



CITY OF CONCORD
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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EDAC)
DRAFT MEETING MINUTES
March 25, 2025 @ 5:00PM
City Council Chambers
37 Green Street (2nd Floor) – Concord NH 03301

Attendees:

Committee Members:

Mike Vlacich, Chair, Mayor Byron Champlin, Ali Sekou (Arrived 5:10), Mayor Pro-Tem (Arrived 5:10), Jim Bouley, Sal Prizio, Ari Pollack, Bobby Segal, Patrick Tompkins, Emily Ricard, Jean Hakuzimana (arrived 5:25), City Councilor Judith Kurtz (Arrived 5:29)

Absent Members:

Steve Duprey, Chuck Gilboy, Alex Stoye, Michelline Dufort

Staff Present:

Matt Walsh, Deputy City Manager – Development
Tim Thompson, AICP, Assistant Director of Community Development
Stephanie McKim, Administrative Coordinator

1. Meeting called to order: 5:04 pm.

2. Welcome by Chair Vlacich: Chair Vlacich welcomed those in attendance and discussed adjustments to the order of the agenda items. Chair Vlacich stated he has had individual discussions with several members of the Committee about economic development in the City, and thanked them for their input. He stated that each member of the committee will each present their experience in the Concord community to the committee with the goal to advise policy makers on their economic development decisions in the City at future meetings.

3. Adoption of Minutes: A motion was made by Mr. Segal and duly seconded by Ms. Ricard to adopt the minutes of January 28, 2025. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Comments by Mayor Champlin: Mayor Champlin noted the Mayor's Business Visitation Program met with Sue McCoo, owner of The Viking House and Capital Craftsman. The Mayor reports Ms. McCoo has been a long-standing member of the Concord business community and has a succession plan for The Viking House and Capital Craftsman. Mayor Champlin expressed concern as a number of small business owners in the Concord are looking towards retirement and what impact this could have on Concord's economy.

Ms. McCoo expressed concern regarding tariffs. The Viking House imports a large portion of its goods from Europe. Additionally, Capital Craftsman reports the price of gold has risen due to global economic environment.

5. **Conversation with Emily Ricard and Concord Young Professionals Network:** Ms. Emily Ricard and Mr. Chad Johnson of the Concord Young Professionals Network provided a brief overview of the Concord Young Professionals Network (CYPN) group. CYPN is a subgroup of the Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce with focus areas of professional and personal development of young people in Concord and surrounding communities.

CYPN circulated an anonymous survey to the Concord area to assess the viewpoints of young professionals.

Ms. Ricard summarized the questions and top answers as follows:

1) Why do young professionals choose Concord?

- a. Job opportunities, relocation for work, affordable housing, proximity to family, and sense of community.

2) Challenges faced by young professionals?

- a. Cost of living, opportunities for career growth in central New Hampshire, wage competitiveness as compared to other locations regionally (southern New Hampshire / Massachusetts), concerns related to homelessness and public safety, and parking options.

3) Suggestions to improve Concord?

- a. More affordable housing, expansion of dining and entertainment options (restaurants open after 9PM in the central business district), improve downtown infrastructure, parking improvements, and better public transportation

Mr. Prizio questioned whether the development of affordable housing falls to the responsibility of the cities due to zoning mandates in rural areas of the state, resulting in lower affordable housing options outside of the cities.

Mr. Walsh stated that there are a number of housing bills currently at the legislature, and some regarding planning and zoning issues impacting housing.

Mr. Thompson stated there is a bill that has gained significant traction in legislature, Senate Bill 84. He summarized this amended bill (if approved) states: In a majority of land zoned to permit single-family residential uses in a municipality, for lots not serviced by municipal or community sewer infrastructure, shall require lot sizes greater than 2 acres, if access to water only it's 1 acre, and for lots served by both water and sewer it's no more than ½ acre.

Chair Vlachich suggested follow up conversations on the topics concerning: housing as it is a cross generation issue, challenges around homelessness and how the committee can ask and support policy makers to effect change.

