

Building/Property Maintenance Committee

Minutes for July 26, 2016



COMMITTEE MEMBER	PRESENT	ABSENT
Mike Fowler, DPW - Chairperson	X	
Robert Mackey, CE Dir/Vice Chair	X	
Ed Garone, Derry Police	X	
Scott Jackson, Derry Fire Dept.	X	
Robert Wentworth, Building Insp	X	
Dawn Enwright, Tax Collector	X	
James Morgan, Councilor Liaison	X	
George Sioras, Town Planner	X	
Joseph Toohey, Resident	X	
Serge Michaud – Resident		X
Ernest St.Pierre – Resident	X	
Courtney Bogaert, Health Insp.	X	
Kerry Harrison, Tax Collector Alt.		
Vern Thomas, Police Dept Alternate		
Dave Hoffman, Fire Dept Alternate		

A monthly meeting of the Building & Property Maintenance Committee was held Tuesday, July 26, 2016 at the Derry Municipal Building Center. Meeting was called to order at 9:00 am.

Approval of Minutes

James Morgan made a motion to accept the June 21, 2016 minutes as presented.

Seconded by George Sioras

Motion PASSED (11–0)

OLD BUSINESS

Sign Ordinance Workshop

Mike Fowler asked George Sioras and Bob Mackey to explain how other towns/cities deal with their downtown sign issues.

George Sioras stated that they were able to find downtown signage language in the following towns/cities: Derry Blight Committee, Concord, Rochester, Dover, Keene, and Claremont. He pointed out that Concord offered grant money of \$350 for sign design and \$1000 for awnings, which was funded through a corporation within the City of Concord.

Mike Fowler questioned if there was a common theme among the various ordinances.

George stated that Rochester has specific design themes in their ordinance. Derry has incorporated a lot of their language into the current sign ordinance. Down the road Derry may want to add a template for what an “approved sign” would look to its ordinance as well.

James Morgan wanted to the committee to understand that these signs are \$3,000 to \$4,000 to purchase and in some cases could be even more depending on the size of the sign. So offering a business a \$350 grant may not be enough.

George Sioras mentioned that the Planning Board worked with 2 local sign companies for about a year and a half to update Derry’s sign ordinance.

James Morgan liked the idea of offering a grant. Code Enforcement has been trying to update properties with little success. The Town needs to take an active role in the downtown and spend some money to make improvements similar to what Nashua has done. Having a grant incentive may push someone to take down a sign or awning.

Ernest St.Pierre questioned if it was the City of Concord funding the Grants.

George Sioras stated that it was a corporation within the City of Concord similar to the DEDC that was in Derry a few years back.

Ernest St.Pierre was not sure if the Town should be using tax dollars to have businesses conform to a sign ordinance. This could create a problem.

George Sioras asked what the goal was of this committee. Derry had a historic district in East Derry and residents fought back. They felt there were too many restrictions.

Mike Fowler stated that the group needed to decide which was worse, having a sign frame with no business listed or a business sign with a vacant building.

Bob Mackey felt that Dover had a good resolution to that problem. They stated in their ordinance that the City of Dover could remove the sign if the building remained vacant for over 6 months and lean the property for the cost. Overall he felt the Town of Derry had a good sign ordinance that could be tweaked.

Mike Fowler asked what the Committee wanted to do.

James Morgan asked Bob Mackey if anyone had contacted Dover to see how their sign ordinance was working for them. Have they found property owners are complying?

George Sioras stated that it takes time for the older signs to be switched out as some of them are grandfathered. Or should the Town be making businesses comply with the current sign ordinance.

James Morgan felt the Town should add that property owners need to change out the sign after a tenant moves out to conform to the new sign ordinance within 36 months of the storefront being vacant.

Ernest St.Pierre stated that the Town needs to enforce the ordinance.

George Sioras explained when the Planning Board makes zoning changes they get push back on the Town.

Bob Mackey mentioned that the Town currently allows signs to be grandfathered.

Joe Toohey agrees that we should not be handing out money to businesses. Can we give tax credits instead?

George Sioras stated that the Town has tax deferred program that has not been implemented. The incentive to businesses would be to fix up their façade and receive 3 to 7 year tax credit.

Ernest St.Pierre questioned if he, as a resident, fixed up his property would he then be offered a tax credit. Let's not put the burden on the residents.

James Morgan stated that it would be easy if we were dealing with one property owner who owned the entire downtown area, but we are dealing with 50 different property owners. Every building has a difference concern and/or financial issue. Nashua pulled a Bond to update their downtown and made business owners update their buildings as well. The Town has not taken a financial lead. We need to educate the property owners and possibly offer a 3 to 5 year tax credit as an incentive. The Town needs to consider making the following changes:

- Get all the various boards onboard as to what the downtown area should look like.
- Take down signs that don't comply and require signs to look a certain way.
- Stop allowing vacant building to grandfather their signs.

Mike Fowler stated that the next meeting was going to be held on Tuesday, August 16, 2016 and we as a committee can decide what we want to make as a recommendation to the Town Council. He also felt that this committee could work as a sidebar to the Economic Development Committee.

Bob Mackey asked everyone to review the materials especially the Town of Claremont as they have information on starting a business in its town, which we may want to include.

Mike Fowler explained that the Town took steps to revitalize the Downtown area back in 2001 (15 years ago). We put in 29 tree pits, 7 trees have been removed and 12 trees are now overgrown and need to be trimmed back. A memorandum has been written to the Town Administrator to request funding and type of tree that should be replaced. The cost to replace the trees could run around \$25,000 to \$50,000 depending upon the type of tree.

Ernest St.Pierre asked if the Town had contacted an arborist to verify which type of tree should be used.

Joe Toohey stated that UNH has a tree program at the college that we can contact.

Mike Fowler felt that the discussion regarding the replacement of the trees could go before the Town Council as early as September for consideration but felt 2017 would be a more realistic time frame.

George Sioras mentioned that there was a dead tree in front of Cumberland Farms.

Mike Fowler explained that this was not the first time the concern with regards to the trees downtown has been brought up.

James Morgan felt that the Town should be removing the dead trees and replacing the missing trees this year.

Mike Fowler stated that he wants to be consistent with the type of tree that is being replaced. Awnings are also affected by the growth of the trees.

Discussion to continue at the August 16, 2016 meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

OTHER BUSINESS

Mike Fowler – 19 Elm St – The building is down. The Highway crew will be going in and filling the foundation and making the property look presentable. There is still some bricks and debris that needs to be removed. However, the hazard has been removed. We will see how the council decides to move forward with the property.

Joe Toohey questioned the newest downtown sign “Turd Hurders” – What type of business is that.

George Sioras stated that it is a pet supply store.

Ernest St.Pierre wanted to ask that Ed Garone have his patrolman be careful out there due to all the crazy things going on lately.

Ed Garone thanked Ernest St.Pierre and stated that the residents have been very supportive.

**Bob Mackey made a motion to adjourn at 9:46 am.
Seconded by Courtney Bogaert**

Next meeting is 3rd Tuesday of Month – August 16, 2016 @ 9:00 am – Room 207

Respectfully,
Sharon Jensen, Recording Clerk