FINAL

LEBANON PLANNING BOARD
Regular Meeting
Monday, May 24, 2021, 6:30 PM
Remote Via Microsoft Teams
LebanonNH.gov/Live

ROLL CALL OF MEMBERS PRESENT:	Bruce Garland (Chair), Matthew Hall (Vice-Chair), Karen Zook (Council Representative), Kim Chewning, Joan Monroe, Kathie Romano, Jeremy Rutter, Laurel Stavis
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Gregorio Amaro
STAFF PRESENT:	David Brooks (Planning Director), Tim Corwin (Senior Planner), Rebecca Owens (Associate Planner)

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1. Call to Order Chair Garland called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

A. Review of meeting procedures and NH RSA 91-A "Right-to-Know" requirements.

Mr. Corwin shared the State directive and participation details for the online meeting in Microsoft Teams. All members identified themselves.

Chair Garland conducted a roll call of members present as reported above. An overview of the meeting agenda was outlined.

2. Other Business

A. UVLSRPC presentation re: Keys to the Valley project

Mr. Brooks introduced Meghan Butts, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), and Alex Belensz, Planner, to discuss the effort and recommended regulatory ideas.

Mr. Belensz gave a detailed presentation of the results of the Keys to the Valley project, a regional housing initiative encompassing the Upper Valley region in NH and neighboring towns in VT. The presentation covered the key findings with links to additional information in a PDF report and the website that lists five key understandings and six key action areas. The objectives, strategies and tools are outlined in a flow chart.

A large amount of data was reviewed by the RPCs to create projections of housing needs by 2030. Affordability is a challenge, with a significant number of cost-burdened households, which are projected to increase over the next ten years given the current trends. Projections were created for each community. In 2030, the population of Lebanon is projected to be over 14,000, with an average of 2 persons per household. Rental households make up 50% of the population, and many renters are paying more than they can afford for housing. Senior housing is a particular need. In addition, more emergency housing, affordable housing for all income levels, homes with supportive services, homes with digital connectivity and transportation, accessibility, and smaller homes are all needed.

The major goals of the project would be to create a strong tax base, increase affordability, and maintain a good quality of life. A suitability analysis was done to reveal the most suitable areas for development in each community. They looked at current land use and the potential for additional housing while maintaining the character of the neighborhoods. Infrastructure such as water and sewer, transportation, sidewalks, and walkability were also considered. Policies and regulations need to incentivize affordable housing. It would be important to create a net benefit in financial terms for a town. Increasing available housing would lower the cost for housing. The area is missing housing between single family housing to mid-rise multi-family complexes; the so-called "Missing Middle". There are ways to promote more housing types and making permitting easier. Regulatory solutions for keeping neighborhood character were also discussed. There could be an expedited process for those meeting housing goals. The website offers links to resources at www.keystothevalley.com.

Ms. Romano noted barriers to development, such as the requirement for sprinklers when converting to three units or more. It is required under the State Fire Code.

Mr. Hall inquired about the causes of the housing problem. Mr. Belensz noted it is both regulatory and financial due to a lack of understanding of the area. There is enough land for development, but there is high cost for new construction and converting existing structures becomes desirable.

Ms. Stavis suggested that income inequality is also creating affordable housing issues. WORDING FROM LAUREL COMING: New Hampshire does not allow municipalities to convert duplex units to triplex and quadraplex units under current water and sewer regulations. Mr. Belensz stated that it needs to be addressed. Mr. Belensz said they are working with Vital Communities on new legislative strategies.

Ms. Monroe inquired about consideration of carrying capacity of the land along with water and sewer capacity. Increasing housing density also means adding more strain on sewer capacity, which may not have been discussed in the study. Mr. Belensz said that focusing on downtown areas mitigates the impact on those services. There are trade-offs with any type of development. Ms. Monroe noted the failure of mobile home initiatives, which could bring the cost of housing down. The increase in the cost of materials over the past year makes alternative sources of materials for construction necessary. It would have been helpful to have it as part of the study.

Ms. Chewning inquired about the expected increase in population and the current shortage of 10,000 homes and the fear that larger homes will be sitting vacant. Mr. Belensz noted that given the current demand it is unlikely, but it may be economical to convert some to duplexes. The shortage is in all types and costs of housing. Ms. Chewning inquired if changing parking requirements would work with the limited types of public transportation. Mr. Belensz stated that renters would sort themselves out based upon their need for parking.

