Merger by Thomas Schofield of Tax Map R20 Lots 028 and 028-1**

Jack Mettee said the two areas that he wanted to cover were the Site Plan Regulations draft for the Business Node Overlay District and the Farmington Schools Focus Groups Key Points.

Mr. Mettee said the Focus Group report was a summary of observations and information from the meetings and he would give the Board an overview. He explained that four meetings were held: three separate meetings on December 16th with the 10th Grade Focus Group, the 11th Grade Focus Group and the Farmington High School Faculty Council. On December 18th a meeting was held with the Henry Wilson Student Council.

He said the students felt there was not much to do within the Town limits for recreation and work and they leave on weekends and after school for opportunities provided in other towns. Many of the older students said they would leave Farmington after graduation. The teachers pointed out that although the students might say this in reality a large number do stay.

Mr. Mettee said the conclusion he had reached was that there might be a market for recreational businesses in Farmington as well as shopping and restaurants that could satisfy the students' wants and needs.

The discussion with the groups focused on what they would and would not like to see. The younger students had a problem relating to this so more specific questions such as what do other communities have that make you want to live there were used. The questions helped measure the students' comments. Mr. Mettee said that he did not

include responses from non-Farmington students. At the third meeting with faculty there was time for only one round of questions. The responses may have been colored because some of the teachers were not from Farmington.

Mr. Mettee said he found it somewhat surprising given economic conditions that the students seemed to have a fair amount of disposable income. Many of the students said they go to the Newington Mall to shop, eat and socialize.

Charles Doke said that all of the items mentioned are the same things that Farmington has been trying to do for years but unless parents get involved they will not have these programs. He said the Town has a paid Recreation Department staff that takes care of the young students and seniors but teenagers have been left out completely. However, he said when the Recreation Department was started it was geared to middle and high school students but now there are not enough staff members to run activities. He said that more residents needed to attend Board of Selectmen meetings to bring up these matters and more residents needed to vote. Mr. Doke said that the Board is trying to create a bus friendly environment and to show a caring Town. One of areas to concentrate on is what can be brought in to revitalize downtown so people will come.

Mr. Doke said there are buildings in the downtown that look out of place but can be harmonized by changing the façade and he used the building that had been Hunter's as an example. He added that in order to get people to come in with a viable business the Town will need to bring the level of activities back to where they once were and to address neglected infrastructure. This will require a realistic approach and community participation will be critical.

He said that one of the problems, and some of the comments address this, is that trouble seekers come to Farmington.

Chairman Parker said the TIF program for downtown will be trying to correct some of what Mr. Doke is bringing up.

Planner Menici said she attended the school department meeting with the 10th graders and found it very interesting. Every one of the students said they plan to leave Farmington when they graduate although the teachers said many do not leave. The Planner said it took a little while to get the 14 and 15 year olds going but once they started talking she was surprised at some of the insights.

The Chairman observed that this was the first time the Planning Department met with the school for planning purposes and he was glad to see the results adding that the Board had just received the report and it deserved further review.

David Kestner said the survey results did not surprise him since all kids like to go to the malls and Newington is the closest big mall adding it is tough for a small Town to compete. He agreed that hopefully the TIF will provide some investment to the downtown area. He said that the comments in the survey are from those who will be the future of Farmington.

Glen Demers commented that every kid thinks his hometown is the dullest place on the planet.

Planner Menici said what stood out is recognizing the need for some kind of after school teen center. She said that the Recreation Department has been approved for after school care but the age limit is 12 years. A program for teens would have to be separate and there is no room for that.

Chairman Parker said that there is a small staff with limited funds. Mr. Doke said the Town was relying on the schools to provide after school activities for teens and felt that was the Town's job. In his opinion if programs are limited to the young students and seniors then the next generation is being missed and their needs are not being met. He added that this is right in the meeting results given to them by Mr. Mettee.

Martin Laferte said some of the comments from students were more mature than he thought they would be and there was some good stuff in the results.

Chairman Parker asked if the report was available on line and if not could it be put on line. Mr. Mettee said he would be putting together a small report including all the write ups and that can go on line with an index so it will be easy for residents to go to particular area. The Chairman said staff will let the public know when this is available.

