

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES
June 23, 2017**

PRESENT: Chris Carley, Brad Hosmer, Councilor Brent Todd, and Claudia Walker

ABSENT: Tim Bernier, Councilor Byron Champlin, John Hoyt, Councilor Fred Keach, Bill Norton, and Stephen Heavener

STAFF: Carlos Baía, Deputy City Manager
Heather Shank, City Planner
Donna Muir, Community Development Specialist

GUESTS: Bob Carey, Attorney, Orr & Reno
Carl Moskey, Administrator, Concord Orthopaedics

A quorum was not achieved. As such, this was not an "official" meeting of EDAC. The members present chose to accept testimony for discussion purposes.

1. Presentation by Concord Orthopaedics Re: Proposed Pleasant Street Rezoning

Mr. Carley introduced Mr. Carey, who provided a brief overview of the proposed Pleasant Street rezoning request. He provided a zoning map showing the various districts in the area, as well as an enlarged map of the medium density residential area between the two institutional areas from Concord Hospital west and St. Paul's campus east. Mr. Carey stated that it is a good thing for the community to have a business doing so well and wanting to grow. The proposed project is a 20,000 square foot state-of-the-art day surgery center. Concord Orthopaedics purchased the property at 297 Pleasant Street and is proposing to have the area rezoned. The rezoning request encompasses approximately a 1/3 mile stretch of Pleasant Street.

Concord Orthopaedics has outgrown their current location, but would like to remain close to Concord Hospital. It is not feasible to construct a new facility on their current site while maintaining their practice during construction. Concord Orthopaedics has looked at other sites and in other towns, but they want to be close to Concord Hospital, especially for patient safety. The current buildings on the new site will be used and a new building will be built into the slope of the property. The rooftop will be vegetated and the new building will not be visible to road. The existing house and barn will be used to house staff and mechanical systems. The new surgical center would be used for day surgery for total joint replacement procedures. Approximately 18 procedures will be done per day requiring about 26 staff members.

According to Mr. Carey, Pleasant Street now sees about 9,000 vehicles per day. It is predicted that with natural growth by the medical community, it is estimated that 1,200 additional vehicles will travel Pleasant Street by the year 2035.

Mr. Carey reported that the medical community is one of the biggest private economic drivers in the City. Concord Hospital is the largest private employer in the City and the growth of the medical community will increase the tax base and make Concord more attractive for people to move here. This project is consistent with the City's growth priorities.

Mr. Carley opened the meeting to allow the public to speak.

Babette Rittmeyer, a resident at 292 Pleasant Street, offered that the size of the group in attendance today (three individuals) is not indicative of the neighbors who will be at the Planning Board meeting. She stated that most of the comments received by the City Council, Planning Board, and City Clerk's office have been against the rezoning of their neighborhood. She stated that the neighborhood has grown since the Birches came in for expansion. The City Council voted 11-2 on the expansion, but was against the rezoning of the neighborhood. Ms. Rittmeyer said that there are many young families in the neighborhood and the City shouldn't chase away these families to obtain more revenue and economic development. She explained that behind the homes are swing sets, pools, and animals and that this rezoning would change the residential character of the neighborhood, which is the last rural entryway into Concord. Ms. Rittmeyer said that she would be able to talk all morning about how she feels about this. She said that all the neighbors would be showing up at the Planning Board meeting, and that there has been lot of hours spent doing research.

Claudia Damon, a resident of 64 Fisk Road, stated that Fisk Road is part of this neighborhood with Pleasant Street. She said that there are many suitable sites for this project. Having affordable housing for young families and workers is important. Why would the City throw them out and destroy a residential neighborhood. Ms. Damon explained that the opportunity corridor would be a good place for Concord Orthopaedics, and it would not destroy people's housing. There are other medical offices in other places around the City. According to Ms. Damon, this is an unwise choice for the City.

Amanda Cricenti, a resident of 289 Pleasant Street, stated that there are many other medical specialties that are in Horseshoe Pond and located not right near the hospital campus. There are many other cities that have medical specialties, such as ear, nose, and throat which perform much riskier surgeries than joint replacement and these offices are not next door to hospitals.