Ms. Romano noted that Lebanon does its part. The other area towns could increase development if they extended their public sewer systems. Mr. Belensz agreed and stated that he has been reaching out to them.

Mr. Brooks thanked Mr. Belensz and Ms. Butts for the presentation and encouraged the Board members to visit the website. If something catches the Board members' interest, they were asked to please contact the UVLSRPC and the Planning Department. There are a number of opportunities in addition to challenges to advocate for changes that would help the housing shortage.

Ms. Stavis advised the UVLSRPC to come up with separate legislative strategies for NH and VT.

B. Discussion re: Ped/Bike related amendments to Site Plan Review and Subdivision Regulations

Ms. Owens discussed bike storage and parking first. There were no questions from Board members. Ms. Romano clarified the number of parking spaces required. Ms. Owens explained the requirements for both bicycle parking and shower facilities. Ms. Romano stated she is in favor of encouraging but not requiring shower facilities.

Mr. Hall stated that he would not add the requirements. The Board should not be requiring showers for businesses, particularly small businesses.

Ms. Monroe noted that there have been comments for encouraging healthy practices. Encouraging bicycles supports the environment, space requirements, and public health. It is better to give the Board flexibility in specific cases.

Ms. Chewning suggested that the Planning Board could adjust requirements.

Ms. Stavis stated she is against any statement regarding public health, as it is not within the Board’s area of concern.

Ms. Romano noted that sprinkler systems were being required now, but just like the showers, she would be in favor of encouraging but not requiring them. A developer could not count on the Board granting a waiver from the requirement.

Chair Garland asked if the Braverman project would have to provide both short and long-term bicycle parking. Saxon does provide both. Ms. Owens read a statement from Saxon explaining their process for determining bike storage in their developments.

Mr. Brooks stated that Staff wants to get to a point where the Board is comfortable with the amendments, and there would also be fire and minor site plan changes reviewed at the June 14th meeting with a public hearing on all amendments at the June 28 meeting.

Chair Garland conducted a Straw Poll as to whether showers should be mandatory versus encouraged.
Showers being Mandatory – Ms. Monroe, Ms. Chewning
Showers being Encouraged – Mr. Hall, Mr. Garland, Mr. Rutter, Ms. Romano, Ms. Zook, Ms. Stavis

Matthew Hall moved that the Pedestrian/Bicyclist Amendments reviewed at the April 26, 2021 and May 24, 2021 work sessions be scheduled for a Public Hearing on June 28, 2021 at 6:30 PM.
The motion was seconded by Laurel Stavis.

Roll Call Vote:
Voting in Favor – Mr. Rutter, Ms. Monroe, Ms. Zook, Ms. Romano, Ms. Chewning, Ms. Stavis, Mr. Hall, Mr. Garland
Voting Against - None
The motion was approved (8-0).

C. Discussion re: resumption of in-person meetings

Mr. Brooks stated that the City Manager reported on the decision by City Council to resume in-person meetings in July. It is being left up to other Boards and Committees to decide when to return to in-person meetings. The emergency order is still in place. Mr. Brooks inquired if and when the Board would like to return to in-person meetings. There is also the issue of whether the public and applicants should be present. Board members were invited to see the new facilities and how in-person meetings would work. Chair Garland stated that he has seen the space.

Ms. Romano noted that there are a number of people in the public who have chosen not to be vaccinated. The best course would be to take it one step at a time and wait to bring the public into the room due to the concern about unvaccinated people sharing the space. Mr. Hall agreed that it should be in stages, but it should be a choice for members as long as a quorum is present in-person when it can be done safely. Ms. Monroe agreed and would want to see the new meeting room. Ms. Stavis also agreed that the Board should be in-person and the public in stages. It is important to remain flexible, as it is not known how the fall will go and how long the vaccines are effective. Ms. Chewning was also in agreement but would be in favor of masks as a way to increase safety.

Mr. Brooks noted that the majority of the Board favors returning to in-person meetings. There may be some Board members who want to remain remote. Whatever the Board decides should be added to the Rules of Procedure as long as it is consistent with State law, which requires a specific reason to attend remotely. COVID may go away as a reason for not attending in person.

