

Minutes

June 18, 2015

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee

Present:

Craig Piper, Chairmain
Tex Haeuser
Mark Eyerman
Robert Foster
Peter Stanton
Adrian Dowling
Jon Jennings
Kathleen Phillips

Absent:

Joe Picoraro
Stephanie Carver, GPCOG
Councilor Claude Morgan
Milan Nevajda
Pat Doucette
Craig Gorris
Libby Reynolds
Councilor Maxine Beecher

1. Welcome

Craig Piper welcomed everyone to the meeting. A copy of the 6/18/2015 minutes, memo titled Possible Revisions—Mill Creek Master Plan from Mark Eyerman to the South Portland CPIC, and a copy of Stephanie Carver's comments to Tex were provided.

2. Adoption of the Minutes

Jon Jennings moved to adopt the 6/18/2015 minutes; Bob Foster seconded. Unanimous approval.

3. Committee Approval of Master Plan Revisions

Mark spoke about last week's Planning Board Public Hearing and noted the highly favorable comments of the Plan, including highly complementary remarks from the Chair. There were a handful of issues raised by the public, and the motion by the Board was to recommend that the City Council adopt the Master Plan with revisions to address those comments. He and Tex pulled together a list of possible revisions, and he noted that Tex's vision is that if the Committee is agreeable, these would go to Council tomorrow as an addendum to what they've received for the Workshop on Monday (June 22nd).

Mark reviewed the memo with the Committee.

Left turn off bridge: The action is to work with the Maine DOT to see if it's possible to extend the left hand turn lane. This would be expanded to include other possible ways to improve that situation, including improving signal functioning.

Peter asked if there is space to lengthen the lane. Mark said it depends on how you look at the lanes; it's an issue with talking to the Maine DOT.

Mark asked if the Committee is okay with the revised language, and they replied yes.

Skateboarding: This was an issue brought up by Dick McGoldrick, who owns the shopping center. He implied that the skateboarders are less cooperative than in the past to suggestions to go somewhere else. The two issues here were: 1) asking the police to do more and 2) adding a skate park. It was noted that Rick Towle from the Parks & Recreation department noted there is need for a skateboard facility. However, it is an issue of if this is the right location.

Jon asked if anyone has spoken with Jim Gailey. He has said before that the city does not want a skate park.

Jon and Peter discussed the skate park in Portland. It does get used, but there are liabilities. Skateboarding at this shopping center is trespassing.

Peter and Craig agreed that this isn't necessarily the Committee's issue.

Tex noted that Rick said it's ideal to have it indoors.

Jon agreed that it doesn't make sense here. He suggested that Mr. McGoldrick write a letter to the police chief and cc City Council—proposing a skate park doesn't need to be a part of this.

Peter stated that it doesn't necessarily make the area desirable, and Kathy added that some people may be intimidated. Craig noted that he doesn't want the Plan to say "no skateboarding allowed."

The Committee agreed that they wouldn't make a change to address skateboarding.

Tex asked about #10 ("Encourage the Police Department to work with property owners to manage undesirable skateboarding on private property"). Jon suggested writing a letter to police. Adrian said the trespassing issue doesn't need to be a part of the document.

Craig said it's important to note the Committee's discussion to City Council.

Affordable housing:

Jon said that he read Stephanie's email and the plan she noted in Massachusetts was highly effective.

Tex said he spoke with Mr. Kessler before and he noted how it's getting hard to meet rent in the area. As long as we are speaking about larger projects, having a 10% requirement would be acceptable.

Craig said that he's nervous about putting a specific percentage—the Plan is about coming with your ideas. We don't have to put 10% but, "What is your plan to make some units/portion of the project affordable?"

Peter, Craig, and Kathy spoke about developers including affordable housing intentionally to make them marketable. Craig said in some instances, the developer needs a cross section of units to make it feasible—you're not going to sell million dollar condos to everyone—so some portion are high level, some are at market rate. Kathy said it's true.

Tex said he worries that if they aren't a little specific, then we won't get affordable units. He suggested asking them to do this or in the planned development option, they can suggest an equivalent option.

