

tremendous amount of input on the priority based exercises that they went through and it was very clear that there are over 200 strategies which was very ambitious. Therefore, it is more important to identify who was responsible and where you might go for additional information. In the revised chart they summarized who was responsible and also added a status column to identify where they are.

Mr. Holden noted that the wealth of what these recommendations represent is as a result of the process which the Planning Board went through. It is almost impossible to prioritize but it is possible to recognize them for on-going public participation and enact those that are necessary. The next step is for the Board to become familiar with them.

Mr. Taintor indicated the next step was to go through the public hearing process. Mr. Holden suggested starting in March. Chairman Smith also recommended incorporating all of the zoning changes on the Zoning Map at the same time. All members felt they were ready for the public hearing stage.

A final work session will be scheduled at the next regularly Planning Board Meeting to discuss any comments that the members may have after reviewing the document that was handed out at the meeting.

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B. A work session on the land line between Borthwick Avenue and Islington Street, with City Council and owners of said property, which is identified as Islington Woods.

Chairman Smith indicated that they would have a one half hour presentation by the Islington Woods principals and a one half hour question and answer period.

Mr. Holden indicated this was an opportunity to take out the next Master Plan for a test drive and also take the existing Master Plan out for one more drive. In other words, they are basically looking at land use issues that present a lot of conflicts and present a lot of visions. No one view is perfect and there can be several views on the same property each presenting particular challenges. Under the existing plan, the majority of what is being identified as Islington Woods Site was basically zoned industrial from 1969 to about 1995 and then was zoned Office Research. The existing uses in the site are non-conforming residential and the majority of the surrounding properties are either residential, office research or industrial and include municipal land where the Collins Well is located. Under these views either the Office Research or the Business District may be appropriate if it is matching the view that the City is looking for in its future development. That is one of the issues that will be coming out through this process. Among the things that need to be considered are whether or not the vision that is being offered by the existing development is appropriate or whether some other vision that may not be in the area is appropriate. That can be measured by socio-economic impacts or what may happen in the future relative to particular transportation modes. On the traffic there are a number of issues that need to be addressed under any development scenario. Common among these are rail crossings. There should be a demonstration that rail crossings are possible under any development scenario. Crossings also post significant safety hazards and the mechanisms may be very expensive so there are issues as to how they would be maintained and who would be responsible. Off site improvements that relate to traffic impacts are also important. In closing, Mr. Holden felt it was important to understand the existing Master Plan which has the area zoned Office Research has a certain vision to it. The proposal that is being looked at is part of a future land use map for the new master plan. What is being presented to the Board is more information so that the Board can act and decide what the appropriate vision would be for this property for inclusion in the new Master Plan which they are hoping to wrap up in the next few months.

Attorney Malcolm McNeill addressed the Mayor, City Councilors, City Manager and the Planning Board on behalf of Islington Woods, LLC, which is a real estate development company which is proposing a mixed use sustainable neighborhood development on approximately 40 acres of land between Islington Street and Borthwick Avenue. Also present were the principals of Islington Woods LLC, Eric Chinberg and Bruce Keough, along with their professional consultants. They provided handouts.

Attorney McNeill indicated they were focusing on the draft Master Plan as they proceed with their presentation. They understood that this was not an application for Site Plan review, it was not a final unchangeable plan but rather represents their concept of an achievable project that will be developed in some manner by the principals. They were present to show factual evidence that would support a favorable recommendation in the Master Plan to change the zoning from its principal classification of Office Research to Business. They are attempting to use an existing business zone as drafted in the Zoning Ordinance to permit the development of mixed uses on the site, consisting of 35% non-residential and 65% residential uses. They believe their project is achievable and consistent with the draft Master Plan and they also believe it is fiscally responsible in the best interests of the City.

Attorney McNeill indicated there were three substantial reasons to support their request.

- 1) The vision for this smart growth sustainable development project fits comfortably within the vision of Portsmouth as outlined in the draft Master Plan.
- 2) The project achieves several important goals of the draft Master Plan. The business zone as opposed to the OR zone or some new hybrid zone allows for the best use of the land through realized visual goals of the draft Master Plan.

