



DOVER PLANNING REVIEW

AN UPDATE FROM THE OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



February 19, 2021

Welcome from the Planning Director

Last week, my wife and I were flipping through TV channels and came across the 1996 movie “That Thing You Do!” It made me think about the question I used to get more than I do now: What does being a “planner” mean? People initially thought I meant that I was a financial planner (my investment account balances do not support this idea), an event/wedding planner, or a scheduler for a trade or service. While all of those things might be similar in the sense they mean your training and desire is to not look at today or tomorrow, but to look in the future and come up with some idea or thought as to what that future may hold.

My experience has told me that no one really asks a member of the police or fire departments what they do, nor public works employees. People understand these jobs are related to public safety, whether it's the firefighters rescuing you, police officers enforcing the law, or public work employees plowing roads and maintaining our infrastructure. These jobs are necessary for creating spaces to live.

My theory is that without planning, you wouldn't have those roads to plow. You wouldn't have those buildings that need to be protected from fire, and you wouldn't have a community that people want to feel safe within. In this regard, the planners' role is to help the community decide how it wants to grow, what it wants to do as far as land use regulations, and, to some extent, quality of life and social/cultural aspects of the community.

Below, in this week's topic area, I'll try to answer that question of what the staff here in Dover's planning office does. Next week, I'll go over what the staff doesn't do, and in two weeks, we'll wrap up with a look at Master Plans.

Happy Reading,

Christopher G. Parker AICP
Assistant City Manager: Director of Planning and Strategic Initiatives

Upcoming Meetings

DOVER PLANNING BOARD – AGENDA

Meeting Type: Regular Meeting
Meeting Location: Council Chambers, City Hall, 208 Central Ave., Dover NH 03820
Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2021
Meeting Time: 7:00 pm

Certain members of the Planning Board may be participating in this meeting remotely. In addition, the Chair of the Planning Board may, per NH RSA 91-A:2, III (c), declare an "emergency" within the meeting if that status and/or the implementation that a quorum be physically present at the meeting. In either event, remote members will identify their location and any person present with them at that location. All votes will be by roll call.

The City of Dover has taken extra steps to ensure the physical location of this meeting conforms with all safety precautions during the pandemic, including social distancing, face coverings, and frequently sanitized facilities. Although qualified members of the public can participate in the meeting by speaking at the physical location, the public is encouraged to leave decisions in advance by calling 508.MEET.0030, emailing Dover.Planning@dovernh.gov, or making written comments to Planning Board, Dover City Hall, 208 Central Ave., Dover, NH 03820. Messages must be received no later than 4 pm the day of the meeting and should identify the name and Dover address of the person leaving the message or providing the comment.

- CITIZENS' FORUM**
- APPROVAL OF THE PROCEEDINGS**
 - February 9, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes
- OLD BUSINESS**
- NEW BUSINESS**
 - Consideration and acceptance of a Minor Subdivision for Townsquare Media Portsmouth, LLC., Assessor's Map 51, Lot 31A, zoned R-41, and located at 292 Middle Road. (7 new lots). *9/21-08
 - Consideration and acceptance of a Conditional Use Permit for 54 BBR, LLC., Assessor's Map 8, Lot 6, zoned R-12, and located at 54 Back River Road. (Proposal is to allow road and utility construction, stormwater treatment, and structures including stairs and retaining walls, with steep slope impacts of 18,799 s.f.). *9/21-00
 - Consideration and acceptance of a Transfer of Development Request for 54 BBR, LLC., Assessor's Map 8, Lot 6, zoned R-12, located at 54 Back River Road. (Proposal is to increase development density allowed by 33-110-D-1-1 residential zoning). *9/20-01
 - Consideration and acceptance of a Site Review for 54 BBR, LLC., Assessor's Map 1, Lot 6, zoned R-12, located at 54 Back River Road. (Proposal is to develop an affordable housing community with 44 detached 384 s.f. one-to-two-unit units). *9/20-00
 - Consideration and adoption of Street Tree Policy
- STAFF COMMENT**
- MEMBER COMMENTS**
- ADJOURNMENT**

*Indicates that if the application is accepted for discussion, the public hearing will be held the same evening. Note that some hearings will be continued from one meeting to another and some may be postponed. Since this is only a partial description of the proposal and may change, persons with questions or wishing to see the plans are invited to visit the Planning Office, Monday through Thursday from 9:30 am to 5:30 pm and Friday 9:30 am to 4:00 pm or email Dover.Planning@dovernh.gov. You may also view materials at www.dovernh.gov. Follow us on Twitter @DoverNHPlanning and Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/DoverNHPlanning>.

