

Town of Farmington  
Planning Board Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, October 2, 2018

**Board Members Present:**

David Kestner, Chairman  
Martin Laferte, Vice Chairman  
Bill Fisher, Secretary  
TJ Place, Selectmen's Rep.  
Charlie King

**Board Members Absent:**

Stephen Henry  
Rick Pelkey, excused

**Others Present:**

Dan DeSantis, Town Planner  
Stuart Arnett, ADG Development

**1). Call to Order:**

Chairman Kestner called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

**2). Pledge of Allegiance:**

All present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3). Review of Minutes:**

September 18, 2018 – Page 1, last paragraph, 3<sup>rd</sup> line- strike "on a" after "facility"

Page 4, 3<sup>rd</sup> line from the bottom – change 25 to 24, strike the symbol for feet (') and add sq. ft. after the 24

Page 7, 6<sup>th</sup> line from the top- add "use" before "Conex"

**Motion:** (Fisher, second Laferte) to accept the minutes as amended passed 5-0.

**4). ADG Development Group – Project Update:**

Stuart Arnett told the board he is happy to be working with the town on 2 projects, one of which is the reuse of the old firehouse site as part of a grant funded effort to encourage a diversity of housing and generate some economic vitality for the downtown. He pointed out the 3 concept boards displayed behind the board and reminded everyone that there is Community Forum on Wednesday, October 10 from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. He said the UNH Cooperative Extension Service will be leading the forum and discussion will include what the town would like to see at firehouse site and downtown and offers an opportunity for the community to provide input on the project.

He said this becomes a key part of the restructuring of the update of the Master Plan which is the second project he is working on with the town. The downtown project is first in line because it requires a vote on a warrant article regarding potential zoning changes at Town Meeting he said.

Mr. Arnett said the Master Plan does not require a Town Meeting vote as it is adopted by the Planning Board and then goes to the Selectmen for approval.

He said the Request for Proposals (RFP) from the Planning Dept. for the town said they wanted

an update to the Master Plan but they wanted it to be an implementable Master Plan and more of a master action plan than a data dump for a lot of information.

Mr. Arnett said they plan to “skinny it down” to the essentials and keep the existing good parts of the plan and redesign it to a more attractive format. One of the ways to do that is to remove the data that is available online and include references to data sites that are updated by their core agencies to get the most recent data instead of something that is 2-5 years old. He suggested that they make it a more visually attractive document so people will be more likely to actually use it.

He said they will return to the board with conceptual ideas they can react to instead of meeting with the board on a monthly basis to decide how each chapter should be written and more of it will be done by surveys.

While this is a planning document predominantly for land use regulations issues it also becomes one of the lead promotional documents because one of the first things a developer will do is to check the Master Plan to see if what they plan to do is what the town says they want to do. The more qualitative, attractive and explicit it is for citizen use it also becomes a document for use by developers looking to find out if they would be a good fit for Farmington he said.

Mr. Arnett then gave a slide presentation of a draft plan for Berlin, Vermont created by one of their subcontractors. He said the format for the plan shown is 11” x 17” and includes all of the “big pieces” needed such as land use, transportation, housing, etc. presented in a visual manner and a lot of extraneous information that has nothing to do with land use planning have been removed.

He said the narrative is succinct with footnotes and links to websites and a discussion on the purpose of the plan. It makes references to other plans but doesn’t include page after page of information about reports created years ago. The plan uses real pictures from the town and the sections are color coordinated with references to the locations of the information he said.

The next slides depicted examples of how the pages are set up with the goals, objectives and related policies on the left side of the page, the description or narrative in the center and maps, charts and graphs on the right side of the page.

He said the plan is not without some narrative and displayed a page that was mostly text regarding civic items, working lands and natural resources to show that the topics can be addressed without 15 pages of narrative.

Several color coded maps, charts and photos showing the current topography and scenic areas as well as a proposed future land use map with the town’s neighborhoods and highway corridors were included on the next pages.

Mr. Arnett said the plan then moves on to more detailed background information, cross referenced graphs and maps with captions describing the major features accompanied by corresponding photos that make it easy for people to see what they are talking about in each section.

