

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

January 16, 2002

A meeting of the Planning and Economic Development Committee was held on Wednesday, January 16, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chamber

Chairman Brian S. McCarthy presided.

Members of the Committee present:

Alderman Scott A. Cote, Vice Chair
Alderman Kevin McAfee
Alderman Timothy B. Nickerson
Alderman Lori Cardin

Also in Attendance:

Mike Lowe, Planning Board Liaison
Alan Manoian, Deputy Manager, Downtown

Programs

Katherine E. Hersh, Div. Dir., Community

Development

ELECTION OF A COMMITTEE CLERK

- Alderman McCarthy called for nominations for a Committee Clerk for 2002/2003

Alderman McAfee nominated Alderman Scott A. Cote.

MOTION BY ALDERMAN NICKERSON THAT THE NOMINATIONS BE NOW
CLOSED
MOTION CARRIED

VOTE ON ELECTION OF ALDERMAN COTE TO THE POSITION OF CLERK OF
THE PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE FOR THE
ENSUING TWO YEARS
ALDERMAN COTE ELECTED UNANIMOUSLY

COMMUNICATIONS - None

- UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

- NEW BUSINESS – RESOLUTIONS

R-02-02

Endorsers: Mayor Bernard A. Streeter
Alderman-at-Large Frederick Britton
Alderman-at-Large David Rootovich
Alderman-at-Large James R. Tollner
Alderman Kevin McAfee
Alderman Marc W. Plamondon
Alderman Brian S. McCarthy
Alderman Robert A. Dion
Alderman Timothy B. Nickerson
Alderman Kevin E. Gage

AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO TAKE ACTIONS NECESSARY FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DOWNTOWN NASHUA MAIN STREET PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND ACKNOWLEDGING THE NEED TO FINANCE THE PROGRAM IN THE FUTURE IF THE CITY IS DESIGNATED A NATIONAL MAIN STREET COMMUNITY AND A SIMILAR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT IS MADE BY THE DOWNTOWN BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND ONE OR MORE CORPORATE SPONSORS

Alan Manoian

Throughout his presentation Mr. Manoian refers to slides being shown in the Chamber.

I want to thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to come here tonight before you. I want to say I am here tonight as a proud representative staff member of the Community Development Division, and I'm here tonight to give a bit of a presentation, and hopefully to engage in a dialog with all of you about an opportunity that has presented itself now to us. When we look at the timing of our downtown program, which began, in terms of the city program, in September of 1994, it is hard to say that was 7+ years ago. Things have gone well, but we are prepared, I feel, to take the downtown to the next phase, to the next plateau if you will. In order to do this we really have to start discussing the organizational structure of downtown and what sort of management entity exists, and how much better we can do.

I want to let you folks know before I start, I do have slides here, but this is not my typical slide presentation. I will not be speaking or referring to the slides in particular. I will be showing these slides to affect you with certain visual impressions, certain heritage icons – they are just there to set a certain mood and tone as we begin.

We have a certain heritage and culture here in Nashua, and this culture goes deep. We sometimes think we are different from those that came before us, but heritage and culture is something that really sticks. I would like to read this to you, which is from the Nashua Telegraph of January 3, 1863 entitled Nashua Thoughts by the thinker thereof. "1863 – Nashua is a seat of industry like the seat of a shoemaker. If anyone sits down here it is to work. We contrive everything so it will facilitate work. Success is the watchword of our people so they love more to raise corn than roses. They have much taste for furnishing instruments of utility, but care little

about contributing to the luxuries of life. One can scarcely come among us without observing a lack of adornments. No monument stands to allure the youth to deeds of honor in youth and art. We must be patient and ever remember people must first become wealthy and then they strive to become magnificent. Being young in years, we may be more honest than splendid. “ I really love that because it keys into a lot of what we are saying in Nashua. We are a very functional, utilitarian place. We approach things in a very prudent, methodical conservative way. I think this is why our downtown program has been very successful. What we did, through the city program, unlike perhaps some of our sister cities of Lowell, MA, what is going on in Manchester and other places, we did not do the big fix approach. Most downtowns that are really having trouble as ours was in 1993 and 1994 you sort of decide well we need to build some big great thing and this will draw everyone back to downtown and change – this is what they have done in Lowell with the Tsongas Arena and what they are attempting to do in Manchester with the Civic Center. We did not do this. We are more honest than splendid. We did this in a very honest down to earth way. We built our downtown from the sidewalks up. In my early years starting out, most of my time was spent on the sidewalks. We had no budget. There was no budget for this program or this amazing effort at this time, and in retrospect that worked out pretty darn well because what our downtown was rebuilt on were relationships. It is relationships that have dictated the results of what we have gotten. We are really engrained out there. The thing I am most part of is a lot of other cities when new business come in they have to have a lot of regulations and hammering to make sure that they do their signage right and to make sure they do their façade right. Here now we have engrained the culture down there from the grass roots up so that when new businesses come in they will actually call us. We don’t have to call them. They will say we are here, we want to make sure that we do this right, we see everyone else doing it right and we want to too. This has been done very well. It really has been done from the bottom up.