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Page 1 of 1



Planning Board, 2/23/2021

In a video released today, I review what's on the agenda at the next Planning Board meeting this Tuesday, Feb. 21. The video can be viewed by clicking the image above or [clicking here](#).

At the meeting, the Planning Board will consider:

- A request for a minor subdivision to create one new lot for Townsquare Media Portsmouth, LLC., located at 292 Middle Road.
- Site plan approval for 44 cottage-sized units at 54 Back River Road. The project requires a conditional use permit to allow road and utility construction, stormwater treatment, and structures that include retaining walls, with steep slope impacts of 18,799 square feet.
- Adopting the proposed Central Business District Street Tree Plan. The proposal was recently presented to the Conservation Commission and can be [viewed here](#).

Results of Last Meetings

Zoning Board of Adjustment, 2/18/21

The Zoning Board of Adjustment met on Thursday, Feb. 18, where they approved the following request for variances after public hearings and deliberation:

- Sebring Holdings, LLC request for a variance from Sections 170-12.B, 170-5 (D) and 170-11 (D) to construct and operate a professional/medical office within a residential district with a distance of 64.5 feet from a residential structure, where 150 feet is required, and 77.8 feet from the front yard property line, where regulations require the structure to be built a maximum of 25 feet from the property line. The variances were requested for a vacant lot on Dover Point Road.
- Diamond Capital, Inc. request for a variance from the definition of "lot" per Section 170-6 of the Zoning Ordinance to permit the construction of two principal buildings (two single-family dwellings) on one lot, where the definition of "lot" does not permit the placement of

more than one principal building on a lot. This variance request was for a vacant lot on Gulf Road.

- Gloria Michaud and Applicant Colbea Enterprises, LLC, request for a special exception to permit a vehicle refueling and recharging station in the Commercial Manufacturing (CM) Zoning District at 45 Knox Marsh Road.

[Click here](#) to watch the meeting and access agenda and materials.

Heritage Commission, 2/16/2021

The Heritage Commission met on Tuesday, Feb. 16 where they:

- Elected officers for the year: Jeffrey Spires was re-elected as chair, Otis Perry was re-elected as vice-chair, and David Emery was elected secretary.
- Agreed that the proposal by Chinburg Management, LLC to rehabilitate the building at 1 First Street (old Strafford County Courthouse) is vital and worthy of inclusion in the Community Revitalization Tax Credit Program. The Commission also voted to recommend to the Planning Board, with reference to the City Council, that during a site plan review, the Planning Board consider requiring an archeologist be on-site inspecting and recording the materials below grade, being disturbed by construction, as excavation occurs.

The meeting agenda, materials, minutes, and audio recording of the meeting are [available here](#).

Downtown Dover Tax Increment Finance District Advisory Board, 2/16/2021

The Downtown Dover Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District Advisory Board met Tuesday, Feb. 16, where they:

- Re-elected Jeffrey Spires as chair and Jeff Roemer as vice-chair.
- Endorsed a request from Chinburg Management, LLC for inclusion in the Community Revitalization Tax Credit Program for its proposed renovation of the old county courthouse.
- Performed a bi-Annual review of the financial pro forma.

The agenda, materials, and audio of the meeting are [available here](#), where the minutes will also be posted.

In-depth: What is the role of a city planner?

I'm asked from time to time, "What is a planner?" And the follow-up question is: "What do you do all day?" Now truth be told, the second question is actually coming from my wife, but it still stands that it is a question I get. I also get a few questions about why we don't do things as opposed to why do we do things. My hope is that over the next few special topic discussions, I can answer those questions and give the reader a better sense of what planning is, what the Department of Planning and Community Development does for the City's benefit, and what I do all day. (Hopefully, my wife reads this).

I like to say that a planner is a critical thinker who creatively solves problems. Those problems range in scale and scope, but the basic idea is that our department's goal is to identify existing problems and help the community find solutions to those problems. Some problems might be, "I want to buy a piece of my neighbor's property and add it to mine – what do I do?" That solution is a lot line adjustment, which requires the Planning Board's approval.

Another problem we get is, "I'd like to have an office in my home, can I?" Sometimes that's allowed, and it's a permit that gets filled out and reviewed. Sometimes it's not allowed, and the solution involves working with staff and the property owner to identify other properties that might be better suited for what they want to do. Another problem we get is, "What does Dover want to be when it grows up?" This larger problem is taken up through our long-range Master planning process.

Certainly, I'm simplifying some of the activities noted above. If someone understands the basics of what a planner might do, they get the connection to land-use planning. That role, which we certainly do play, is probably the most time-consuming and recognizable. This involves supporting the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment and other land use/community Boards (we support 10 directly, and three more indirectly). Luckily in Dover, that's just a part of what we do. The community has long understood the need to think and act strategically.

