

PLANNING BOARD
APRIL 12, 2011 at 7:30 PM
TOWN HALL, 41 SOUTH MAIN STREET

In attendance:

Members: Bill Dietrich, Judith Esmay, Charles Faulkner, Joan Garipay, Jim Hornig, Kate Connolly (Selectmen's Representative)

Staff: Vicki Smith, Jonathan Edwards

Others: See attached sheet

1. MINUTES – MARCH 29, 2011

The minutes of March 29, 2011 were approved.

2. DISCUSSION WITH MEMBERS OF HANOVER'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION (AHC) REGARDING RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Affordable Housing Commission members present: Jim Reynolds, Chip Brown, Don Derrick, Robert Chambers, Andrew Winter, and Karen Geiling.

The meeting was requested by the Planning Board to inform the AHC of efforts being made to rezone the residential areas and to obtain their feedback. Copies of Edwards' Residential Project – Policy Development, In-Town Hanover draft memorandum, dated 11/18/10 (revised 11/22 & 29, December 6, 13, & 20, 2010) and Residential Project In-Town Policy Development – Executive Summary, dated 01/03/2011 were handed out.

Commission Comments/Questions:

1. The Commission is focused on (1) the possibility of particular sites for affordable housing; and (2) whether there are opportunities within the regulatory framework to increase affordable housing opportunities.
2. Edwards' draft memorandum is very much in line with the Commission's thinking.
3. Current zoning regulations do not allow most people to do what they want to do.
4. The regulations should make it simple for people to include affordable housing in their developments.
5. Allowing accessory apartments would solve the concerns of a variety of constituencies in town.
 - CONNOLLY said unless you put regulations on the accessory units, making them forever affordable, you still have the elephant in the room which is at least 3 students or more occupying these non-affordable dwellings. Undergraduate students are the most lucrative tenants.

6. There are a large number of houses in Hanover with individuals living alone. It might be helpful to educate the public about renting rooms, and to consider changing the regulation that limits rentals to no more than 3 unrelated people.
7. Half or more of people inquiring about room rentals are members of the workforce, not students.
8. Maintenance ordinances provide other ways to make a town look nice.
9. Dartmouth is one of the few large area employers that has control of land and the money and desire (from time to time) to develop land into housing for their mix of employees. One of Commission's main things is to try to support Dartmouth when they are trying to do the right thing.
10. Larger employment entities are a burden on Hanover in terms of traffic loads and other infrastructure demands.
11. The suitability and public acceptance of manufactured housing were questioned.
 - Edwards said manufactured houses are already allowed and have become a lot more sophisticated, being pretty much indistinguishable from their stick-built neighbors. State law also allows for mobile home parks which have higher density allowances.
 - An AHC member said in terms of long-term planning, use of manufactured houses becomes a much bigger discussion.
12. Are design requirements being considered for the proposed areas of higher density?
 - ESMAY said the Planning Board is not interested in making aesthetic decisions. They could consider style elements in the context of preserving the character of the neighborhood.
 - A suggestion was made to be stricter in terms of architectural controls.
13. A complaint was made about the costs involved with development planning.
 - DIETRICH said the Board has revised its regulations so that a developer does not have to spend too much time and money on a tract that turns out not to work. He asked for feedback of the specific pressure points.
 - Smith said the process is pretty good and gives the applicant a lot of benefit (thorough applications & checklists, access to Town staff, Staff Review with Department heads, etc). The wildcard is the neighbors.

Board Comments/Questions:

1. The RPC has learned from neighborhood tours of the importance of landscaping and vehicular accommodations, which can really change the character of a neighborhood.
2. The AHC was asked what population it is aiming at: Who are they? What income levels are they considering? How pressing is the need?
 - An AHC member said they are still in the process of identifying the supply and demand. A lot of data available is outdated. The demand has clearly changed from what it was 5 yrs ago. Senior housing is a point of interest. A lot of seniors are downsizing. It is not an overwhelming, pressing, alarmist need right now.
 - Derrick suggested data driven information will not work. The gauging of providing for what is Hanover's share of affordable housing will be the answer as to how far to push towards having more units made.
3. It was noted that Hanover is dependent upon people traveling great distances to get to its major employers. A question was posed whether Hanover should aim at providing

housing for a certain fraction of its overall employees, earning a certain amount of income, rather than force them to commute. HORNIG said a lot of people enjoy ‘living in the boonies with their 5 acres of land’ and don’t count heavily the cost to commute. An AHC member countered that there are also employers that are not able to hire because employees cannot afford to live in Hanover. GARIPAY asked how far out in the rural area is too far out for affordable housing? It was noted that the AHC is not of one mind on the matter. Some think they should stick solely to in-town opportunities; others believe they should be open to other options even though they might stray from the green elements of access to public transportation, water, and sewer. An AHC member said the dogma of being near public transportation and municipal services is taken way too literally. In VT/NH, more houses are on septic systems than are on town/city systems by a large amount. Smith agreed, stating why should lower/moderate level income people have to live in-town? Everyone should have a choice.

4. ESMAY asked of the AHC’s goals. AHC members provided details of their various backgrounds and reasons for getting involved with affordable housing which include:
 - Marrying interests of the built environment and its impact on the quality of life for the people who live here with a larger purpose of providing safe, sanitary, and decent housing;
 - Helping the workforce to stay ahead of the game;
 - Helping the quality of life for lower income individuals that are working so hard for themselves in the community; and
 - There is great value in having a balanced environment where there is a variety of people and a variety of jobs that reside in the town.
5. GARIPAY asked how to improve the standard of living in the community without losing some of the people who could be enriched by those improvements. An AHC member said you have to find a way for those people to make more money. The big issue is more of an economic issue. Edwards asked if the overall goal is to promote prosperity, what are the elements it takes beyond housing. An AHC member said allowing mixed use and being supportive of home businesses are a start.
6. ESMAY asked the AHC of their thoughts on where to locate areas of greater density. An AHC member said the area along W. Wheelock St., adjacent to the Dartmouth campus, might lend itself to more student housing. Housing more students on campus will also reduce the pressures in the residential neighborhoods that abut the campus.
7. DIETRICH said the Planning Board & RPC are hoping to bring zoning amendment proposals to Town Meeting next year. It would be helpful to get feedback from the AHC as to how the proposals could be changed with regard to providing affordable and workforce housing. It would also be useful for an AHC member to speak at Town Meeting about affordable housing.

3. OTHER BUSINESS:

Edwards provided an update on the HOP/East Wheelock/Inn bus shelter project, for which the Town is seeking grant funding. Issues involving the shelter design and sidewalk work are still being worked out.

HORNIG asked if the RPC is prepared to undertake a question of what 'build-out' means. It is largely taken as a consequence of the zoning. Often the future population is the goal and the zoning becomes the mechanism to achieve it. ESMAY said the question is whether to zone density and then figure build-out or to set an optimal build-out and set zoning to achieve that. A consequence of relaxing things is increasing the build-out result.

4. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 9:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Beth Rivard