

**PLANNING BOARD
APRIL 21, 2015 at 7:30 PM
HOWE LIBRARY, SOUTH STREET**

In attendance:

Members: Kate Connolly, Judith Esmay (Chair), Joan Garipay, Iain Sim; Nancy Carter (Selectmen's Representative); Michael Mayor

Alternates: Kelly Dent, John Criswell, Brian Edwards

Staff: Vicki Smith

Others: See Attendance Sheet

1. PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON WEST WHEELOCK GATEWAY DISTRICT

ESMAY welcomed the public stating that there would be a presentation and then lots of time for questions and answers. The goal of the meeting was to provide residents with information so that they feel informed when they vote on the zoning amendment at Town Meeting on May 12.

Smith gave an overview of the process that led to the proposed zoning and site plan amendments.

Alison May, a Kendal resident who grew up in Hanover and lived for many years on Main Street in Norwich, had some comments. She was supportive of housing density in the downtown, hoped that re-development would not eliminate the currently affordable housing, and thought that the parking standards proposed would not result in adequate parking. With first-hand knowledge of morning commuter traffic backed up from the interstate to her Norwich home, May said that anything that will slow cars will not be helpful. She did not feel that West Wheelock Street was actually a neighborhood. The Planning Board pointed out that fewer cars are expected and that residents will not be using their cars at peak hours as residents are more likely to walk to work or school. The area will not likely appeal to families. The expected future residents are students, faculty and other young professionals.

Jerry Madden said that he has been a resident of Hanover since 1986 and has resided in 15 college towns. He does not want Hanover to look like Lansing Michigan, State College, Pennsylvania or Tacoma, Washington. He thought that the proposal to re-zone the area was an attempt to maximize private gain and does not look like a sound plan to him. He thought that the buildings shown in the massing studies are unattractive, too close to each other and too tall. He wanted to know: how many people live there now; how many will live there at full build out; how many more cars would need to be parked in the district; what proportion of the area is owned by the College and what proportion of future the population would be students vs. professionals. In his opinion the new district would not make the town better; instead it would be made more congested and unattractive. He felt that the unnecessary density would decrease the quality of life in Hanover.

Tim McNamara, Dartmouth College, described the 6 buildings owned by the College on the north side of the street. He said that tenants are not a homogenous group- there will be grad students living on a stipend and others with BMWs. He said that the district currently provides housing for a younger, single population that is not automobile-reliant. He thought that the housing will continue to be affordable because the high density is not desirable for many folks.

CARTER said that the parking standards were developed relying on current demand for parking by existing tenants. She noted that many millennials share cars and are likely to rent a zip-car® type vehicle. The amendment encourages zip-car® type options for use in order to further minimize parking demand. She noted that the re-development of the district is a private/public partnership with the public enabling change by amending the ordinance and the private sector re-developing their properties. She pointed out that none of this will happen next week and that the regulatory changes will enable Hanover to grow in this district for the next 10- 20 years.

Bernie Waugh stated that he generally was in favor of new urbanism, but has three concerns: 1) parking standards are set too low; 2) permitting five unrelated persons in this district would put pressure on the town to allow similar occupancy in other parts of town; and 3) with this proposed increase in density, there should be a compensating decrease in density elsewhere in town.

SIM said that commercial uses, being limited to 1000 square feet, with only 1 parking place provided, are most likely to appeal only to residents of the district. Others can also walk from public parking lots.

Bob Russell lives near Occom Pond and thinks of Hanover as a walking town. He had two suggestions: one to speed up traffic, pedestrian bridges which could span West Wheelock Street; and synchronized traffic lights to slow down traffic. He also wanted it announced that the Thayer School of Engineering is “cleared” to double in size in the soon future.

Sandra Hoeh was discouraged to learn there was no guarantee that the new housing would be affordable. She pointed out that people leave their spouses but do not leave their cars. Smith added that she had a call from Dena Romero, a former community counselor in Hanover who could not attend. Romero was very concerned that there was not an affordable family housing component. Romero worked with many families who needed deep subsidy and felt that the Town needed to provide for this demographic.

Chip Brown, a member of the Hanover Affordable Housing Commission and member of the West Wheelock Working Group, said that the town is not being asked to subsidize affordable housing here. The town is being asked to increase the density to allow for more housing units.

Bill Fischel remembered that ten years ago, the town voted to down zone the rural district from 3 acres to 10 acres minimum lot size for lots created in a major subdivision. This down zoning would compensate for the increased density proposed. As a result, only multi-millionaires can make purchases in much of the town where there is extremely unaffordable housing. He thought that the zoning amendment is modest but would have a positive effect resulting in less sprawl elsewhere. He noted that along with the higher density, there would be a more urban look to the West Wheelock District. He thought that the density was desirable and highly beneficial to the

town. He asked if the proposed amendments to the Site Plan Regulations were legal. The Planning Board has consulted with Town Counsel on the advisability of adopting site and building design standards.