Dover's policymakers and its administration understand that Fortune 500 companies don't succeed without a plan, whether it's a business plan or some other strategic document guiding them. Dover is in the same position. Without our Master Plan and thinking strategically, Dover would not have evolved into the community it is today. That is probably the more central and vital role that Planning and Community Development staff play. We work with the community to determine how best to continue to grow and evolve, understanding that if you don't grow and evolve, you become stagnant and regress.

On a day-to-day basis, we spend time working with property owners to understand their property rights, whether they be the property owner who wants to develop their property or an abutter or neighbor to a property being developed. We work with stakeholders to understand how they can interpret and utilize our regulations, and how those regulations protect them, whether they're an abutter or the applicant.

People point out that my title includes the term "Director." There can be an assumption that this means things don't occur without our approval. I find this funny, as I don't feel that I direct anything other than the staff I have. I facilitate growth and development. We help applicants complete applications and navigate the process so the appropriate public body reviews and determines if the application is successful.

In addition to those roles, we also coordinate land conservation and preservation efforts. We recognize in Dover that we need to preserve and protect land as we grow and evolve. Not every piece of property is ideal for development. Not every piece of property should change and evolve. Through our Master Plan process, our Conservation Commission and Open Lands Committee actively work to preserve and protect those resources. Similarly, our Heritage Commission works to identify and protect land in areas that are socially, culturally or historically significant. Our Energy Commission works to make Dover a better steward of our land and resources.

So that is the tip of the iceberg look at what we do. This doesn't even get into special projects such as the Community Trail, wayfinding, infill development, etc. Or the Capital Improvements Program (CIP), where we assist other City offices/service areas with developing and utilizing strategic plans to guide them. Finally, we administer the City's Community Development Block Grant (CBDG) program. This is a federal program where funds are provided to Dover to support human and social service groups assisting low/moderate-income residents.

Next week, I'd like to cover what we don't do, or the third most popular question I get, "Why don't you say no?" After that, I want to circle back to the idea of long-range planning and what it means in Dover. Our mission is to think strategically in Dover, and we look towards the future and look towards how we can continue to improve the City for ourselves and those who are yet to live here.

Now, if someone could please pass this along to my wife, that would be great....

Book review: "Brave New Home"

A friendly reader had emailed me that he was reading “Brave New Home: Our Future in Smarter, Simpler Happier Housing” by Diana Lind. This was a book on my to-read list, so I moved it up.

Overall, it is a great overview of housing in the United States over the last 100 years. It explores how the country has shifted from urban to suburban and explores levels of homeownership versus rental over that time. The first section is a solid summary of the trends that have been experienced and the financial incentives the federal government has made to encourage the shift from a rental society to a homeowner society.

The second section looks at innovations that could be used to address affordability. Topics such as accessory dwelling units (ADU), co-housing and smaller unit sizes, and other innovations. This section also explores how different age groups are looking to live.

The third section talks about how to move your community towards being innovative. Many of the tools explored, such as increasing density and education about housing needs and construction costs, are intelligently described and laid out in a highly readable and developed manner.

I see this as a book any housing advocate should read and use to deliver an elevator speech. It is a college textbook quality book, written in a readable and engaging manner.

Survey seeks feedback from motorists

Over the next 12 months, staff from the City of Dover and Sebago Technics will monitor traffic data and implement new traffic signal coordination programming throughout 17 signalized intersections along the Central Avenue corridor. As part of the ongoing implementation, drivers who use the corridor are asked to provide feedback about how these efforts are improving traffic flow. This feedback includes a simple, five-question poll, which can be accessed online at <https://conta.cc/3pFYtQl>. Other such surveys will be published as changes to the signal timings are made to gauge public reaction.

The program is the result of a partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the New Hampshire Department of Transportation (DOT), which provided grant funding to install the innovative technologies at 17 of Dover's intersections within the Central Avenue corridor.

The \$811,875 project is made possible from \$649,500 in grants from the FHWA's Accelerated Innovation Deployment (AID) Demonstration Grants Program administered by the DOT and a 20 percent match from the City of Dover, totaling \$162,375. The FHWA grants were approved by Governor and Executive Council, DOT and Dover City Council. FHWA's AID Demonstration Program provides funding to accelerate the implementation and adoption of innovation in highway transportation.

For more information, contact Community Services at 516-6450. To view a video detailing the project, visit <https://dovernh.viebit.com/player.php?hash=WPwgOuxNGoqm>.