The next section contains the recommended actions stated concisely with columns listing the current situation, what should be maintained, what should slowly be changed and what should be changed most quickly. This information would come from discussions with the board and community members he said.

Mr. Arnett then said other than the back cover that is the entire Master Plan. He said there is a lot more work to do to decide exactly what to include in the plan and asked the board to consider having this type of document in the hands of someone who does not know anything about Farmington vs. them looking at the current Master Plan.

Mr. Kestner said this format is a lot less than the 480 pages found in the existing Master Plan and that he was in favor of whatever minutia could be cut out of the plan and thinning it down to a more manageable size. He said he liked the plan presented and the only issue might be that it would be printed on 11" x 17" paper in landscape format as most people are used to 8" x 11" in portrait format.

Mr. King said that the 11"x 17" format would be more conducive to being viewed online as most people have wide computer screens and that format lends itself to that especially with electronic data. The Town has the ability to print that size and in color and it's important that they have an electronic copy of the plan with all of the right links. It is going to have to be the Town's burden to maintain the links to specific supporting data such as the resource inventory list, conservation lands, wetlands ordinance and the aquifer protection overlay he said.

Mr. Arnett said he didn't want them to have to stay on top of things that other people are doing. For the small percentage of people who want everything on paper they can print it rather than to have the Town stacking it up in a bookcase that nobody ever gets to.

Mr. Laferte asked if the Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) would be involved with the development of the Master Plan.

Mr. DeSantis said they will be involved with the data side of the revision as they have a plethora of data to work with.

Mr. Arnett said they would also be helpful with GIS mapping and some of the links could click through to the SRPC because they are a group that maintains data bases and are paid to do so.

Mr. Fisher asked for the timeline to completion of updated plan and to get it out to residents.

Mr. Arnett the first half of project has been funded through Town Meeting and they hope to get the second half funded at Town Meeting and expect to complete it about 1 year from now.

Mr. Fisher said he keeps hearing people asking where to find information and that this format for the plan will help them with that. If they were looking for specific information they would go to that section in the plan and there would links to lead them to additional information. He said he liked the format and the links and keeping them updated is very important.

Mr. Arnett said part of the answer is how well he does his job and how well the board does their job. He asked how long it would take them to ask the board what the answers are to the objectives, policies and actions and how long it will take the board to get the answers back to

him. He said the board taking 4 meetings to talk about the same topic is different from him making suggestions and then the board says they like 3 of the 4 suggestions.

Chairman Kestner said there are 10 chapters in the current Master Plan and asked if they planned to tackle two chapters at time.

Mr. Arnett said that is the way it is typically done but they are considering starting with making some big statements that cut across everything and then filter it down from there. That will be decided by the board he said.

Mr. King suggested the subsections be formatted the same way where it starts with goals and objectives, the supporting information and then a summary at the bottom.

Mr. DeSantis said one of his objectives when he got started with this project was not to make the Chairman go crazy. He said he understood that the last update was somewhat painful and long and that it doesn't need to be.

Mr. King said during the 2005 update the residents were tasked with word-smithing the document and then it becomes long and tedious because that is not what we are good at.

Mr. Laferte said the Planning Board should get together with Mr. DeSantis and develop a game plan for the project so they know what they are going to do and when they are going to do it.

Mr. King said that Mr. Arnett would start by proposing the 3 or 4 methods or formats they could use and not by asking the board what the format or content should be.

Mr. Arnett suggested Mr. Kestner and Mr. DeSantis should discuss what they see happening over a certain timeframe and some objectives for 5 or 6 key topics. He said they would obtain more information through online surveys and then return to the board with an analysis of results which reduces the amount of time spent determining what is important to be included in the plan.

Chairman Kestner said it starts with Mr. Arnett and Mr. DeSantis looking at the objectives listed for each of the 10 chapters in the current plan and determine if they are still viable. He said the 10 or 15 objectives in some of the chapters may be "wordy" and suggested they look at condensing the objectives down to 1 or 2 sentences.

