

Approved Sept. 11, 2014

**CITY OF ROCKLAND
COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES FOR JULY 17, 2014**

Board Present: Chair Valli Geiger, Thomas Keedy, Adam Ackor, Terry Pinto, Ann Morris, Eileen Wilkinson, and Alternate Amy Files. Mayor Larry Pritchett, ex-officio member attended.

Board Absent: Audra Caler-Bell

Staff Present: City Attorney Kevin Beal, Recording Secretary Kara Cushman

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 P.M.

Previous Meeting Minutes:

ACTION: Member Morris made a motion, seconded by Member Wilkinson to pass June 26, 2014 COMPS Commission meeting minutes as written. VOTE: 6-0-0

ACTION: Member Ackor made a motion, seconded by Member Keedy to pass June 12, 2014 COMPS Commission meeting minutes as written. VOTE: 6-0-0

New Business:

Chair Geiger discussed the upcoming Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) meeting scheduled on Thursday, July 24, 2014. Mayor Pritchett requested the COMPS Commission to attend this educational meeting as it will include a round table discussion with Mr. John Rocca, a consultant from the Canadian Maritimes to talk about the waterfront and downtown development.

The COMPS Commission agreed to schedule a joint meeting with EDAC and present August 7th and 28th with a starting time of 6 pm as potential meeting dates. COMPS Commission will still have one other regular meeting scheduled in August on either the 14th or 28th based on what day EDAC chooses for the joint meeting.

Old Business:

Chair Geiger asked to review the moratorium. She said that City Council on 1st reading voted to postpone Councilor Dickerson's Ordinance #16 Chapter 19, Section 19-304 Downtown Zone (DT) Height Regulations to February 9, 2015. This is due to City Council passing Ordinance Amendment #20 moratorium of Site Plan Applications for new or expanded buildings over 50 feet tall in portions of the DT Zone south of Park Street and Park Drive. She also asked if the COMPS Commission's work of the moratorium should be placed on all downtown or step downs for other areas.

Member Pinto said the whole idea of the moratorium is to allow time to make recommendations. The ordinance is written stronger than it needs to be. We have a preconceived notion that the height should be 50 feet. If it should be 50 feet, what are the reasons and why? He said we have to closely look at our position on blocking views. What are the differences between 100 feet and 50 feet? By reducing height to 50 feet, the only corridors that open up are the buildings behind it that are 65 feet.

Chair Geiger said we need to address resident's concerns and distrust of the City when it comes to commercial businesses coming in to residential areas.

Alternate Member Files said it makes sense to look at form-based code and that it's not all about blocking views, but rather the comfort of the residents and the relation of corners and gateways.

Member Pinto said we should look at the street width, type of landscaping, directions of the streets north, south, east, and west. In certain areas, the streets should be wider or narrower. Also, it's important to look at the economic impact.

Resident Charlie Jordan said in some of Camden's town zoning, they allow for more height if you take the width of the building in a little bit. There is a little give and take to still provide views.

Member Wilkinson said we want to avoid monoliths. The buildings should be about proportion, balance, and aesthetics. We want to avoid what happened with the hotel where the proportions are overbearing for itself and the neighborhood.

Chair Geiger said the Colorado Springs plan talks about proportions with transition zones, so we can see visually how it will work. Then it steps down when you get to residential.

Member Pinto asked if we could get professional help with planning this. City Attorney Beal said COMPS Commission would have 90 days from September 10th to make any changes to the ordinance amendment to present to City Council.

ACTION: Member Morris made a motion, seconded by Member Ackor to approve Ordinance Amendment #20 as written. VOTE: 6-0-0

Member Pinto said the trend is coming back for allowable residential, but not commercial businesses in residential zones. Past zoning created apartments as a buffer between residential and commercial. An increase in residential in downtown makes both businesses and residential successful.

Member Keedy said it is important to look at residential parking. Mayor Pritchett said that we can't talk about mixed-use zoning unless we work with parking, too. If it's not in the plan, it

won't work. Member Pinto said we should look at all parking and uses. Night parking differs from day parking. Commercial parking could be available to residential at night.

Chair Geiger redirected the Commission to discuss the DT Zone and Tillson Avenue Area Overlay Zone (TAAOZ).

Member Morris felt that the second point under Section C Standards was contradicting. She also asked who defines exceptional design.

Chair Geiger said it does a good job at going back and seeing where we failed and how to create thriving, enlivened public streets that are safe. Penetration creates eyes on the streets. Member Pinto said that blank walls makes blank streets and they're not friendly. We have to consider the function of the buildings.

Mayor Pritchett said this defines a lot of Main Street as it currently is. If buildings were to burn down or be torn down, this would address any new buildings going in. He asked if we need to have buildings all look alike.

City Attorney Beal said this is not the intent of the Planning Board. The intent is to identify elements in existing architectural designs. Most historic districts like modern buildings because it more defines the historic buildings.

Alternate Member Files said she sees a lot of arbitrary numbers in this and that we are strictly making everything look the same. She said that COMPS Commission shouldn't go through this as they will get hung up on the details. She suggested taking a longer time to look at this and to not respond to this right now.

City Attorney Beal said that procedurally there are problems with the existing code, but if this ordinance is over the top, can we get a simpler fix by looking at the original text.

Member Keedy said the Colorado Springs plan had subparts in downtown. He asked why we don't bundle Main Street with Tillson Ave.

Chair Geiger said Rockland has small land mass and there is room on Winter Street and Tillson Ave due to the space being underdeveloped.

Member Pinto said these standards stop developers from coming.

Chair Geiger said to look at Camden Rite Aid vs. Rockland Rite Aid. Camden demanded that the parking be in back and required landscaping. Member Pinto said that landscaping and setbacks should be established and that the ordinance can't be written too tightly.

Resident Jesse Butler said we need a mechanism written into this and craft something that is for future use. General conversation continued about abstract vs. specific numbers to be presented to the Planning Board.

City Attorney Beal said that the standards have to be clear for everyone: neighbors, boards, and businesses.

Member Keedy said we are still new looking at this with a form-based code perspective. We need to work out a process to get a sense of what it will look like and how it will work.

Mayor Pritchett recommended that the COMPS Commission look at Mitch Rasor's Waterfront Area Redevelopment Plan at the next meeting. General discussion about Winter Street continued.

City Attorney Beal advised COMPS Commission to not over extend themselves with the limited budget, looking at smart code and Camden Street, it may be over ambitious to work on the Downtown Overlay at the same time and that in the short term make smaller changes.

Mayor Pritchett said that with moving to form-based code, we may have to live with what we have with some changes for now. He suggested prioritizing projects.

Chair Geiger said the next meeting will be to discuss Camden Street. She asked members to come back having looked at Councilor Isganitis's proposal and the Winter Street report. City Attorney Beal said he would provide copies of the Waterfront Revitalization Plan.

Next Meeting tentatively set for July 31, 2014.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Cushman
Recording Secretary