When we started out it really was done out of the Community Development Division. Immediately as we assessed the situation here in Nashua 7 years ago – if I might say prior to working here for the City of Nashua I was employed by the City of Lowell. I was the Main Street Program Manager for the City of Lowell. We were a Main Street community. I came here to Nashua fully understanding the methodology because this is where I am from. I came here with my bible, of course, which is the great handbook of the National Main Street Center. The program, the job description when I first arrived here the way it was set out was something that was really defined as a person being a coordinator, seeing who was going to do what, and then just trying to help. We really set about rewriting the whole position really based on the main street methodology. I was just looking at the very first article that was ever written up about me when I got here. I said in that article, I ended with it, and I was trying to in a very subtle way start expressing and communicating the main street methodology – I ended that article by saying “Well, I am here. I know everyone is looking to this new person to turn downtown around, but the fact is one person can’t do this. Of course not.” I said, “This will take an effort that is going to include not only downtown business people, this is not a program, this is not an initiative that is about just downtown business people. This is the main street methodology.” I said in that article “This will take not only business people, it will take teachers, students, religious leaders, historic preservationists, right through the whole gambit.” This is what we started articulating.

We set off and started doing some very creative, high-octane things out there. We got people turned onto the program. This is how Destination Downtown came about. We hoped that this would happen and it did. Destination Downtown came together. It came together as a volunteer based organization, and they worked in partnership with what we were doing. That organization has existed now since 1996, and these folks should be commended. What they have done and the burden that they have carried over these years because what we did starting in '97 – we really started off doing a lot of the events. Of course, it was the Community Development Division that created and introduced the winter holiday stroll, which is now a part of our culture in this city – an important ritual and tradition. We created and introduced the Taste of Downtown Nashua. We created and introduced the Spring Awakening Festival, which is a wonderful cultural affairs festival. We created and introduced the Main Street Twist the Night Away. We created and introduced the Nashua River Harvest and Heritage Festival. Folks got involved in this, and what we decided in 1997 was it was time for these folks in the community, which they wanted to do, to start executing these events. They were successful. Sponsorship was pretty well with them. People loved it. We're doing this because we determined here in City Hall at that time when Mayor Davidson started his administration – because I did in fact start under Mayor Wagner's administration – that we were not just going to focus on doing special events because again we were not going to have any budget for this program, we were not going to have any staff, and it was going to be me doing the thing the best I could. This was fine, and we made an agreement out there. We had some large meetings, and everyone in the community agreed, yes, let Destination Downtown start conducting these events. We started going forward with building the riverfront park – completing doing the redevelopment of railroad square, etc. We started doing these projects that urban planners would do things that volunteers were not going to go out there and do. This has been the case now going on.

Destination Downtown has carried the weight of a lot of these things. We had hoped that group would blossom and not just be doing only promotional if you will marketing initiatives and special events but getting involved in maybe some other activities – business development activities, business marketing activities, cooperative, promotional efforts, working on some historic preservation – becoming a downtown root. The fact is though that the folks that have done it they're burnt out. There is nothing unusual about this. It happens everywhere, and they are sort of getting to a point now where volunteers can only keep going for so long. The Winter Holiday Stroll, they raised \$12,000 – every year for that. It has become quite a thing.

The National Main Street Program was created in 1982. The National Main Street Program is a subsidiary, if you will, of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Main Street Program is about historic preservation and economic development. I want you all to understand that. This is what the whole methodology is built upon. This is really capturing the two emerging trends in our society today. The emergence of greater interest in sense of place and the emergence of spirit of community. What is the difference between place and community? A place without something that makes it distinctive and special is simply a location on a map. Community – what is the distinction between a municipality and a community? Think of a community as a community of memories. That is what a community ultimately is – our shared

memories and something that we have in common that binds us together. This is about quality of life. Think about sense of place being about the physical, the built environment in terms of quality of life. Think about spirit of community about being the human side of quality of life. This gets to the heart of economic development and sustaining a powerful downtown economic program. What is it the nexus of convergence of sense of place and spirit of community? It is historic preservation.