Islington Woods mixed use neighborhood is consistent with the vision of the Portsmouth Master Plan as described in the introduction of the draft Master Plan. In their discussions with the Planning Staff over the past 16 months, they have been consistent with offering suggestions and feedback to drive their plan towards the vision of the Master Plan. It will be a livable, walkable village style neighborhood which will be as special as the downtown. The retail component of the project will allow residents to walk to the store or enjoy a cup of coffee without getting into an automobile. The office component of the project, in its connection to nearby office buildings on Borthwick Avenue as well as the hospital, will allow some residents to walk to work or to their doctor's offices. It will also be a transit development. The main access road that will connect Islington Street and Borthwick Avenue will be designed to meet the design of the Coast fleet. Additionally, land will be preserved for the future opportunity of locating the passenger train station on the Borthwick side of the project if and when passenger rail service to Portsmouth becomes a reality.

- 3) Finally, Islington Woods will provide affordable live/work space and exhibition space to artists.

Attorney McNeill spoke about the goals of the draft Master Plan. The first goal is regarding land use. The draft Master Plan calls for maintaining a balance of places to work, live, recreate and do business, to transform the City's main transportation corridors to enhance their appearance and encourage mixed uses and to maintain the public recreation areas and promote development that supports the Master Plan vision. They believe their plan does all of that.

Douglas Griner, of G21 Company, a landscape architect, spoke next. He indicated this was a neighborhood that would offer a diverse mix of places to live, work and play. It provides cultural amenities, public walking trails and retail opportunities. The design process began with a site evaluation to understand the opportunities and constraints of the project. They evaluated the land for access, natural resources and the context of the property to surrounding land use. They have been able to preserve a larger unbroken open space area that is an asset to the residents, surrounding community and associated natural systems connected to the open space. The plan

creates a village streetscape that fosters pedestrian circulation between commercial, housing and open space area. It also preserves the option of a train station or future extension of the rail service in Portsmouth. He pointed out the two components that helped them develop their plan. First, the sites special features such as the logical connection between Islington Street and Borthwick Avenue. The wetlands and the buffers, moderate slope areas, wooded areas, wildlife habitat and drainages. They all curve in a manner that further delineates a framework for the project. Finally, there will be a mixture of passive recreational assets. Their mixed use plan also provides a logical connection between the residential uses along Islington Street and the institutional, industrial and professional office uses along Borthwick Avenue.

Mr. Griner indicated that the second component of the plan was the development program. The mixed use concept features retail stores, commercial, professional office, artist live/work space and townhouses. This represents 35% non-residential and 65% residential. Their program represents three land uses: housing, professional office and commercial use.

Eric Chinberg introduced himself and indicated that he had been a builder/developer for the past 20 years in the seacoast area. He has done several mixed use developments. He is currently the Chair of the Housing Partnership in Portsmouth which has given him an appreciation of the housing and affordability of the housing in Portsmouth. They are trying to create an affordable house space for artists to live, work and exhibit their art. He believes this diverse housing mix is important to the local economy which is why 10% of their residential units that they propose are affordable housing for artists where they can both live and work. The townhomes are more in line with the average price of homes in Portsmouth however they recognize that average priced homes are still out of reach for many people and that is why they have to work closely with Arts Speak to create this concept.

Bruce Keogh introduced himself and indicated that he has lived and worked in the seacoast for the past 15 years. He spoke to the transportation aspects of the project. Islington Woods will be a pedestrian friendly village and they will drive an access road with a sidewalk the entire length. They would like to extend the sidewalk down Islington Street from where it currently ends at the entry of Barberry Lane at their expense. The project will also be transit-ready. That means that in the near term it will accommodate the Coast fleet. In the longer term, being transit ready means preserving the option for passenger rail service. They would be happy to enter into an arrangement with the City to preserve a train station in an area owned by them.

