

PLANNING BOARD
APRIL 26, 2011 at 7:30 PM
TOWN HALL, 41 SOUTH MAIN STREET

In attendance:

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

Alternate: Iain Sim

Staff: Vicki Smith, Jonathan Edwards

Others: See attached sheet

1. MINUTES – APRIL 5 AND 12, 2011

Review of minutes was postponed.

2. DISCUSSION WITH DARTMOUTH COLLEGE REGARDING RIVERFRONT MASTER PLAN

Joanna Whitcomb, of Dartmouth College, said the riverfront area represents the western gateway to the campus and town. One of the main reasons to develop a Riverfront Master Plan is to reclaim the area as a natural feature.

Whitcomb said Dartmouth commissioned an existing condition survey of the riverfront area from Milone & MacBroom last December. They then met with numerous groups of riverfront user to better understand how the area is used. They also met with Town staff, the Conservation Commission, and regional planners. Following those meetings, Dartmouth developed 3 concepts to address issues raised by the various groups. Dartmouth is now gathering input and feedback on those concepts.

ESMAY questioned the underlying concerns expressed by those consulted on the project. Whitcomb said parking, stormwater runoff, and health of the river. Many people feel current uses such as equipment storage, parking, the pump station, etc. are not appropriate for the site. Parking is a dominate feature. Both graduate and medical school students park at this location. Whitcomb said the law is clear about uses on the river's edge; they are to be water dependent uses. The current uses at this site are grandfathered. Long-term goals include reducing parking and the amount of impervious surface at the site. Short-term goals include completing the swim dock relocation project, beginning design work for renovations of the Ledyard Canoe Club, and addressing access to the river by the rowing dock.

HORNIG questioned the amount of Dartmouth students' use of the area. Whitcomb said she did not know. Edwards said crew is the most popular athletic program at Dartmouth. Of the 12.17 miles of Hanover shoreline, this area and Wilson's Landing are the only places with

ready and legal public access. Edwards said the old dock is fairly extensively used on warm days.

Whitcomb walked the Board through the 3 conceptual plans.

Plan A:

- 220 parking spaces (6 less than existing)
- tear down a couple buildings
- relocate the Fuller Boathouse
- create more storage space & consolidate existing storage space
- open up the site entrance & relocate the pedestrian path at the entrance
- extensive network of trails connecting to Tuck Dr
- stormwater management
- pavilion & picnic tables

Plan B:

- 170 parking spaces
- tear down existing boathouse and rebuild a shed for kayak/canoe storage
- rebuild canoe club farther back

Plan C:

- a roundabout (that was not well received by the groups consulted)
- new exercise facility built into the hillside
- new storage buildings backed away from the river
- parking plan was not well received by the groups consulted
- narrowing of the back area, creating more of an entrance to the back area facility

Whitcomb noted that the parking space count varies amongst the 3 Plans. 220, 180 & 170 spaces are proposed. She said improving river access and treatment of the parking area is included in all 3 plans. Dartmouth is still considering whether to open up the site, creating contiguous space, or to create public space at one end and private space at the other. A 4th conceptual plan is in the works that will incorporate various components of the 3 plans outlined above. Whitcomb said there is a good chance this is an archeologically significant site. They will have to be cognizant of what they may find as they dig it up.

Board Questions/Comments:

- Is the matter of how runoff will be handled settled in all 3 plans?
 - Whitcomb said no. A long-term goal is to deal with it at the top of the hill, rather than at the bottom.
- How much parking is required for people specifically using this site for waterfront activities?
 - Edwards said the Town does not have an outdoor recreation parking standard. Whitcomb said the demand is estimated at 50 spaces, more when regattas are held. There is also a need to accommodate parking of 70' trailers.
- This is a wonderful place for families to experience the quiet enjoyment of the riverfront. There's precious space in town where that could happen.
- It is assumed there will be continued public access to the site.
- The area in question is critically located at one of the Town's gateways.

- Whitcomb said yes, but added that there will be times when it will not be accessible (when class reunions/special events are held).
- It will be an asset to invite more students to utilize the area as suggested in Plan B.
- Water treatment of the former grassed area in Plan C was questioned.
 - Whitcomb said the area would be crowned in such a way to direct runoff to swales.
- How are people responding to the proposed trail systems?
 - Whitcomb said people do not like the idea of the extensive trails in Plan A due to the nature of the soils in the area. The trails proposed in Plan B are still under consideration.

Public Comment:

- Judy Reeve said the entire parking lot at the proposed park & ride facility on Rte 120, was a stormwater treatment plan.
 - Whitcomb said the same design is being considered for this location.

ESMAY recapped that the general consensus is that people favor relieving this acreage of activities unrelated to the river (parking, exercise equipment) and that all of the proposed plans represent a great improvement over what is there now.

Whitcomb said Dartmouth is hopeful more comprehensive planning will be done at the organic farm, another riverfront property, in the not too distant future. The site includes 20 acres on the river side and 200 acres on the other side. It offers incredible opportunities for education and outreach.

3. OTHER BUSINESS: None

4. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.