If any of you think of what makes us have a nice sense of place, a good type of place I want to be in we all know in our guts it is really about the type of built environment we're in. Sense of place is about structures that are absolutely distinctive and one of a kind. When I come here to downtown Nashua I know the memory I will have in my head of downtown Nashua until I die will be the Hunt Memorial Library Building. That building is one of a kind. It is our signature and identity. A pedestrian based environment – an environment that is conducive to social interaction. This is the sense of place we are trying to create. When you look at a community you want a community where you have a spirit of community where people have some type of a common bond. The thing with Nashua is that has been so challenging for us here in the city with downtown redevelopment is half the population of Nashua, these folks were not born here. Many of their children have been born here, but where is that connection in sense of community? This downtown effort is more than just about downtown. Frankly, we're at a point now with downtown that if we walked out right now – down Main Street we have no vacancies on our street level. When vacancies do occur now it is a very competitive scene for who will get that space.

We launched this initiative seven years ago because downtown was vacant and it was frightening. We've done a commendable and excellent job working with the business community trying to reposition this place in the marketplace with a new image/identity and we've done this. We are very successful at it, but the business community now is in good shape out there. Anyone that is a good businessperson is doing very well for themselves, and downtown Nashua in terms of a consumer destination/business place our reputation is pretty solid. The National Main Street Program is built on the four-point approach of organization, design, marketing, and economic restructuring. Up until 1996 our state did not have a Main Street center. We couldn't even have been involved or participated in a National Main Street Program. In early '95, a group of individuals started an effort to bring the National Main Street Program here to our state. Just so that I can help you understand my interest and involvement from the beginning I actually found two letters here from way back when – one dated August 28, 1995 from Jeff Harris who was the field representative of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which says “Dear Alan, thank you for taking the time to meet with me on Thursday and give me a thorough tour of downtown Nashua. It appears that you are having a positive impact on raising awareness of preservation on Main Street, and I hope that the momentum continued.” Well it did. “We are continuing to work towards a statewide Main Street Program in New Hampshire, and will keep you informed of any developments. Barbara Pressley and Chris Klaas who is an architect in Concord are working to identify some potential sponsors, and Peter Brink may return to the state this fall to make a presentation to them.” I then found this letter dated October 10, 1995 from Inherit New Hampshire. “Dear Alan, members of the New Hampshire Main Street Task Force

cordially invite you to attend a meeting and lunch for potential Main Street sponsors and underwriters. Your presence will be important to show the enthusiasm for such a program to be brought to your community. The purpose of the meeting is to familiarize major institutions already engaged in community reinvestment work with the Main Street Program, etc.” We participated actually in the formation of this in the early days of the state. They did in fact establish the state center. It is established in partnership with the Community Development Finance Authority up in Concord, but they have great corporate sponsors of the likes of Public Service of New Hampshire. They were actually the lead corporate sponsor in this effort. Fleet Bank, many of the banks in the state, Granite Bank, etc. so they had great corporate support. They’ve formed and established the New Hampshire State Main Street Center. They were after us early on and were sort of interested in us getting involved, but we were really rocking and rolling down here in those years, and we felt that we were okay for now and moving ahead. This was the case.

A number of communities have in fact won the competition and have been selected and designated as National Main Street communities. This is a competitive process. We do not just become a Main Street Program because we wish to. It is a competition. It is a statewide competition. Who has won this competition over the last few years – Berlin, Claremont, Tilton, Littleton, Lancaster, Derry, Milford, Wilton, etc. You notice they haven’t gotten any cities yet. They are very anxious to take the next step to see cities get involved. This is a competition. It is really about a competition for a true and general level of spirited community and sense of place. You have to demonstrate some very powerful ways that we do have a strong community here in Nashua, and this is a community effort. Our downtown is about our community in every form and fashion. We’re at a point now though in this process where this is not just about helping the downtown business people; it is about creating a sustainable economy for our city as we go into the future. Destination Downtown has done an extraordinary, super human job as volunteers – Philip Scotsas, Alla Vatallaro, Karen Goddard and the many others through the years. The point is though that we have been so very successful and we have done so very well that it is time for us to take the next step. You may think that Destination Downtown may be a little concerned that we have our organization, what will happen to us. The important thing was to have meetings with them and discuss this with them. We have done this over the past few months. They fully understand at this point that it is time for them to take the next step and to move on.