Attorney McNeill then went on to address the impacts and concerns. The principals on the land will develop the property in some fashion. They believe that the project that they are proposing conceptually represents the best available option to promote the interests of the Master Plan and to create a reasonable transition between the office use on Borthwick Avenue and the primarily residential use on Islington Street, across from their site. They believe that this project presents an environmentally less impacting alternative than development under the Office/Research zoning capacity. They also believe that the traffic impacts of this project are comparable to the impacts of the existing zoning and under either development scenario, sufficient capacity exists to accommodate traffic impacts on both Islington Street and Borthwick Avenue. They appreciate citizen and City concerns regarding Islington Street however they do not believe the traffic is a reason not to rezone this parcel. They believe that the totality of the benefits of their project, measured against the impacts of office/research development supports the business zoning which they are requesting. In their City Hall experiences, they were frequently told that traffic, environment and transportation were the major concerns.

Stephen Pernaw, Traffic Operations Engineer and the President of Pernaw and Company, spoke next. They were asked to conduct a preliminary traffic evaluation of this proposed development from a capacity of traffic operations and safety standpoints. Their office was familiar with this study area as they had conducted a traffic study for Portsmouth Hospital in 1998. Their first step involved researching current traffic counts. Between 4:00 – 5:00 pm and between 5:00 – 6:00 pm,

the commuter periods were the highest traffic counts. The existing traffic demands are about 700 – 900 cars per hour. Another interesting fact is that on Islington Street, heading towards downtown, traffic volumes increase. Further examination of the Islington Street area show that the peak hour volumes vary by as much as 20% from one day to another day due to random traffic flow. The next step was to determine the amount of traffic that this development would generate. The site is going to generate approximately 270 vehicle trips during the pm peaks. Not reflected in this table is the potential for trip deductions that could happen as a result of transit. Islington Street is expected to have a 2% - 9% change, depending on where you are. The impacts on Borthwick would be between 3% and 18%. Another type of impact that is going to occur is a result of the through connection between Borthwick and Islington. By providing the connection they will be increasing the access to the hospital to three. They further showed that both intersections would operate at acceptable levels of service and below capacity with the site fully occupied and the connector road in place. Stop sign controls would be the appropriate type of traffic control. Site distance at the Islington Street and Borthwick Avenue intersections is ample. They are well aware of the concerns regarding traffic however they do not believe it should be the deciding factor of whether to rezone or not. Impacts connected with the existing zoning could be greater. This project is unique as it gives the City an excellent opportunity to improve accessibility to the Borthwick area and the hospital as well as increasing transit ridership and also it may be the site of a future multi-mobile facility for B&M Railroad.

Adele Fiorillo, of NH Soil Consultants, introduced herself as a certified wetland scientist. It was her role to provide information with respect to natural resources and offer input to the team with respect to the protection of important natural resources. She has initiated ecological assessments on the site, in particular a functional assessment of the wetland areas, wildlife habitat and those type of ecological components. She also worked with Dan Fenner, a hydro-geologist, with NH Soil Consultants, as well as Kenneth Barry with Field Associates, the civil engineering firm for the project. The project team recognizes the proximity of the site to the Collins Well which is an important consideration. They have compiled information to assess how this project would effect water quality and potentially effect the aquifer. Their preliminary work shows that this would not pose a threat to the Collins Well. Only a small fraction of the site, 1%, is contained within the mapped aquifer. A review of the existing water sheds with respect to surface water show that this site is within the Hodgkins Brook Water Shed and off flow from this site again goes northwesterly away from the Collins Well as well. Ms. Fiorillo stated that the treatment of surface water run off will be an important component to this development project. Appropriate stormwater treatment will mitigate surface water quality. In considering a zoning change from Office Research to Business, she comfortably said that they could potentially reduce pollution simply by comparing the two zones. One important difference is maximum building coverage is much less for a business zone, which will have an impact on impervious area and stormwater run off volume as well as quality. With a mixed use neighborhood they have increased flexibility in site design, they could provide a better opportunity for Best Management Practices as well as utilizing additional stormwater potential.