Chair Vlachich questioned whether young professional expressed concerns with job insecurity. Ms. Ricard responded CYPN has seen an increased concern with job insecurity post COVID and the current political climate cutting grant funding, Department of Education and non-profit work.

Mr. Bouley questioned what types of things the City should be doing and what types of things the private sector should do to address the concerns of CYPN.

Ms. Ricard stated young professionals are gravitating to Salem and Manchester because these communities have created walkable, mixed use districts (such as Tuscan Village) which feature residential, commercial, entertainment, and dining options in close proximity to each other. This has eliminated some of the barriers faced by young professionals but not all.

Discussion ensued regarding affordable housing, homelessness population, public safety, nightlife and entertainment, working with local businesses to market new developments to retain and attract young professionals.

6. **Conversation with Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce President Tim Sink:** Mr. Sink provided a brief overview of Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce (GCCC) task force established in the 1990s to survey local business developers and assess their development experience in Concord. Mr. Sink reported the information gather was then was put into a report and presented to City Council. Some of the key issues around development in the 1990s were development project timelines taking more time in Concord than in other communities, and unfavorable developer interactions with City staff. Mr. Sink presented the report to City Council then subsequently met with the former Mayor and City Manager. He reported some changes were made to encourage development to bring Concord to where it is today.

Mr. Sink reported the GCCC has a Local Government Affairs Committee that has heard concerns about potentially unnecessary delays concerning the review / approval process for some development permitting applications and cost impacts associated with delays, criticism of the Architectural Design Review Committee, and an outdated zoning ordinance that requires variances that increase cost and cause delays.

Mr. Sink has recommendation on two issues that has been discussed in this committee:

- 1) Short term changes to the zoning ordinance recommended by GCCC (provided to this committee and to the Zoning Board) that address repetitive zoning issues; and,
- 2) Foster a culture of urgency to expand the City's tax base.

1 Mr. Tompkins requested clarification on tax base growth and if that applies to being bolder in
2 developments, bringing in new industries, or residential development.

3
4 Mr. Sink clarified that all would be applicable to grow the current tax base. He recommends
5 marketing Concord as a business-friendly city to attract more development and build better
6 relationships with developers.

7
8 Chair Vlachich inquired where in the development process are developers currently experiencing
9 issues. Mr. Sink suggested that, anecdotally, the Government Affairs Committee has a perception
10 that the development permitting process takes longer in Concord than in other locations.
11 However, he had no specifics and stated he would need to report back to elaborate on which
12 departments within the City.

13
14 Mr. Tompkins inquired about the data that shows the gap in affordable housing for young
15 professionals. Ms. Ricard reports CYNP does not have that data.

16
17 Mr. Walsh reported there are 2,352 housing unit currently in process with more to come after
18 the next Planning Board submission deadline, which would (if all constructed) increase the
19 City's housing stock of 19,000 housing units by 12%, and will increase the City's population by
20 approximately 5,500 people thus causing the City to grow to around 50,000 people. Mr. Walsh
21 noted that Concord is an extremely desirable community due to a variety of macro and micro
22 factors. Macro factors include the general popularity of small cities (i.e those smaller than
23 50,000 people) with high quality of life, changing demographics, societal changes sparked by
24 the Covid-19 Pandemic, as well as the State's lack of broad base taxes. Micro factor includes:
25 Concord's centralized location with easy access to Boston / lakes / the mountains / oceans,
26 outstanding public services, arts / cultural, recreational opportunities, and high quality of life.
27 As such, the City was in the top 10 list of housing markets in the Unites States according to
28 Zillow.com in 2023 and Realtor.com in 2024. He also noted that the City was one of 18
29 communities in the State which were recently designated as a "Housing Champion" by the State
30 of New Hampshire's Department of Business and Economic Affairs for its progressive approach
31 to housing, and land use regulations related thereto, and that housing is permitted in 95% of
32 the City's land area. Mr. Walsh noted that Concord is very progressive towards housing unlike
33 many other communities in the central New Hampshire region, and the State at large. Mr.
34 Walsh noted that affordable housing is a broad statutory term, and refers to households earning
35 60% or less of the area median income. Mr. Walsh reported by statue, a housing needs
36 assessment done by the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission, and the City
37 has more than its regional fair share of affordable housing.