What does it mean to participate in this competition? The interesting thing is that for the past few years they would do this annually. Every year you had a short at this competition, and by the way they just select three communities each year. They have in fact been so successful with the program in so many communities have won designation that they need to take a bit of a break. After this year’s competition they are not going to have a competition for the next two years, which means if we do not win this competition this year, we as a community win this competition this year, we will not have an opportunity to do this for another three years. Can we afford to wait three years? Why should we wait three years? Why can’t we win this competition? We have some tough competition though let me tell you. We had to do the first step. I did in fact invite Kathy LaPlante who is the Executive Director of the state program here

to Nashua a couple of months ago. She did a presentation, an excellent presentation to get us a little bit gunned up about the whole thing. That was the first important step. The next step was in fact to attend the application workshop. If you as a community to not apply and attend the application workshop you can't go forward with it. The application workshop as it so happened was held in late November. I attended the application workshop. A representative of Destination Downtown attended the workshop. A representative from the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce attended the workshop, and a downtown businessperson attended the workshop. The four of us went and we did this. At this time I would like to commend the Greater Nashua Chamber of Commerce for doing that, and attending it and investigating it. The workshop was quite interesting. There were a lot of communities there. This year they are only going to select two cities out of the three communities. Our toughest competition will be Concord. They are going full tilt. There were four of us registered for the workshop. There were 20 of them representing the school system, historic preservation community, municipality, Chamber of Commerce, Convention of Visitors Bureau, everything – cultural affairs, performing arts community, etc.

What does it mean then for us to do this, and believe me they have worked this out over the years. They make it tough, and it is supposed to be tough. It has to be tough. Here is the application itself – 90 questions, interesting questions. I have been in this field career for ten years of my life, and I think I know it all? I'm going to have trouble answering these questions. It is really tough stuff. The thing that they want to see is the municipality itself is interested in backing this effort. If you are a community with a population of greater than 5,000, and we surely are at 87,000 today, you are required to hire a full time director for this organization. You have to demonstrate a proper budget. We are a major city. We have to demonstrate a proper budget. They want to see it as a three-way partnership, which is so right on, and there is no other way to do it. They want to see the municipality involved financially as well as with resources, staff, etc. They want to see the downtown business community with the same commitment – financial, resources, everything, and they want to see a good large corporate partner in the community. The first step is for the municipality I feel to take the lead and to demonstrate our vision and commitment to our sustainable economy in the future. I guess I'm here tonight to make you all feel comfortable and understand where we go with this.

We have to submit a letter of intent by the end of January, and it is simply that. It is a letter of intent. They want to see in that letter of intent some type of a legitimate effort that we are going forward securing the initial funding we need and starting to organization ourselves as a community. This is our first hurdle to go forward and demonstrate that. It does not mean that funding must be secured and appropriated by that time. They just want to see that we have initiated a legitimate effort to investigate it and go forward to participate in this competition. This is the first hurdle is to get the letter of intent and feel confident as a community that we intend to do this as a community. This is where my work comes in now over the next couple of weeks. Here in City Hall we all feel comfortable and will go forward, but I must over the next couple of weeks get a good sense from the private sector and the rest of the community if they intend to follow our lead. Once you submit that letter of intent they will look at it. If they feel what they see in that letter of intent is okay they will say fine, go, you may submit your application. The

application has to be filled out and completed by March 28th. That is the next hurdle. By March 28th we have to have our entire community turned on to this in a big and powerful way. My director and I had quite a dynamic discussion about this today. We're committed to making a 110% effort. Kathy and I both agreed on that we feel that when you do this and get the community involved in this we cannot do this half way. If we're going to do this we are going all the way – total commitment, total focus, 100 hours a week, we will be victorious, we will win the competition. That is why we are in the competition. Over the next few weeks – between now and March 28th – I have to go out and speak before the rotaries, the Lion's Club, the Exchange Club The Friendship Club, our hospitals, our schools, corporations, everywhere. We have got to get people turned onto this in a powerful way. We need all of our Aldermen together if we choose as a city to go forward and do this. We can get and demonstrate that we are partners in this. We will know, we have to know by March 28th if we have a financial commitment from our two other partners. If we don't this can be discarded and we will know as a community that we don't have what it takes. I don't want that to happen. I think we do have what it takes here in Nashua, but we are a functional utilitarian place and we are more honest than splendid sometimes. It is time for us to be splendid and magnificent. Can we do this? I think we can. I am prepared to dedicate and I think we in Community Development that this is what I will be doing for the next 2 ½ months of my life. If we're going to be in the competition we have to have run a commendable race. We have to go into the competition as a real thoroughbred racehorse. We can do it in the community, but I really believe that it will be we in the city – city hall if you will. We have to do this.