In conclusion, Ms. Fiorillo felt that the site characteristics show that regardless of which zone this property falls into, there will be minimal recharge of the Collins Well aquifer for the project. Ground water flows north of the site and tends to be north westerly away from the Collins as well and 100% of surface water flows away from the Collins Well and adjacent wetlands provide excellent surface water quality treatment. A change in zoning will effect overall water quality simply on the basis of the reduction of pavement and improved stormwater treatment capabilities.

Attorney McNeill stated that this mixed use project would generate substantially more tax revenue than an office use under the Office Research zone. The tax revenue generated by their conceptual use should be approximately \$833,000. They recognize that a portion of the site consists of residences however their type of units will result in negligible numbers of school age children. The proposed units are two-bedroom townhouse units, averaging less than 2,000 s.f. in size. He went on to say that the essential important components are traffic, compliance with the Master Plan,

compliance with environmental features and compliance with the neighborhood component. He indicated that buildings in an Office/Research district can be 20' higher than they can be in the business district so this would be more compatible with the Islington Street neighborhood.

Attorney McNeill acknowledged that they were in the very early phases of the process to make Islington Woods a reality. As the process moves forward, their team stands ready to work closely with City Officials to evaluate issues of concern and to solve problems. The principals have purchased the land and are in a position to move forward quickly to take this conceptual project to the next stage when the zoning of the site permits the uses that they have presented.

QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD:

Mr. Will: Asked for the number of live/work units, the number of affordable units and whether there are any affordable units for those that are not artists?

Answer: 12 units or 10% of unit count. Prices will be governed by various factors but will be in line with other affordable housing in the area. They are just talking with the art community.

Mr. Will: 12 units seemed small. Were they considering any affordable units in any way, similar to what they have been working on with the Housing Partnership?

Answer: Total of 114 units. No, they are only considering affordable housing for artists.

Mr. Sullivan: Affordable housing is considered \$150,000 or less. Their presentation indicated their prices would be comparable with prices around the city. Are they going to have any homes that will be under \$150,000 for affordable?

Answer: He wasn't clear – he meant to say that the non-affordable units will be in line with area housing. Yes, the affordable units will meet the criteria for affordable house, governed by statutes and tax credit rules.

Mayor Sirrell: She has been concerned about the over-development of the area, including Portsmouth Hospital and Liberty Mutual. The City lost 35 of their best water wells and ended up with one. She asked how close they were coming to the Collins Well.

Ms. Fiorillo: The edge of the property line that is closest to the Collins Well is approximately 600 linear feet.

Mayor Sirrell: A big concern of hers is the traffic going out onto Islington Street. She asked if they will be opening up any type of road onto Borthwick Avenue.

Mr. Pernaw: The thru connection from Borthwick to Islington will allow traffic to flow in both directions. Their analysis shows that Islington Street will carry the minority trips and Borthwick will carry the majority trips. One-third to Islington Street and two-thirds to Borthwick.

Mayor Sirrell: Asked if they had studied the traffic pattern regarding the amount of cars as they get out of work on Borthwick where it is bumper to bumper going out to Route 33?

Mr. Pernaw: They collected existing data on Borthwick from the previous Hospital traffic study and on Route 33 they obtained a study from the Planning Department. The other end of Borthwick, at the By-Pass, they were able to get data from the NH Department of Transportation. On Islington Street, they conducted their own counts. They have looked at all of that information at this preliminary stage.

Mr. Coker: He asked to clarify some numbers that were used earlier. The volumes on Islington Street at the present time run 700 –900 cars per hour at peak. After post development, they estimate generating 270 trips at peak. However, they also said there would only be a 2% - 9% change in the traffic volume.

Mr. Pernaw: Only one-third of the volume will be going out to Islington Street.

Councilor St. Laurent: He asked how much fill would be used on the site and whether they would be filling any wetlands?

Ms. Fiorillo: Based on their conceptual plan, they have estimated that they are probably looking at 3/10 of an acre for the wetland crossing, a small isolation pocket associated with the existing sandpit, the existing roadway that goes into the radio station, there will be some incidental impacts to the culvert that goes underneath it for the expansion of the roadway, and a small wetland along the railroad tracks will be impacted.