38
39 Mr. Pollack reported the state legislature has a sense of urgency around housing. In the past,
40 challenges have come from drafting a bill that applies to land planning and development across
41 the state despite the individual community's needs, tolerances to density, infrastructure
42 capabilities, and ability to finance infrastructure projects is vastly different. Mr. Pollack
43 reported he is now seeing a sense of urgency starting to change the usual allegiance to local
44 control in land planning and development.

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Discussion ensued about Government Affairs Committee, attracting new business and retaining current businesses, post COVID effects on local economy, legislative action, co-marketing, surveying, and networking to encourage awareness of development and local business.

7. **Regulatory Amendments:** Mr. Walsh discussed draft amendment to the City's Demolition Delay Ordinance. He reported the City has had the demolition delay process for 30 years. Currently if a building is more than 500 square feet (SF) and greater than 50 years old it would be subject to the Demolition Review Committee delay process. The current process is inefficient due to the subcommittee involvement. Mr. Walsh reported this ordinance does have a public purpose as it has been instrumental in saving certain historic structures and cited the Rolfe Barn located in Penacook Village as the most recent example. The Rolfe Barn is 1789 double English barn, the only of its kind in the state of New Hampshire that still remains largely in part because of this ordinance. The proposed change would be to remove the Demolition Review subcommittee and move the responsibility to the Heritage Commission, and streamline the "historic significance" determination process. A hearing would be accomplished within 45 days and the process entirety would be no longer than 60 days. Mr. Walsh reported this change would create transparency and remove a barrier in the process by eliminating a step. The Heritage Commission supports the change and staff presented the regulatory change to EDAC for consideration and comment. Mr. Walsh reported staff would like to present to City Council for the April agenda which would then move to a public hearing in May.

A motion was made by Mr. Bouley that the Economic Development Advisory Committee support the amendments to the Demolition Delay section of the Zoning Ordinance and send a letter to the City Council stating such. This motion was duly seconded by Mr. Segal. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Walsh reported City staff has begun the process of interim zoning amendments. Staff will provide a draft copy of the proposed amendments at the next EDAC meeting for review. Mr. Walsh reported these amendments will be distributed in multiple batches so not to overwhelm staff, affected boards and committees. Staff is open to discussions with EDAC, GCCC, Government Affairs Committee, Planning Board, and City Council.

For the first round of review in April, Mr. Walsh reported the staff are focused on the following proposed amendments to ordinances dealing:

- Multiple principal use on a single property
- Overhaul to the accessory dwelling unit
- Updates to the sign ordinance
- Overhaul to the entire childcare facilities ordinances to better align with RSA 171
- Provision regarding accessory structure setbacks
- Housekeeping amendments regarding Planning Board and Zoning Board approvals

Mr. Walsh reported staff are also working on amendments to the parking section of the ordinance. Currently all parking standards are in the zoning ordinance. Two proposed amendment to parking the staff are considering:

- 1) Create a Conditional Use Permit process that would allow changes to parking standards to the reviewed and approved by the Planning Board. The Planning Board has a more comprehensive review of the issues in the entire scope of the development project in comparison to the Zoning Board.
- 2) Remove the parking requirements from the Zoning Ordinance and relocate all the standards and requirements to the site plan review regulations, allowing the Planning Board to consider waivers without the strict statutory criteria necessary for relief that the Zoning Board is held to.

Potential other changes may include: buffer regulations, building heights, building setbacks in residential zones, clarification of maintenance of non-confirming parking lots, and some refinements to home occupations in the RO district.

A brief discussion ensued regarding prioritization of proposed amendments with emphasis on parking, setbacks in certain zoning districts associated with older areas of the City, building heights in certain area of the City (Airport and Central Business District in Penacook Village and along State Street), among others.

8. Committee's Meeting Schedule: The Committee next meeting to be April 22, 2025 at 5:00 PM.

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Segal and duly seconded by Councilor Kurtz. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 6:37 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stephanie McKim

Administrative Coordinator - Development