Ultimately what are we looking at for an appropriation in the budget? They want to see a three-year commitment. We must demonstrate a three-year commitment rock solid to even be considered for it. Once we are done with that three-year commitment we are not in any way locked into this after that. Frankly, and they know it and it is in here, if after three years we do this and this wonderful organization comes together and we're doing these things, if it is not at that point ready to absolutely fund itself and support itself it deserves to die right then after three years and then that is it we go on and do what we must do out of Community Development. It will not die after three years. We will have one of the most successful Main Street Programs in the nation. Just so you all know the commitment is for three years legally and in every other way. That is it. If we choose not to go forward we are not on the hook in any way to go forward with it financially. We have to demonstrate the three years though, and we have to get our two other partners to do so. The main street methodology again I hope you all appreciate is historic preservation. It is about what all of these images represent in our community. We have got to preserve and restore what is left in tact. This is what happened to our iron foundry, one of the most important structures in our nation in terms of technology and industrialization. Our monuments, our rituals, our spirit of community, our community of memory, these images that I am showing have nothing to do with buying and selling goods. We're taking the next step. We have done a good job folks and it is time for the business community and the Chamber of Commerce to worry about the downtown businesses. It is time for us to worry about our community and our sense of place and heritage. These young people want desperately to be involved in civic efforts to create sense of place and spirit of community. There is no entity vehicle for them to do it in. Our Main Street Program will be that vehicle. These kids stopped at

a dead end. They are ready to go, they are rearing to go out in the community. I don't show this picture because of the plaza. This is our time right guys the '60s when we were kids, that is our heritage and our 20th century story to be preserved and told. What will happen to these structures? Do we truly have the management entity to really safeguard these things and invest in them? We don't right now. We go from this to this – look what these people have done out there. We could not have reached this plateau. This cannot be all there is now and we are done.

How will we use these resources? What will become of these? The National Main Street Program will give us the prestige and stature and structure to do it. How can we keep up with everything that is out there that needs to be done? The opportunities are extraordinary and if we don't seize them these opportunities in the next three years – they may be gone. The oldest standing church in our city and it was designed by Asher Benjamin – the father of American architecture. We have not touched, scratched the surface of the significance of Nashua, the story we have to tell, the resources that is our civic obligation as Americans to preserve – we have something special here in Nashua. One of my tours – many tours with these children – how can they participate in sense of place and spirit of community if we don't have a Main Street Program that grows beyond what we have now, these kids are simply not going to know how to get involved. We might lose this structure. It is coming apart. It will take a community to save this building. Not a Mayor, not a couple of Aldermen, not Alan Manoian, it will take a whole community to save this building. Whose business is it? Is it just the church's, is it just our French Canadian community? No! Look what we can do when we wish to. We are just scratching the surface the last few years. One of the most important buildings in our region – if you look at it and think about it. We need the National Main Street Program as part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. It is time for us to reposition this program. It is time for us to help the business community. We have done a good job at going out there to making sure that it is that much better to sell jewelry, furniture out there, and oriental rugs, etc., but now it is time for us to start doing this for our people and the next generation. This is what it is about. There is our beautiful new brick memorial walkway. People go there now and this is where our community of memories is being recreated. Half of the people in our community have that because their ancestors have been there and they feel it. Half of our population does not have it. It is our obligation and duty to create a vehicle for them to start being a part of that community of memory. This has become a wonderful place of humanity and civility. It was not four years ago. It was a rough, dangerous place.