Councilor St. Laurent: He lives in Panaway Park and eventually, after filling a lot of wetland, the watermap is backing up into their neighborhood. Are they going to help to continue the water moving. Otherwise, the water backs up into their neighborhood and eventually all the growth will create their neighborhood to flood.

Ms. Fiorillo: They will have to show that they are maintaining water sheds. The one area where they are crossing the roadway, the plan is to utilize a span culvert so that the stream volume will follow its natural channel and that they wouldn't be holding water back however they would minimize the amount of fill that would go there. The grading for the existing road and culvert is at the top of the watershed, where the wetland starts, so they are at the very edge of the wetland. They would be going towards Hodgkins Farm rather than Hodgkins Brook.

Question: 25 years ago they heard the same thing from HCA, the fisheries and other developers out there and they were concerned about preserving the wetlands. All of the white pines and oaks that are out there are all dead from floods. The regulations have changed because there is so much concern about preserving wetlands and open space.

Attorney McNeill: He indicated those are all uses that would be permitted in an office research zone.

Question: This is the biggest project that he has seen. He asked if this will be phased in over a period of years?

Answer: Phasing is often done as a result of the market. They assume it would take three years to sell out. As a result of the infrastructure and utilities, they would build it all at once. They would focus on one or two of the development areas on the residential part. They would want to get the main building done initially, with one of the residential areas. Depending on the market, they would then determine the pace of the others.

Attorney McNeill: He pointed out the amount of green space around the structures.

Assistant Mayor Grasso: She had three concerns. The first dealt with the open space and asked what the comparison was between the two zones.

Answer: They did not have that data however the difference in surface parking area was about 103,000 s.f., which is somewhere around 2 ½ acres, which would be associated with the office research zone.

Mr. Holden: Office research requires 30% open space and the business district required 15%.

Assistant Mayor Grasso: Asked if the roads are public, private or a combination.

Attorney McNeill: They are continuing to have discussions with the City on that.

Assistant Mayor Grasso: Do they have anything in writing from Guilford Transportation for a rail crossing because the City has found them very difficult to do business with.

Mr. Keough: He indicated they have had two meetings with Guilford Transportation. There is an existing crossing on the Islington Street side which is not in very good shape but there is only one train per week that goes down that track. Phase I of his conversations with Guilford is that they were agreeable to granting the private crossing in exchange for them upgrading the other crossing to current standards. They would have two at grade crossings, fully signalized and up to current standards. A condition of that understanding was that the road had to be a private road. Their plan is to go to the State to petition for a public crossing which is usually done for a public road but could also be done for a private road. They are agreeable to having the road either public or private.

Councilor Ferrini: He indicated that his law firm has represented companies and Mr. Chinberg although his firm is not involved in this instance. He has checked with the City Attorney and he will not participate in a Site Plan review as a Planning Board however they sit in their legislative capacity and he would be doing so in the event of a zoning change and therefore he may speak. He had a question about what they have available for specific detailed data as to market viability of the project. He asked how sustainable the 35% non-residential use was going to be in the area, what the potential fallback contingencies might be and what they might see going forward. With a three year build out, he would like to know what they are looking at relative to risk.

Mr. Chinberg: They have been approached by an office developer who is interested in developing the office building site and that is the type of partnership that they will probably get involved in to get it going. They understand they are taking a risk in Phase I in getting a little downtown area built. They are enthused about going 35% non-residential as they will be creating small retail spaces for specialties and they should have a fairly broad market.

Mr Sullivan: He has a great concern with the traffic on Islington Street and he does not want to see their road opening onto Islington Street as it would be a disaster waiting to happen. The quality of life and the safety of the people that live on Islington Street would be greatly hampered. The city has been attempting to get the heavy volume of traffic off of Islington Street for years. He also has concerns with the sewerage flow which all goes into the brick box which has problems. He thought the developer might be willing to put some money into the reconstruction of the brick box to make sure the sewer is handled properly. If the road is a private road, then there will not be any city services, such as plowing, trash pick up. That is something that needs to be addressed. What happens if the B&M plans to open up the Boston to Portland Route again?

Attorney McNeill: He reminded Mr. Sullivan that this would go through the respective Boards for their review.