Jon suggested Tex look at the 40B/R. For the developer, it's a great incentive and economic development tool. A lot of review stages can be skipped if you have 10% overall affordable.

Peter said South Portland has to address this as a city. With trying to entice developers to do something, you don't want to put anything in there that turns them off. He noted that there's not a lot of older housing stock; everything will be new. How does that impact the ability to make things affordable?

Jon: Affordable isn't what you think anymore. It's not just underserved, it's also families. Those programs are voluntary. As a developer, to bypass steps in review by making 10% affordable, many people love it.

Craig asked how "affordable" is defined in the plan. Tex said not in much detail—"moderate income." Jon asked how it's defined in the Comprehensive Plan, and Mark said the HUD definition is moderate income up to 80% of median household, area wide.

Peter asked if TIF could be used to subsidize mortgages. Tex said yes.

Kathy and the Committee spoke about artist units, like on Sherman Street. Peter said nothing builds interest in a community like having artists move in, but he's not sure how to get them in South Portland. Jon said there's a vibrant community in Knightville—South Portland is on its way to creating that.

Tex said that Mark points out the Plan "goes as far as possible in terms of creative 'incentives' for developers to build affordable housing. This is to go beyond, try to be responsive to public input—a large project (20 units is considered large here), then make a unit affordable. He doesn't think it's overly tough on the builder; include something about flexibility with the planned development option helps, too.

Peter said that selling it to City Council, that's helpful. If it's not there, it might come back.

Craig said that the point is to come in with best ideas and he wants to be sensitive to limiting that.

Jon said he doesn't like the "must" in #14 ("Include a requirement in the new Village Extension and Mill Creek Core Area zones that any new development or redevelopment project that creates more than twenty dwelling units must assure that at least ten percent of the units are affordable to moderate income households"). Bob suggested "encourage" rather than "must." Jon said they could also create the incentives they've talked about.

Craig liked the suggestion of "encourage," and when a developer doesn't have 10% they will have to explain why. He asked Adrian what he thought, and Adrian said "must" is a little severe.

Kathy agreed; "encourage" sounds more flexible.

The Committee agreed on changing the wording and Mark said he would rework it.

Broadway setbacks: The Committee agreed that this was a good point. Peter said it makes sense; preserving some space is a good idea.

Tex had the feeling that these comments were trying to get him to say development toward the eastern end of Broadway will be limited by transportation capacity and will not trigger road widening. He said that's the reality—we can increase transit, up the biking and walking, improve the signal at Mussey/Broadway, etc.—and there are middle turn lanes, too.

Craig spoke about the Master Plan having no access to Broadway from the big intersection of the bridge past the library and limiting access points to that from a safety perspective. It will always be a small strip of land. It would be great if it wasn't businesses in that stretch; it would move them to Mill Creek. Jon asked if that meant no curb cuts along Broadway. Craig said that would help move business into Mill Creek and help traffic flow, and Tex added it would green that strip up.

Peter said there can't be no curb cuts; he's not opposed to preserving space for a future Council/planner.

Jon said you would kill the development opportunity at the Pratt Abbott corner with no curb cuts.

Tex underscored Pratt Abbott. Because of public input, now that's up on his list for property that wants to be redeveloped—that's the only way it will be totally cleaned up.

Right turn lanes:

Mark said it's the City's plan to signalize, not remove. Tex noted they have funding for it.

Jon said that just because you can get a grant, you want to make sure it is really needed.

Tex noted that they did this on the west of Broadway off the bridge and thinks it helps.

The Committee discussed the backups in the area, and the signal for the turn lane that is pedestrian actuated.

The Committee agreed they were okay with this change.

Mark said that he will get the changes to Tex tomorrow.

4. Comments from the Public

No comments from the public.

Tex told the Committee, assuming the Workshop goes well, that the Plan will go onto their agenda to get adopted. He asked if they should put it on the next agenda (July 6th) or wait until he's back in the office (August 3rd). The Committee decided to have it placed on the August 3rd agenda so Tex will be present.

There is no CPIC meeting in July.

5. Adjournment