Is this about business and selling goods? Yes and no. Here is our community of memories. This is the other reason that we must take this to another level. Do you see that structure there? The eyesore? What is it? It's nothing. That is the oldest standing structure in our entire downtown, an authentic 1842 – the first period of the mill town, pre civil war, it sat on East Pearl Street, and this is what we did to it. The guy who is a good friend of mine that owns the building could have a little private parking lot for himself right next door to his building, and I do not blame him for this. I assure you that we as a city allowed this to happen as well because we didn't have the big picture. In my entire career here, 7 years, there are three things that are the most sorrowful days of my life in this city, and this was one of those three that I carry with me to this

day, and I still have one of the timbers in my office that I keep to remember that this will never happen again in our magnificent city. If we don't take the next step and get a sophisticated organization it will happen again. Bringing our community and our treasures back home – our heritage icons. I hear we will be going through an exercise soon with the city flag my dear Aldermen. Is that so? I will make a bold statement right now. I know that we are going to do this through the school system. I have been working with a lot of kids in schools in the city. Most of the children of Nashua are historically illiterate of our city history. They are. It is a fact. To do a city flag you have to understand your heritage icons and everything your city is about. We need to launch this program to get the school system involved in an organization like this as well. It will be up to these kids ten years from now. That smoke stack was going to be demolished. Broad Street Park was being punched through. Community Development said that is our heritage icon, and it is. It represents something very powerful. That is what this program will be about. That is what downtown is about right there. Three Greek guys that grew up in the old neighborhood on West Pearl Street. This is what is home, and this is what is real.

Here is the challenge. It is intimidating. It is scary. It looks like a mountain I am looking up at. We can win this competition if we as a community want to win the competition. I would like to go out and be the – use me as whatever – I want to go out and really be the person that physically gets in people's faces and gets them excited. We as a city have to go forward though and do the appropriation to set the standard and to start off. I think it is time for us to take the step. Our downtown right now is good and everyone knows it. We have a good downtown. The question I pose to all of you is do you want to have a great downtown. Complacency will kill us out there right now, and if all it was about was making sure the business people are making money and doing well, then we have done that – mission accomplished. If that is all this was about well then I guess we are done. I don't think that is what this was about though, and I know from everything – I have had people in the community say to me over the last few years that we have to take this to the next level now and become magnificent. We can win the competition. Thank you.

Alderman Cote

I was with you until you got too close to the end. I support many of the efforts in terms of what you are doing, but I think it is important for us to be careful and probably not over editorialize some of the things that you want. One of the things that makes the city vibrant is some of the changes that have occurred. There have been a lot of positive things that have occurred. As much as I feel your pain in terms of that particular structure that was taken down, there are issues I think that are beyond the city in terms of some of those things that occur. The city can't insert itself into areas where it may not necessarily always be appropriate. I share your enthusiasm over all. I would caution you a bit on your editorializing, particularly on the flag. To suggest that our children in this community are historically illiterate I guess is a bit harsh for me to be able to accept. What better way to get them involved in this community then to have them be a part of establishing something as important as our city flag.

Alan Manoian

I concur with you.

Alderman Cote

Thank you. I appreciate that, but I would suggest that one thing that we don't want to do is have children in this community that are historically illiterate, hence the reason for getting them involved in that process. My suggestion Mr. Manoian would be that if we are going to embark on this program and make it successful that we had ought to on the merits of the program and not personally editorialize our feelings into that process.

Chair McCarthy

Are there other questions from member of the committee regarding the Main Street Program?

Alderman Cardin

I had a couple of the same concerns that were brought up last night. I don't know how much information you have at this point or if there is anything in the book of how tos on how you go about hiring your executive director and that type of thing. I know those are some of the concerns that were brought up at last night's budget session, and I didn't know if you had any more thoughts on that or anything else to share with us tonight.

Alan Manoian

In terms of ultimately selecting the executive director of this proposed organization?

Alderman Cardin

That was one of the concerns that came up last night.

Alan Manoian

Ultimately, that director would be hired. We would start interviewing people based on or done through the Board of Directors that would be brought together in order to establish the organization. That is why I think it would be important for this organization to have a very broad board that represents the entire community so that when they in fact go through the process of determining who will be the executive director that person represents the interests of the entire community. It would be those folks ultimately that would then determine who the executive director should be, and I would hope, of course, that the city would have membership on that Board of Directors. We would obviously have a say because, of course, it very much impacts our public efforts.

Alderman Cardin

One of the other concerns that was brought up was the commitment by the other parties. I know that was a big concern. Do we have any idea of who corporate sponsors may be or even any type of commitment from the people downtown? Is there any of that going on yet?

Alan Manoiian

As of right now, no. That is what we will launch. We came out of the application workshop in the end of November, and again I did describe the four of us, coming out of the application workshop we sat back to see what they might do and who they might start talking with. We got the impression that they really felt that we would probably be the most appropriate to do that. We're ready to launch that effort tomorrow morning literally.

Alderman Cardin

I support this. Don't get me wrong I just know there were some concerns about the structure and how things were going to pan out.