Mr. Arnett said one of his associates has already looked through the existing plan and his assessment is there is still a lot worth keeping in the plan.

Mr. DeSantis asked if the board wants him to present an action memo with a timeline for their approach to updating the plan at the next workshop meeting.

Consensus of the board was to request that Mr. DeSantis provide the memo.

Mr. King said most towns would agree that they need a better downtown, better housing and to protect the natural resources and farmland but this is what it specifically means to us and where we want to see improvements.

Mr. Arnett said there are a lot of Master Plans that look other Master Plans and they would try not to do that with Farmington's Master Plan. He said this may make more work for the board or Mr. DeSantis as the objectives change it may affect their thinking about zoning. The Master

Plan drives the zoning so as you go through the process then the next step will be how the land use regulations reflect the zoning he said.

Mr. Kestner said every board member has their ideas but they are not the last bastion of what the other 5,000 other people in town want to see here and they need to be cognizant of what their thoughts are. He said he is not sure how to get people's input because some people don't want to answer questions online and the survey done during the 2005 update was costly and not very successful.

Mr. Arnett said another factor to consider is when to ask the questions. The later you ask the more focused the question is but there is also the danger of someone saying this is a done deal so why are you asking me now.

Chairman Kestner said putting the surveys online also has the potential to get answers from non-residents unless they are sent to residents' e-mail addresses.

Mr. King suggested once there is more structure with a proposed format there should be public hearings and meetings to encourage public input on the proposal. He said the board would be the conduit to make sure the goals and objectives are adjusted to be correct for today and then funneling it to Mr. Arnett's group.

Mr. Arnett said they also hoped to find venues where they can go to the people and they feel comfortable talking instead of making the people come to them.

Mr. King listed some town events that may provide venues to get public input such as Hay Day and Town Meeting and suggested they consider the timing of the event and what questions they would plan to ask at that point.

Mr. Fisher said the community forum mentioned earlier is a good place for the public to provide input because they are looking at the redevelopment of the old firehouse lot which will be applied toward the Master Plan. The Selectmen are also doing Whistle Stops which are another good place to tell the boards what they want to see for Farmington he said.

Mr. Laferte asked how many people have signed up to attend the forum.

Mr. DeSantis said about 25 people have signed up so far. He said his experience shows that double the number of people who signed up will come to the event.

Chairman Kestner thanked Mr. Arnett for attending the meeting.

#### **5). Correspondence:**

**A).** Mr. DeSantis announced that on Friday at 9 a.m. he would be presenting the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant application to the SRPC Technical Advisory Committee. He encouraged anyone who is available to come to the presentation. The applicants will make their presentations, the SRPC TAC will score the applications and then they will be sent to the state he said.

**B).** He said he received the Town Meeting calendar and the first day to accept petitions for any zoning amendments is Monday, Nov. 12. He said he would like to have a workshop after the last day to accept petitions which is Dec. 12. He said he did not know if he will have the

amendment to zoning ordinance regarding the old firehouse ready by then. He said the last day to post a public hearing for an adoption of a proposed zoning amendment is Jan. 10.

Mr. Kestner asked if the issue of moving the definition of street frontage currently found in the site plan/subdivision regulations to the zoning ordinance is among the topics being discussed with the Town Attorney.

Mr. DeSantis said the matter has been discussed with the attorney.

Mr. King asked if there is a list of potential zoning amendments.

Mr. DeSantis said he is currently working on the list.

Mr. Kestner said the Thanksgiving holiday will play into how much time is available for the members to consider the amendments and that he will be out of town that week. He asked Mr. DeSantis to try to include the anticipated zoning changes for their next meeting.

Mr. Kestner noted there must be 2 public hearings on proposed zoning changes.

Mr. DeSantis said one hearing is due on Jan. 10 and the second on Jan. 21.

**6). Any Other Business:** None

**7). Adjournment:**

**Motion:** (Laferte, second Fisher) to adjourn the meeting passed unanimously at 7:18 p.m.

Respectively submitted

Kathleen Magoon

Recording Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Kestner', written over a horizontal line.

David Kestner, Chairman