Mr. Hall confirmed that the rules could be modified as needed and suggested that there should be a date in mind for bringing the public back, perhaps Sept. 1, 2021. Applicants should appear in person. Mr. Brooks suggested that all local persons should be there, but those at a distance could participate remotely.

The Board members discussed the issue of requiring in-person attendance for Board members and applicants with their consultants. Mr. Corwin noted that Board members must go back to in-person unless there is an extreme circumstance.

Mr. Brooks inquired if the consensus was to return to in-person meetings beginning with the July 12, 2021 meeting. Chair Garland asked Mr. Brooks to draft a statement regarding the return date.

Ms. Monroe and Ms. Zook both stated that it was useful to have the ability to attend remotely regardless of travel.

Mr. Brooks summarized that the full Board would be back to meeting in-person as of the July 12, 2021 meeting, but can participate remotely if there is a compelling reason to miss the meeting. Applicants should be present, especially if they are local, but related consultants at a distance could participate via Teams. Mr. Rutter added that an applicant should communicate to the Board as to who would represent them by attending remotely.

Ms. Stavis left the meeting at 9:15 PM.

D. Rules of Decorum

Mr. Brooks stated that the Rules of Decorum were adopted by another Board, and there is a recommendation that all Boards adopt them as a baseline standard of behavior. There is a Pledge of Civility included. It is suggested that they be adopted as an addendum to the Rules of Procedure.

Kathie Romano moved that the Planning Board adopt the Rules of Decorum.
The motion was seconded by Matthew Hall.

Ms. Monroe stated that it is unnecessary.

Voting in Favor – Ms. Chewning, Mr. Hall, Mr. Garland, Mr. Rutter, Ms. Zook, Ms. Romano
Voting Against – Ms. Monroe
****The motion was approved (6-1).***

3. Committee Reports

A. **Planning Board Subcommittees:**

--Planning Board Capital Improvement Program (K. Chewning/M. Hall/B. Garland/L. Stavis)
--Planning Board Development Regulations Update (M. Hall/K. Romano/ J. Rutter / J. Monroe)

B. **City Council Subcommittees:**

--Class VI Roads Advisory Committee (J. Monroe)
--Lebanon Energy Advisory Committee (J. Monroe)

C. **Other Subcommittees:**

--City Council Representative (K. Zook/D. Whittlesey)
--Heritage Commission (J. Rutter) The Commission is in a state of flux with the chair and another member resigning or not extending their terms. New members are needed, and suggestions would be welcomed. The City Clerk places announcements in the *Lebanon News* for openings on Boards and Committees.
--Pedestrian & Bicyclist Advisory Committee (G. Amaro)
--Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (B. Garland/L. Stavis)
--UV Sub-Committee of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions (B. Garland)
--Upper Valley Transportation Management Association (VACANT)
--Mascoma River Local Advisory Committee (K. Romano)
The One Mechanic St. shoreland protection application for the Mascoma riverbank was just received. Permits take a long time.
--Steering Committee for the Implementation of the Master Plan (B. Garland/K. Chewning /VACANT/J. Monroe)
--West Lebanon Revitalization Advisory Committee (L. Stavis)
--Planning & Development Department – Task Status (D. Brooks/ M. Goodwin/T. Corwin/R. Owens)

4. Approval of Minutes

A. April 26, 2021

Page 1, line 24-25, to read, "To reduce confusion, signage would conform to the updated manual on uniform control devices, which would provide visibility and safety."

Page 2, line 32, to read, "…a ratio of 78% developed to 22% undeveloped…"

Joan Monroe moved to approve the Planning Board minutes of April 26, 2021, as amended.
The motion was seconded by Jeremy Rutter.

Roll Call Vote:
Voting in Favor – Mr. Garland, Mr. Rutter, Ms. Monroe, Ms. Zook, Ms. Romano, Ms. Chewning, Mr. Hall
Voting Against – None
****The MOTION was approved (7-0)***

5. Adjournment

A MOTION by Matthew Hall to adjourn the meeting.
The motion was seconded by Jeremy Rutter.

Roll Call Vote:
Voting in Favor - Mr. Rutter, Ms. Monroe, Ms. Zook, Ms. Romano, Ms. Chewning, Mr. Hall, Mr. Garland
Voting Against - None
****The MOTION was approved (7-0).***

The meeting was adjourned at 9:26 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Holly Howes
Recording Secretary