

**VILLAGE OF WALDEN
JOINT BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 7TH, 2006**

Mayor Becky Pearson called the joint board meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

On roll call the following were:

Present: **Board of Trustees**
Mayor Becky Pearson
Deputy Mayor Mary Ellen Matisse
Trustee Mary Jean Norman
Trustee Roy Wynkoop
Trustee Lauren Keator

Absent: Trustee Richard Hurd, later present
Trustee Jose DeJesus, later present

Planning Board
Chairman Stan Plato
Member Edan Holmes
Member Brian Sebring
Member John Duffy
Member Edmond Leonard

Zoning Board
Chairman Jay Wilkins
Member David Ohlmer
Member James Corbett
Member Keith Hunter

Absent: Member Suzanna Rougier

IDA/Community Development Board

Chairman Matt Seichen
Member Bill Kirnan
Member Greg Raymondo

Absent: Member Martin Besdesky

Manager Politi explained that Suzanna Rougier will be resigning from the Zoning Board and Brenda Adams will be appointed.

Comprehensive Plan Design Guidelines

Alan Sorensen explained that the village has gone through a comprehensive plan process and one of the recommendations includes a detailed master plan for the redevelopment of the area around Railroad Avenue, and Grant Street. The idea behind that is to encourage the adapted reuse of some of the existing industrial buildings in that area as well as to encourage new infill development that would be mixed use infill buildings that would have residential on the second floors and retail office on the first floor and to have the area redevelop in the manner that is pedestrian oriented, aesthetically pleasing and is economically vibrant. One of the things they felt was necessary to achieve that overall goal of developing a vibrant mixed use neighborhood was the enactment of design guidelines. The design guidelines will address such things as how buildings are placed on sites within the lots, the scale of the building, architecture of the building and design features, so that as the area is redeveloped it is redeveloped in a manner that is both aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian oriented and functional. Some of the things that are specific requirements within a mixed use district are that the infill buildings are redeveloped on vacant sites that the structures are mixed use and two story structures. One of the things that is talked about is form and roof line. In developing the standards for that they look at the existing building stock within the neighborhood. Also, that the buildings are built up to the sidewalk so that the building line is maintained along the street. One of the concerns was that there would be sufficient landscaping and street trees. That is something that is also required as part of the design guidelines. As development proposals come in or redevelopment proposals within the neighborhood these guidelines will help the planning board in guiding their decisions. They also talk about architectural features in the guidelines. There are also standards for signs and lighting. They also talk about parking standards.

Mayor Pearson stated that there are also guidelines for Main Street. She asked if they should be more specific or can we be more specific.

Mr. Sorensen stated that in terms of the design guidelines the building stock in the historic central business district is different than Railroad Place. The buildings are right next to each other and typically flat rooflines, two/three story structures. The general rule of thumb in terms of façade renovations is that the renovation respects the historic architecture of the building. It may be the building that is being renovated is not a historic structure and there the guidelines give you some general rule of thumb.

Chairman Plato stated that they had one come before them last night that they would like guidance with.

Mr. Sorensen indicated that he would be happy to provide guidance.

Trustee DeJesus stated that this would be a case where Mr. Sorensen would attend the planning board meeting.

Chairman Wilkins asked how that would work if they granted a variance for Main Street.

Mr. Sorensen stated that it depends on the nature of the variance. The idea is that the facades are reviewed by the planning board.

Trustee DeJesus stated that it may go directly to the zoning board. Some of these things should be applicable to what the zoning board is doing.

Mr. Sorensen stated that any change to the façade should be referred back to the planning board.

Member Leonard stated that the planning board has received a very preliminary seven lot subdivision on the north side of Route 52 on the line with the town. The entrance road will be in the town.

Mr. Sorensen stated that they could have an intermunicipal agreement. You would have a joint review.

Mayor Pearson stated that there is nothing in the code book that considers downtown historic.

Mr. Sorensen stated that it is not a historic district.

Mayor Pearson asked if that would benefit the village.

Mr. Sorensen stated that there are advantages in having historic districts. Long term it would be in the village's interest to do so. There is a process in terms of designation. It should be further explored. The property owner would have to want to be a part of it.

Member Hunter asked, regarding the rezoning of the Railroad Place area and the impact on the real estate market.

Mr. Sorensen stated that it does open up possibilities that weren't there before. The conceptual plan is one that is inviting. The rail trail could also have an influence.

Member Hunter asked if there were any known environmental issues associated with these properties.

Manager Politi stated no.

Mr. Sorensen explained that this is a long term process.

Trustee DeJesus stated that if you look at all the studies it has taken 10 years to get to this point.

Deputy Mayor Maise asked Mr. Sorensen what direction he was going first.

Mr. Sorensen stated that we will be going in multiple directions because there is multiple aspects of this proposal that has an influence on the redevelopment of Railroad Place, one being the rail service. That process is already in the works as far as reaching out to the Orange County Transportation Council. We are also in the process of getting grant money for the feasibility study and that looks favorable. The next step will be to take a look at the ownership of all the parcels. They will also reach out to perspective developers to see their interest in investing in Railroad Place.

Mr. Sorensen further stated that the funding for the feasibility study will be coming from a grant through the Unified Planning Work Program which is part of the Orange County Transportation Council. They have funds that are unspent that have been allocated for this year.

Member Corbett asked if it will be up to the planning board to turn down plans that don't comply and is there going to be a resurrection of the old concept of the architectural review board.

Manager Politi stated that has been brought up before and this is one way you can enforce that.

Trustee DeJesus stated that we do have an architectural review board which is the planning board.