The Chairman then asked Mr. Mettee to give the Board a summary of the Site Plan Regulations Draft.

Mr. Mettee explained that as part of the Business Node Overlay District the discussion has been not only use and dimensional standards but also aesthetics and what he has heard is that the Board wants to maintain the quality of the New England small town character. This has been translated into the draft.

He explained that rather than having the standards within the Zoning Ordinance it was more appropriate within the Site Plan Regulations so they can be changed, adjusted, or waived by the Planning Board without having to go to the ZBA. Different segments such as parking, landscaping, building and lighting have been created. However, when going through the existing Site Plan Review Standards Mr. Mettee observed that there are already a fair amount of standards so in this document reference is made to those existing standards such as "in addition to these, Section XXX will apply". He said in this way an applicant will recognize that there are additional requirements. The Planning Board will also see the integration.

Mr. Mettee began addressing each section of the draft regulations. Planner Menici said that because the Site Plan Regulations aren't as time sensitive as some of the other items to be discussed tonight she was suggesting not to rush but that the Board take the time to read them in conjunction with the existing Site Plan Regulations. The regulations do not need to go to Town meeting because the Planning Board adopts them after the appropriate public meeting notice.

Mr. Mettee said he had some ideas for changes in language and some clarification that were non substantive. The members agreed and the discussion will be taken up at the February 3rd meeting. Planner Menici said the language for the warrant articles will be reviewed at that meeting as well.

She suggested that the Board discuss the development plan and what it will include.

Mr. Mettee said the Board talked about TIF back in November and he had given them the outline for TIF districts at that time. The districts are already defined and each will have a separate set of objectives. He said that on Route 11 the goal will be to bring utilities to the area to provide greater opportunity for development. For downtown the goal will be to improve infrastructure such as sidewalks, curbs, lighting, and streetscape. Once the improvements are made the property owners can see the Town has done its part and now it will be their turn to improve the facades.

Mr. Mettee said that these are the two visions and each will have a description of what will be done and how much the improvements will cost. Planner Menici said the hard part is how to pay for the improvements. She is already working on the Route 11 area and has put together a spreadsheet that addresses several sources for funding and projects revenues. The sources include grants from CDBG and EDA and a bond. The total will be a little over \$2,000,000 with a bond contributing \$1,200,000 and the remainder from grants.

The Planner explained that the process is to take a year by year look at the value of the property starting with today and then each succeeding year, applying the tax rate and then arriving at the total revenue. She said that once you know the source of the money then you know how to pay for the expenses on an annual basis. TIF is a method to take the increased property value to pay off the bond in an incremental fashion. The same process will be used for Route 11 and downtown.

Mr. Mettee gave an example of a property increasing \$10,000 in value with a tax increase of \$1,000 and the increased tax revenue would go to pay off the bond. However, the tax bill has three parts, town, school and county, and it is vital that the school and county realize that they will not see increase funds for the specified period of time under the TIF. He said this is an important part of the planning process.

Chairman Parker said he had concerns about the time frame for applying for grants and bonds. He said his understanding was that none of this financing would be accessed until such time as the Town had a firm contract with a developer in place and the Town would not extend utilities until there is an approved application with a developer. Mr. Mettee said it can be done that way but in the meantime the TIF would allow the Town to start putting money away for that goal. He said if the Town can get grants this will be enough to move the project forward and once work is started property values go up and the additional tax revenue is put into a separate escrow fund. He added that this is a policy decision as to how much risk the Town wants to take.

Planner Menici said she wondered if there was an advantage to having a Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the sewer extension. Phase 1 could be Route 153 to Route 11 and Phase 2 would be Route 11 itself. This would mean the Town could apply for two rounds of grant funding. She said that this would bring the sewer extension to properties that the Town owns and instead of waiting for the private sector to get development started the Town could spearhead it.

Chairman Parker said extension of water would also be necessary. Planner Menici said the water lines were already out there but the Chairman pointed out that they were not on the west side of Route 153 and some water extension was necessary. The Planner said the water is there and available for people to tie into although this was not easy to accomplish. However, she said the Board had only discussed extending the sewer as part of the TIF.

David Kestner asked if the grants could be applied for only once or if they could be applied for yearly to which the Planner responded they could be applied for as often as the Town liked.