Alan Manoiian

In fact, if those two partners do not emerge through the process we simply will not be submitting our application on March 28th and that will be it, the process would be terminated.

Chair McCarthy

I would also comment – I heard those concerns last night – there are lots of entities that could be potential sponsors. There is one city and if the Community Development Department went out and started soliciting funding and the first time they do that they will be asked the question what has the city committed the answer is we don't know yet, we're not sure if we are committing to anything we want to see what the response is you will not come back with a nickel. The leadership in obtaining that partnership has to come and if it doesn't then we can write the program off.

Kathy Hersh

With respect to the questions that were asked last night, we will be providing a written response .. tape flipped ...

Alderman McAfee

Can you anticipate what the financial commitment will be?

Kathy Hersh

The financial commitment that we're asking for from the city will be \$40,000 a year for three years. Then there needs to be a fairly equal match to that from the downtown business community and then another third from one or more corporate sponsors.

Alderman Cote

Would that mean that everybody needs to go in \$40,000 so you need to find a corporate sponsor who would jump into this for a period of three years at \$40,000 a year?

Alan Manoian

That is correct. They have to jump in for the three-year commitment.

Chair McCarthy

That doesn't necessarily have to be one corporate sponsor right? You could find several that together would be ..

Alan Manoian

That is correct. It could be a collaborative effort.

Chair McCarthy

The current status of the resolution is that the Budget Committee last evening held it. I would actually like to see us send it back to the full Board contingent upon their recommendation this evening so that if the Board is happy with the answers to the questions we can pass it next Tuesday. I think that we can argue about holding it and all that, but the answer is we basically either decided next Tuesday to do this or not. It is that simple.

MOTION BY ALDERMAN CARDIN TO RECOMMEND FINAL PASSAGE

ON THE QUESTION

Chair McCarthy

Last night we were discussing whether one of the paragraphs should be stricken out of the language because the current wording in the resolution implies that we can't have any commitment beyond three years if we want to. I think it might be good to not, although the intent is to have the commitment be three years, we wouldn't want to allow ourselves not to be able to extend that if we got to that point and so desire. I think it is on the first page, third paragraph.

MOTION BY ALDERMAN NICKERSON TO AMEND BY DELETING THE THIRD

PARAGRAPH
MOTION CARRIED

MOTION BY ALDERMAN CARDIN FOR FINAL PASSAGE AS AMENDED
MOTION CARRIED

NEW BUSINESS – ORDINANCES – None

POSSIBLE NON-PUBLIC SESSION

DISCUSSION

Kathy Hersh

I would like to thank Mr. Manoian for the compelling presentation. I want to inform you that I was at the Nashua Regional Planning Commission Executive Committee meeting, which is why I was late. I apologize. One thing that might be of interest to the Board of Aldermen is that the household hazardous waste collection program, which has been ongoing for several years and has had seven collections a year for several years is now being reduced to four collections a year because of the increased expense of disposing of the household hazardous waste. If the program is extremely successful they are looking for ways that they can increase the budget so that they can increase the number of collections. For me, personally, I feel that this is something that has been very positive and beneficial to our community, and I am hoping that solutions can be found to bring that back up to 5-7 collections.

Alderman McAfee

There is a proposed subdivision that is right next to Parish Hill. I had some constituents concerned to say it mildly of what another 76-unit subdivision will do to their community. Of course, they are a little cautious of what the impact will be on them, and also the school systems in general. I think the calculation is 1.5 children per household. Within the next couple of years there is an additional – off Pine Wood Road, which is the Dunloggin subdivision there are 21 houses and this is 76. We're looking at 200 units, 300 more children in the school system.

Chair McCarthy

It is actually .74.

Alderman McAfee

Legally I guess there isn't a heck of a lot of leverage that we have going in front of the Zoning Board looking for a variance to change the density because it splits on R9, R18, and they would like to turn it into an R12. In doing so, it will reduce their number by one house. If they were built out the R9 and the R18 it would get 77 houses. If they go to an R12, 12,000 sq. ft. lots,

they will get 76 houses. I think the owners in purchasing their property adjacent to an R18 zone had expectations that they were protected by the R18 zone meaning rear yard setbacks of minimal of 40 feet. I think that is something that could be maintained if we held to that. I think that is not a ought to meet by the developer. I would be interested in any other points that you might have.

Mike Lowe

If I remember right – this is off the top of my head of course – there is something when you do a development that a certain percentage of the land must be set aside for the city. I think it is 5 or 10%.

Chair McCarthy

Only if you are doing it under the provisions of the clustering sections of the ordinance.