Ms. Damon asked whether medical uses are allowed by right in the opportunity corridor. Mr. Baía checked and found that medical uses are allowed by right in the opportunity corridor.

Mr. Carley thanked those who commented.

Mr. Carley asked whether Mr. Carey or Mr. Moskey wanted to respond to the comments from the public. Mr. Moskey responded that the gentleman who sold the property had a difficult time selling due to the traffic on Pleasant Street. Other neighborhoods have approximately 2,000 vehicles per day; this area of Pleasant Street has 9,000 vehicles per day and the traffic will only get worse. Additionally, Mr. Moskey stated that other communities are not set up like Concord with this medical corridor in place.

Mr. Carley asked whether the old Concord Clinic across from the hospital would be appropriate. Mr. Carey replied that the proposed building would not be able to go onto that site, as there is a 40 foot drop. Concord Orthopaedics wants to be on one floor. That site is owned by Dartmouth Hitchcock and it is not a viable site, although it may be suitable for another medical specialty practice.

Mr. Carley inquired as to how close Concord Orthopaedics needs to be to Concord Hospital and how is the distance decided. Mr. Moskey responded that the challenge for Concord Orthopaedics is distance from the hospital for patient safety. The physicians at Concord Orthopaedics also cover the emergency room and need to be accessible to the hospital. One of the other reasons for needing to be close to the hospital is when patients come in for services, they want to come to one consolidated place.

Mr. Hosmer stated that his role on EDAC is because of the Capital Regional Development Corporation, whose mandate is to increase the tax base and stimulate job growth. From this perspective, Mr. Hosmer is in favor of the economic development portion of the project.

Ms. Walker explained that she sees so many different issues. She sat on the board of Concord Hospital for 12 years, and the hospital is one of the greatest business assets in the City. She understands Concord Orthopaedics wanting to be close to the hospital. She lives across the street from institutional properties and understands what the neighborhood is going through. Ms. Walker stated that she doesn't remember how the area was rezoned to residential. The economic growth of the medical community is a great gift to the residents of the City. She wondered if there was some way to open up the land around Concord Hospital.

Councilor Todd agrees with Ms. Walker that this is a situation with many moving parts. Zoning was switched from institutional to residential, but the fact remains that it ended up residential. The City evidently could see the future of rezoning at the time to protect the residential nature of the neighborhood, but he thinks that the rezoning from institutional to residential did the City a disservice. The value of the medical community to the City is important and this issue puts Concord Hospital and Concord Orthopaedics and other medical entities in the City in a difficult position.

Councilor Todd offered Langley Parkway North was mentioned previously and it could be an alternative. However, City Council in the past has been against Langley Parkway North and suggesting that the medical corridor expand there in the future is just pitting neighborhood against neighborhood. Ms. Damon asked whether the land around Langley Parkway North was under conservation. Mr. Baía replied that the land is owned by Concord Hospital and the City.

Councilor Todd reiterated that there are a lot of moving parts to this proposal, but from an economic development position it is a good thing; from a neighborhood perspective, it is not.

Mr. Carley stated that when people buy a home in a neighborhood, they buy into the character of the neighborhood as well. It is unfair when that character is changed. He expects that this neighborhood will change on its own in the future, but the medical community may have to wait for that change to happen organically.

Ms. Rittmeyer stated that Langley Parkway North is on the books for construction start in July 2018 with a completion date of 2021. Councilor Todd explained that being listed as a capital improvement project in the budget for a future year doesn't mean the project has been approved by City Council. This is a way for the City to keep track of what proposals have been made. Mr. Baía stated that the project was previously programmed for Fiscal Year 2018, but has now been moved to Fiscal Year 2019.

Ms. Rittmeyer explained that her father had been visiting Concord Hospital and tripped over uneven bricks. He had to wait for 25-30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. If Concord Orthopaedics has a patient that needs to go to the hospital, that patient would also have to wait for an ambulance, as the ambulances are not dispatched from the hospital.

Mr. Carley stated that without a quorum, EDAC would not take a position at this time, and he doesn't know whether EDAC would take a position because there was no referral from City Council.

Mr. Baía stated that if EDAC doesn't meet again, the information from today's meeting and from the previous meeting held on June 9th would be posted on the information section of the City Council agenda.

2. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Muir,
Community Development Specialist

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