Mr. Kestner asked if the Board was aware of what was happening with the schools and that he was not quite sure of the mathematics of that situation but it could mean layoffs. He stated he was concerned about bond issues and thinks other people will have serious concerns as well. He suggested four phases using grants might make it more appealing to residents. Planner Menici said Mr. Kestner was trying to project what another community would do.

Mr. Kestner said there has just been a recession and property levels have dropped and both as a Planning Board member and as a taxpayer he did not understand Mr. Mettee's assumption that values would increase. He thought it would be better to rely on grants so as not to burden taxpayers.

Charles Doke said that although the Town tax rate was the same as last year because of the reassessment taxes had gone up. Glen Demers said part of that was a 12 percent increase on the County portion. Mr. Kestner said people look at the bottom line so it still came back to an increase and was a very sensitive hot topic button at this time. He said that was why he was suggesting pursuing grants and doing four phases so the yearly impact would be less.

The Chairman said that some of what is proposed addresses the problems and will make business development more enticing thereby creating jobs, increasing revenue and improving the ability of the community to open up opportunities. Mr. Demers said that it may be good for the Town but if the taxpayers are told to dig deeper they will shut down. Mr. Doke said that currently under consideration is a Public Safety Building for Fire and Police and that will need a bond. Additionally, Mr. Kestner said the Water/Sewer bond is still being paid off and there is way too much cost to Farmington residents in the next few years.

Planner Menici said she did not want people to become alarmed over this because she did not see the need for a bond in the next couple of years. She said there would be more grant money used on the front end of the project and some revenue would come from the TIF since as soon as that is adopted an escrow is set up and the money

begins accruing. If the sewer extensions are not done for five years there would be that many years of revenue in the TIF account and that money would be used as the matching funds for grants. She repeated that she did not see this happening in the next year or two but possibly four or five years out.

Martin Laferte said at some point it was necessary to cautiously bite the bullet or there would be more problems for the Town to deal with. He said he appreciates the concern about taxes and it is warranted but the Town will have to move forward. Mr. Doke said they will have to figure out the priorities.

Planner Menici said this development plan is basically a narrative as to where the TIF will be, how it will be funded and how it will operate under an advisory committee. Adopting the development plan and the finance and revenue plan that is a part of the overall plan does not authorize the bond. If a bond becomes necessary it will come back at a separate time to the legislative body and will be a separate action altogether. This step allows the TIF to exist so revenues can start to accumulate in the TIF escrow account.

Mr. Mettee asked if Farmington had a Capital Improvement Program. The Planner said the Town is currently working on it. Mr. Mettee said they are working on one in Dover and they are also trying to figure out the Town garage and Police station which they are considering as part of capital budgeting. He said that is the same as the idea of the TIF district. It is a bonding process that is not seen on the tax rate but is part of the bigger picture.

Chairman Parker said that under this plan the grants will be first and the bonds will not come through until an approved applicant is in place. Planner Menici said the sewer extension will not be rushed into even with grant money. The Town will allow some time for the TIF revenues to collect in the TIF account before work is started.

Chairman Parker asked if a development plan is needed before applying for any grants. The Planner said it is not although Mr. Mettee said it can be helpful for the funding agency to see.

David Kestner asked if the Planner will be able to give the Board an example at the next meeting. She said she will revise the spreadsheet into two phases and provide that to the members. Mr. Mettee said the plan can be amended at any time but at least the Board will have a basis to make a decision.

The Planner said as she was working on the development plan and the revenue plan the idea arose about breaking the project out into phases. Mr. Mettee said he liked the idea as it provides more flexibility and makes it more palatable for residents. All the members agreed with using phases. Mr. Kestner said maybe there should be more than two phases. Planner Menici said it may end up as three phases: Phase 1 for Route 153 to Route 11; Phase 2 would concentrate on Route 11 close to the intersection; and Phase 3 would extend to Pound Road on Route 11.

- **Any other business to come before the Board**

None

At 7:24 pm Martin Laferte motioned to adjourn the meeting; 2nd Glen Demers. Motion carried with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,
Bette Anne Gallagher, Department Secretary

Chairman, Paul Parker