

# MINUTES

## STATE-CAPITAL-REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

**March 29, 2013**

Attendees: James Bouley (Mayor); Michael Connor (Director, NH Dept. of Administrative Services); Senator Sylvia Larsen, (State Senate); Rep. Candace White-Bouchard (House), Deb de Peyster (Public Rep).

Also in Attendance:

Commissioner George Copadis, NH Employment Security (NHES)  
Rich Lavers, NH Employment Security (NHES)  
Ernie Liakas, NH Employment Security (NHES)  
Chuck Schmidt, NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT)  
Stephen Henninger, Assistant City Planner, City of Concord  
Matt Walsh, Project Manager, Community Development, City of Concord  
Ed Roberge, City Engineer, City of Concord  
Tom Aspell, City Manager, City of Concord  
Carlos Baia, Deputy City Manager – Development, City of Concord  
Matt Monahan, Central NH Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC)  
Joanne Cassulo, NH Office of Energy and Planning (NHOEP)

The meeting came to order at 8:30 A.M.

### **1. Introductions**

The Mayor welcomed those in attendance and attendees briefly introduced themselves.

### **2. Approval of Previous Minutes**

Minutes of June 20, 2012 were adopted as presented.

### **3. State Prison Request for Proposals**

Mike Connor provided a brief overview and provided a history of the project. He noted that the House Public Works Committee recently voted to include \$38 million for the construction of a new women's prison in Concord. Tentatively, the facility would be located to the west of the current men's prison. It was noted that the former Laconia State School was also considered, but Concord is currently the preferred location. The new prison is tentatively scheduled to open in May 2016.

City representatives presented a variety of concerns which they asked the State to consider should the project move forward. Such concerns included:

- Impacts on abutting residential neighborhoods;
- Potentially substandard water pressures vis-à-vis finished floor elevations for the new facility;
- Impacts upon the City's Merrimack River Greenway Project should prison farm land on the east side of Route 3 be used for the project; and

- A request to include better landscaping for the existing men's prison as part the project in order to soften the facility's appearance along Route 3.

Senator Larsen reported that she recently met with the Commission of Corrections who indicated his department has no plans to relocate the men's prison from Concord. She also reported having discussions with the Commissioner concerning relocation of so-called "C-1 Prisoners" (i.e. those close to release) to another community.

A brief discussion of the number of released prisoners who are part of Concord's homeless population ensued. City officials expressed concerns that prisoners released from the men's prison, as well as the NH State Hospital, are not matriculating back into society and consequently end up homeless in Concord, thus putting strain on City services.

#### **4. Concord Steam Update**

Carlos Baia provided a brief update concerning the Concord Steam Project. He reported that Concord Steam has not yet secured financing for the new plant to be located on Langdon Avenue. Consequently, Concord Steam will not be able to achieve contractual deadlines with the City or State for steam and electricity. It was also reported that Concord Steam is considering renovating the existing steam plant at the Gallen Office Park as a backup plan should the Langdon Avenue project not be achievable.

Discussion about the potential impacts to the City and State ensued. It was noted that heated sidewalks in downtown could not be achieved without a viable steam plant. Ed Roberge, City Engineer, reported that heated sidewalks should be possible utilizing the current plant. However, he also noted that the City will be stubbing natural gas to all properties abutting the Downtown Complete Streets project area, thus potentially reducing Concord Steam's client base.

It was the consensus of those present that the City and State should work closely to monitor the Concord Steam Project moving forward.

#### **5. Tobey School Renovation (NHES)**

Ernie Liakas reported that renovation of the former Tobey School into new office space for the NH Employment Security Department is currently underway and progressing well. Renovations will be completed in January 2014. It is anticipated that full occupancy will occur approximately 60 days thereafter.

Rich Lavers presented a traffic study prepared by Tighe & Bond for the Tobey School renovation project. A brief discussion of the study's findings and recommendations ensued.

Senator Larsen discussed the Lafayette Posts located at the intersection of Industrial Drive and Fruit Street. She reported that legislation has been approved requiring relocation of the posts back to the State House Grounds. Mike Connor indicated he would follow-up on the schedule to relocate the posts.

**6. 32-34 South Main Street (NHES)**

Matt Walsh reported that the City, working with NHES, issued a Request for Proposals package to developers concerning the sale and redevelopment of property at 32-34 South Main Street on behalf of the NHES. Proposals are due on April 16, 2013. Mr. Walsh reported that the asking price for the property is \$1.75 million per an appraisal commissioned by NHES. He further reported that developers are showing interest in the property and that he is cautiously optimistic that the City will receive multiple proposals for the property.

**7. 10 West Street (NHES)**

NHES will be divesting of this property as part of its plan to consolidate operations to the former Tobey School property. Rich Lavers reported that the NHES will be marketing the sale of this property without assistance from a real estate broker. He further reported that NHES has decided to delay listing the property on the open market until development proposals 32-34 South Main Street have been received.

**8. Downtown Complete Streets Project**

City Engineer Ed Roberge provided a brief update about the project. He noted that the project is in design development with construction scheduled to commence in September 2013. He noted that a meeting has been set to discuss impacts to the State House Plaza and other state properties for March 29<sup>th</sup>.