Trustee Hurd stated that proposal for the seven lot subdivision with the road being in the town should come to the village board because it has policy implementations.

Chairman Wilkins asked if it would be in the best interest of the zoning board to adjourn an item in order for Mr. Sorensen to review it.

Mr. Sorensen stated that part of it depends on the nature of the use variance they may be asking for. With the use variance you have the ability to impose conditions and one may be that the applicant comply with the design guidelines for downtown. One condition could be that the façade should be reviewed. He could get a list of the variances and set a work session to see if there are things for the façade that should be addressed.

Chairman Wilkins suggested Mr. Sorensen get a copy of their agenda.

Member Leonard suggested Mr. Stickles pick out the items from the planning board agenda that Mr. Sorensen should be present for.

Mr. Sorensen stated that one thing that would be very helpful is pictures or postcards of the historic buildings. That's what he would use as a guide.

Mayor Pearson asked if the planning board would be the people to say we need a building to look like that old building again or are they going to be allowing not that stringent of guidelines.

Mr. Sorensen stated that within the guidelines that element should be replicated to the extent feasible. It depends on the building.

Lieutenant Tim Dexter, Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer, Beacon

Lieutenant Dexter stated that the Mayor asked him originally to come over and the focus when they met in Beacon was to see what Beacon did to turn them around. It was an awful place in the 80's. The first thing they did in the late 80's, early 90's was to identify what the problem was. They did a crude study of the city. They have three paid firemen on every shift and they saw that as an untapped resource. They brought those guys in on shift and had them walk every neighborhood to identify things that were unusual, multiple mailboxes on a house, a fire escape nailed on the back of a house, a couple gas meters, electric meters hanging, and a lot of parking. They identified it on a chart and anything they found as a discrepancy they would identify it and outline in a red box. They found a lot of multi family homes that were converted without any approvals. They started their multiple dwelling inspection program. You have to make sure your community adopted the regulations. It took three years to go through the entire city. They found it to be a battle to bring them into conformance. They go back every three years and they don't find any major changes or violations. It takes the town or village board to make the commitment that you have to staff your board properly and make sure who you hire are well trained and well paid. They also started to adopt laws. As he saw a problem he would go to the city council and say he would need to have this. They had problems with the courts. Judges didn't like bringing code enforcement cases before them. They gradually changed that over. One law was the application processing restriction law which is a law that says if you're not on the good boy list in town we can't do business with the community. If your taxes aren't paid, your water bill isn't paid, if the snow wasn't removed and the building department cited you, you can't go before the planning board, zoning board or come in and see the building inspector, you're dead in the water. This has been a successful tool for them. This law covers all of your properties. The elected officials have to support your building department and boards. One of the other things they did was that they realized in the 80's, because most of the Main Street buildings were vacant they had developers come along and want to put in Section 8 apartments and that didn't turn out to be a good long range plan. What the city council did was in 1997 they passed a law that outlawed all the residential uses on the Main Street, on the store front level. They also amortized the discontinuance of those based on how much money each individual put in. It has been very successful. Owner occupied properties are better maintained and easier to enforce. The city council zoned out all multi family in the City of Beacon. There are multiple dwellings over the store fronts. They have a data base of what those properties are. Provided they continue as multi family they can stay. They have zoning for cluster housing, townhouses and condominiums. The other thing they did was to increase the penalties. He wants them to raise the maximum fine that the court can impose. They also amended the laws to close

down the time frame that people had to comply and then to empower the city to remove the debris and charge the property \$100 administrative fee and 5% and attach it as a lien. They only shovel people's sidewalks once, because they get the bill. They charge \$1.00 per foot. The judge has to understand what the communities' priorities are. The building official has to do good paperwork. They are very successful in court. He's never lost a case. They passed a law that prohibits any unregistered vehicle in Beacon. You can get a permit if you have a vehicle that is in working order that you're waiting to sell and it's good for one year. They also did a board up law for buildings that maybe had a fire or the windows were broken out. They also have a high grass ordinance. They have a graffiti law. The tree ordinance allows you to cut three mature trees within 100 ft of each other every six months or you have to get a permit. Now you have to have a working toilet on every construction project or a porta john. They are currently working on a landlord registration law.

Chairman Plato asked if it was ever a problem if the city allowed it to exist for a certain amount of years.

Mr. Dexter stated no.

Trustee Hurd asked what the budget was for Mr. Dexter's department.

Mr. Dexter stated that without his salary its \$175,000. He also indicated that as they increased their activity and their funding their structure fires have decreased.

Manager Politi asked what his staff consisted of.

Mr. Dexter stated besides himself he has two full time deputies and one full time clerical person and the full time firemen.

Member Kirnan asked what the City of Beacon do after a snow fall with vehicles on the streets.

Mr. Dexter stated it's not his department, but there is a snow ordinance. Now its you have to have your car off the streets if there is a snow fall of 2 inches or more. It used to be from November 1st until whatever. If the city administrator declares a state of emergency then the police department can tow. Right now they just tag them, \$50./\$75. fine. He doesn't know how they handle Metro North because those are permit parking.

Deputy Mayor Matisse asked if Mr. Dexter inspects construction sites.

Mr. Dexter stated yes, but you have to remember that he is staffed well. They show up at construction sites probably more then the builder wants them there. He could have never done it by himself.

Mr. Dexter further stated that you have to use the state codes series. You can't have the Village of Walden code. You have to adopt a local law for the administration of

that code setting up very specific requirements. He also stated that the only thing in the code is public assembly and they have to be done annually. Everything else is based on what your community thinks is necessary. They do multiple dwellings every three years and it's a staffing issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Mitchell
Village Clerk