An unidentified fellow said that he passes through town many times a day. In his opinion, vehicle traffic is not the issue. He thinks a pedestrian crossing the street without much attention to traffic is an accidental death waiting to happen. Bill Young, chairperson of the Hanover Pedestrian and Bicycle Committee, said that the College and town will run a program this summer to educate pedestrians about street crossing rules. He is hopeful that with engineering, enforcement and education that pedestrian mindsets can be changed.

Robin Carpenter understood the motivation for increased density. In his mind, if a person wants to live in a high density area, they would not come to Hanover. He is concerned about the building mass, the high walls and appearance. The Planning Board clarified that yards in this district are around buildings, not lots. Carpenter will follow up with the Planning Office about the façade study.

Judith Reeve wondered about the control of West Wheelock Street. It is a state road in the urban compact, so controlled and maintained by the town.

Michael Tsapakos was concerned that if traffic moved more slowly on West Wheelock Street that more cars would use West Street as a bypass.

Christine Eickelman lives on East Wheelock Street. She helped out two visitors to the College, neither of whom had a car. One arrived in a snowstorm from Qatar and did not bring boots. Eickelman drove her every week to the Coop. She does not think it is possible to live in the Upper Valley without a car. She also thought that food shopping was very inconvenient for residents of West Wheelock Street. She thought there needed to be a food store closer. She pointed out that the district will be very attractive to College juniors and seniors who will probably live in the new units rather than young professionals.

CARTER noted that an increasing number of young men and women do not have cars and many who come to the College do not have a US driver's license. She said that it was very common for one apartment mate to have the only car and to allow others to use the car.

Dick Mackay wondered if the Planning Board was the same group that hosted the meeting at the Ray School. He wondered if this proposal was rooted in that effort.

ESMAY described the neighborhood planning process and used Goose Pond as an example of the process and outcome of such efforts.

Mackay pressed to know what the problem with West Wheelock Street was. Smith responded that the Town needs more housing. SIM noted that more units in this area will likely draw students who are currently living in other neighborhoods.

Sue Deaett wondered if the zoning amendment passes, what will stop landlords from renting to more people. She was concerned for tenant safety. The rental registration process was described.

Don May described a delightful vacation in Spain where he and his wife decided to go carless. He supported more bicyclist and pedestrian use of the street and making the street safer for them.

Another unidentified woman reflected on her trip to Viet Nam where motorcycles predominate. The air is so polluted that people wear masks. She has lived in Princeton where graduate students have been pushed to housing out of town while retirees have taken up housing close to campus. She is concerned about rent increases and affordability.

Ruth Lappin pointed out that affordability, one important part of the Master Plan vision, has been lost. She asked why each building should not be required to have one or two affordable units. She thought the amendment was being presented to the town too early and should be considered at a future time when there can be more involvement in the crafting of the amendment by people in the community.

Bryant Denk thought the Board was overly optimistic about decreased reliance on cars. He thinks it is a good idea, but is overly optimistic.

Waugh said that housing is a problem in the Upper Valley. His co-workers have a very difficult time finding housing close to his office in Lebanon. He applauded the Planning Board for trying to address it.

Joyce Noll questioned the need for a sewer upgrade. The pump station is old and needs to be replaced. Most likely that will be done in partnership with developers who will pay their fair share.

An unidentified speaker thought the proposal fell short of a beautification project for the gateway to the campus and town. She was concerned about the proximity of the buildings to the road and the health impacts of vehicle exhaust on residents. Planning Board members clarified the setback distance for her and noted that pushing the building too far from the road puts them closer to the adjoining neighborhood and up against the steep hillside. She pointed out that the ghost trees shown in the streetscape renderings would not be planted if stormwater management elements were incorporated into the streetscape.

Marilyn Denk thought the buildings in the massing studies look too institutional, too much like a dormitory and do not give a residential feel. She thought that the renderings are not typical of what Hanover looks like.

Bill Young said that the design allows for a complete street which is endorsed by the Pedestrian Bicycle Committee.

Rick Ely wanted clarification about the process of amendment. Les Riman wondered why the density should go along West Wheelock Street and did not think that aesthetics can be legislated. He thought the building length allowed was too long.

Michelle Farrell is concerned about business use, the high rents and lack of parking. She asked about the review process. She did not feel that commercial uses were appropriate.

Bryant Denk was confused about the height standards which were clarified for him.

ESMAY thanked everyone for coming and encouraged them to attend the Site Plan Regulation amendment hearing on Tuesday, April 28 at the Town Offices at 7:30 PM.

2. ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Smith