Mr. Sullivan: He felt he would also be remiss if he didn't bring his concerns up at this forum so that they can take record of them and take corrective actions to make sure what goes in is good for the City over the next 50 –100 years.

Mr. Will: There was a lot of conversation on the actual zoning change from office research to business. He felt this was a very unique parcel and he was wondering why general business rather than some sort of overlay or mixed zone?

Attorney McNeil: They had a number of discussions with the City and the Planning Department and discussed creating a hybrid zone or taking some other unique approach to this site. The more

they looked at the business zone, with the most distinguishable factor between office research and business is in office research business and residential are not permitted. The business district seemed to make sense.

Mr. Coker: He suggested that, given the particular sensitivity of the Hodgkins Brook watershed, the wetlands, the near by presence of the well, he felt many of the requirements of either rezoning or creating an overlay district would and will be looked at very hard so he didn't believe it was a straight either/or proposition. He asked about their usage of the words "sustain" and "sustainability" and he felt those particular words could mean many different things to many different people. He asked for an explanation of what they mean by a sustainable community.

Attorney McNeill: Their mission was a sustainable development. Transit and pedestrian orientated communities including bike paths, healthy building design and construction, open space and habitat preservation, housing affordability and diversity, participatory community planning and decision making.

Councilor St. Laurent: Is the present entrance way on Islington Street the WBBX driveway?

Attorney McNeill: He believed it was.

Councilor St. Laurent: He felt that was a very tight area and was very difficult to get in and out of. He understands the affordable housing is for the artisans. Therefore, a nurse who works at the hospital and making \$40,000 could not live in this project?

Attorney McNeill: The townhouse units are tended to be market based in their price.

Mr. Ricci: One of his concerns was life safety with fire service accessibility. He sees a 70,000 s.f. office and commercial building that only seems to have one way in, a one way cul-de-sac, on the left hand side. On the north side of the hill, it seems like a long way without another means of egress. He asked when the traffic counts were taken, and specifically what time of year on Islington Street and he asked traffic counts from 7:00 am – 7:00 pm and he would also like to see traffic counts for the office research vs. this development.

Mr. Pernaw: The traffic counts came from many sources. A lot of information came from the NHDOT. On Islington Street the latest was in August of 2002. On Borthwick it was in August of 2003. Because it was 2002, they went out and did a count at the BBX driveway in January. The Borthwick counts came from NHDOT and were done the summer of 2003. When they do go back to the Planning Department to talk about the specifics they will have a whole set of intersections with fresh data.

Mr. Ricci: Did he anticipate that the data would increase from the 2002 data?

Mr. Pernaw: The Islington Street numbers from 2002 was 8900. The previous count in 2002 was 9100. So traffic went down a little bit. On Borthwick Avenue, the traffic went up a little bit.

Mr. Ricci: He indicated he would like a 12-hour traffic count, specifically to get an average over the past 12 months. He would also like to see the peak rates if this were built out as office research vs. this development.

Mr. Pernaw: They could include that in their full study.

Mr. Sullivan: He would be interested in where they take the traffic counts on Islington Street because that makes a big difference. He would like to see the whole corridor done.

Chairman Smith: He would also like to see included in the traffic study how it would impact the traffic circle. He sees a much higher number than 271 at a peak time and that doesn't even take into consideration the people who work on Borthwick Avenue at Liberty Mutual or the hospital trying to do a shortcut through this development to get home quicker.

Chairman Smith summarized some of the issues that were brought up at the work session: Housing, the well heads and the recovery if they were impacted, traffic will be a great concern, wetland fills and how it will relate to the residences around the area, the timeline of the build, not only in economic reasons but the impact on the residence, railroad crossings with Guilford who is normally uncooperative, the zoning ordinance itself and emergency access.

Chairman Smith thanked everyone for coming out and participating in the worksession.

II. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn at 8:15 pm was made and seconded and passed unanimously.

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Respectfully submitted,

Jane M. Shouse
Acting Secretary for the Planning Board

These minutes were approved by the Planning Board on July 21, 2005.