Mike Lowe

I remember when I was living down in Sunset Heights there was a little park in there that nobody ever uses that much where they had to set this back. This goes way back into the '70s.

Chair McCarthy

They were probably doing it under the clustering provisions. There is a provision where if you are in an R30 zone you can ask to use the R18 lot sizes and provide significant open space.

Mike Lowe

They are doing this here.

Chair McCarthy

They are asking for a variance on the lot size. It is a fairly complex issue. I am not convinced that there is reason to grant a variance for that. I think ultimately knowing what I know now about zoning in this city at least we could do a much better job for both the developer and the abutters by taking a creative look at how to do something more flexible on that property. I would like to see us pursue that.

Mike Lowe

I concur.

Kathy Hersh

Yes, I am very familiar with this proposal. It is before the ZBA for a dimensional variance because as you said they are trying to get a variance from the R9 versus the R18 and make it all the same. Our contention in Community Development is that there is reasonable use of the property as it is currently zoned and so therefore the test of hardship is not met, which is what the test needs to be for them to get a variance on Tuesday night. It is our feeling that a rezoning, which is basically what this is, is something that should come before the Board of Aldermen and the Planning Board as opposed to going to a relief board although they have the right in the world to do that. They have the right certainly to go to the ZBA. I agree wholeheartedly with Alderman McCarthy. I think that what we really should do is sit down with this particular developer. I know that the community self, the neighborhood itself, is meeting on this to determine what they would like to see on this site. I would like to sit down and see if there is some common ground, some way of protecting the parts of the site that are important to the neighborhood and the community. If you drive on Broad Street past the site you will see there is a nice field along Broad Street that really has a character to it that I think is important to that area and then as it goes up the hill there might be areas that are more appropriate to put houses and still provide those buffers along those neighborhood edges. I think there is opportunity there. We have done this in the past as a city very successfully so we will be looking at that.

Alderman McAfee

I still have this meeting at Birch Hill Elementary School at 7:00 p.m. this Friday. I have asked the attorney, Attorney Prunier, to be there, but he is traveling this weekend. I believe he is having another meeting Sunday, but I am not sure where or when. My meeting is on at Birch Hill at 7:00 p.m. if you would like to come.

Kathy Hersh

Thank you.

Alderman McAfee

Do you have any other ideas about it?

Alderman Cote

I have to agree with both Alderman McCarthy and Director Hersh that is the best approach. Particular with that attorney, I think he would be very willing to work with you on that. He has a demonstrated track record particularly in my ward and the adjacent ward in terms of doing that when we have looked at proposed development sites and what is in the best interest of not only the developer but also the surrounding neighborhoods. Clearly he has a split zone piece of property. It will be a very difficult argument to suggest that there is hardship in there when the property is usable so the effort of trying to make it pass before the ZBA is going to be a struggle at best. I would believe that it would be within the developer's best interest to sit with you and the neighbors, and to come up with something that is appropriate. Clearly he wants to have a

development up there, he will have a development of some sort, and it would be better for him as is demonstrated by him going before the ZBA to have one that is all of a consistent type of a layout. It takes a lot of effort, work, struggling, and compromise to find some sort of any agreement, but the best approach might be with your abutters when you meet with them is to find out what would be an agreeable solution to this with them. Obviously they will be looking for buffers. They will be looking for a development that isn't going to detract from the value of their homes and will keep the continuity of the neighborhood and all of those things so look at the plan, do somewhat of a charette with them if you can't have the developer or the attorney there and find out how you can accomplish that with them and then see if you can meet with them. I have found that generally has been the best approach in making both parties happy.

Alderman McAfee

Thank you.

Chair McCarthy

At our next meeting I would like to have some discussion of what sort of things we would like to take up in this term. I think if we come up with a list of topics we want to address and perhaps Kathy we could prevail upon you to talk about what your department is going to be doing – we are in the middle of having finished the master plan and going onto a process of looking at getting the zoning ordinances redone. There will be a lot of challenges there in terms of what areas we want to address in terms of innovative zoning techniques, etc. In the meantime, we still have a host of problems with our existing zones that we can't ignore for the time that it will take us to get something else drafted. If you would spend some time thinking between now and then of what things we would like to take up we can come up with a list and try to get some ideas on what sort of things we want to introduce and start debate on.

ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY ALDERMAN COTE TO ADJOURN
MOTION CARRIED

The meeting was declared adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Alderman Scott A. Cote
Committee Clerk