Tim Sink reminded City staff that the Chamber sets up a season visitor's center on the State House Plaza and asked that renovation plans for the plaza account for this.

**9. 247-249 Pleasant Street / HB 550**

Mike Connor reported that the State has listed the property with NEI Norwood. While the State has completed an appraisal for the property, it has not set an asking price for the property. Rather, the State is accepting proposals from interested parties. Proposals are due on April 9<sup>th</sup>. The State hopes to present offers to the Long Range Capital Planning and Utilization Committee on May 7<sup>th</sup>. Once the Long Range Capital Planning and Utilization Committee meets and selects an offer, the City will be extended its right of first refusal per RSA 4:40.

Matt Walsh reported that he had been in contact with Jared Nylund and Chris Norwood concerning the property, including potential related parking issues. He indicated the City might be willing to entertain zoning relief with respect to potential parking issues, pending more information about the preferred redevelopment proposal for the property.

Mr. Walsh further noted HB 550, which will amend the RSA 4:40 procedures for divestment of surplus State owned real estate. Specifically, the legislation will give municipalities a 60 day time period to exercise their right of first refusal after action and notification by the Long Range Capital Planning and Utilization Committee. In addition, any transaction including a municipality must be completed no later than 15 months after acceptance by the Long Range Capital Planning and Utilization Committee. He indicated the City may propose modifying the amendment in order to further clarify the RSA 4:40 process.

## **10. Gulf Street Properties (NHDOT)**

Matt Walsh reported that representatives from the City, NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT), and NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) recently met with the Common Man Restaurant to discuss their interest in acquiring NHDOT property located at Gulf Street. Mr. Walsh reported that the Common Man would acquire the property in order to make improvements to the parking lot, as well as potentially construct a small building to complement the existing restaurant.

A brief discussion ensued about petroleum and coal tar contamination at the property. Mr. Walsh reported that those issues might be more manageable than originally believed. Specifically, NHDES has reported that Liberty Utilities and NHDES have developed a Remedial Action Plan for addressing coal tar soils under which Liberty will accept all responsibility for remediating said contamination. Mr. Walsh also reported that the State of NH Oil Discharge and Disposal (ODD) Fund Program would cover up to \$1.5 million in petroleum related liabilities at the property.

Lastly, Mr. Walsh added that the project scheduled is being dictated by Common Man's ability to focus resources on the sale. Thus, the project is proceeding slowly at the present time.

## **11. Loudon Road / Windsor Square (NHDOT)**

Carlos Baia reported that the project is moving forward and that a purchase and sales / development agreement will be presented to the City Council for approval within the next 60 days. He also indicated that the developer has secured property to allow for re-alignment of Old Loudon Road with Loudon Road and D'Amante Drive to create a four-way, signalized intersection.

## **12. Gallen Office Park**

- a. Huntress / Coutress House: Mike Connor indicated that both properties are currently going through the Long Range Capital Planning and Utilization Committee process, with the goal of listing the properties in June 2013 and closing transactions with buyers by December 2013.

Mr. Connor further reported that NH Division of Historic Resources has required that Huntress and Coutress be preserved for adaptive reuse. However, in the event the State is unable to sell the properties within a set period of time, this restriction shall lapse, thus allowing the buildings to be demolished.

Senator Larsen inquired whether there had been any interest in using either property by mental health providers. No one was aware of such interest.

- b. Liberty House: Mr. Connor reported that this property is currently being used by the State for office space.
- c. Philbrick Renovation: Mike Connor reported that the renovation will be completed in October 2013, with occupancy to occur prior to January 1, 2014. He indicated a variety of smaller Boards and Commission offices are being relocated to the property from Concord and elsewhere in the State. Once completed, the 30,000 square foot building

will house approximately 70 staff. Presently, the large field at the Philbrick site will remain open for public use.

**13. Other Business:**

- a. Senator Larsen informed the group about ongoing discussions with the Manchester Transit Authority to expand bus service from Concord to Manchester Regional Airport. Federal funds have been secured; however, a \$16,000 local match must be provided. Rep. Candice White Bouchard indicated that she and Senator Larsen are working to secure the matching funds from local businesses and that no City funds are envisioned for the match. The goal of the project is to create a pilot program with up to ten bus runs per day between Concord and the airport.
- b. Senator Larsen inquired about potential Community Development Block Grant funds, or other City funding sources, to assist the Concord Women's Club with renovation of their facility on Pleasant Street. It was the consensus of the group that City staff would work with the Senator to discuss potential funding opportunities after the meeting.

**14. Meeting Dates:**

Lastly, Mr. Walsh discussed future meeting dates with the Committee. It was noted that the traditional Wednesday morning time was problematic for the State due to conflicting schedules for the Governor and Executive Council meetings. It was the consensus of those present to move all future meetings to Friday mornings at 8:30AM.

The Mayor indicated he would like the Committee to reconvene in June to discuss the women's prison project, Concord Steam, and the Downtown Complete Street project.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Matthew R. Walsh  
Assistant for Special Projects  
City of Concord