APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE VILLAGE OF NORTHBROOK
DOWNTOWN ZONING STEERING COMMITTEE

Village Hall Terrace Room
September 30, 2014

Members Present: Chairman Scott Cyphers, Susan Elfant, Steven Elisco, Selwyn Marcus, Lori Jordison

Members Absent: None

Staff & Consultant Present: Tom Poupard (Director, DPS), David Schoon (Assistant Director, DPS), Michaela Kohlstedt (Senior Planner) Leslie Oberholtzer (CodaMetrics), Tony Manno (RTA)

Call to Order & Introductions
Chairman Cyphers called the meeting to order in the Terrace Room of Village Hall at 7:05 p.m.

Public Comment- Hear from the Audience
None

Review of October 24, 2014 Meeting
Member Elisco moved, Member Elfant seconded, to approve the October 24, 2014, minutes as submitted. On voice vote, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Presentation & Discussion of Proposed Form-Based Regulations for Downtown
David Schoon, Assistant DPS Director, along with the assistance of Leslie Oberholtzer, CodaMetrics, and Tom Poupard, DPS Director, walked the Committee through the current draft of the proposed form based code amendments for the downtown.

Schoon started his PowerPoint presentation regarding the draft form based code amendments by briefly summarizing the proposed new zoning regulating map and six new zoning districts for the downtown. In response to a question from Member Elisco, Oberholtzer explained why the Northbrook Shopping Center was zoned VG3 - Village Green Commercial Center District rather than the VG 2 – General District.

Schoon then summarized the development approval process. He stated that under a form based code, all reviews are handled administratively unless an applicant is requesting a deviation, variation, or exception to the proposed rules, or some other zoning relief. Then either the Architectural Control Commission or the Board of Trustees would be involved with the review of the project. Committee members then discussed the concept of minor deviations for certain specified items, which are handled administratively by staff. Committee member expressed support of this concept and even though it is something we may want to have available for other items in the Zoning Code.
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Schoon then reviewed the section of the proposed regulations regarding building forms. He reviewed the five proposed building types (storefront, cottage, stoop, row, and civic). In response to a request by Member Elfant, Schoon and Oberholtzer explained why certain building types were allowed in certain zoning districts and not others. They also explained how a certain building type (e.g. a storefront) may have different requirements depending upon the district.

Schoon then began to explain the different requirements (e.g. building placement, parking placement, height, uses, and street façade requirements) that give each building type its form. Regarding building placement he summarized requirements such as build to zones, occupation of corner, minimum front line coverage, minimum setbacks, and location for parking. He discussed height & use regulations such as minimum and maximum height of the building as well as individual floors, allowed uses by story, occupied space, and location of parking within a building.

During discussion of height, Member Elisco questioned whether the range between the minimum and maximum height for each floor was too great thus not ensuring a continuity between buildings along a block frontage. Oberholtzer stated you could definitely decrease the range, but by doing so you reduce flexibility. Member Marcus stated that you may want to have a narrower range to ensure such sites as the C1 properties and the rest of the properties on the former Northbrook Garage block develop in a compatible fashion. Cyphers suggested that we may want to provide greater flexibility, but may want to require all projects in the VG1 go through the ACC. The Committee members discussed how limiting do the regulations need to be in order to achieve the look and feel we want for our downtown. Staff suggested that as the Committee continues its review of the rest of the regulations to keep that question in mind.

Schoon then reviewed the street façade requirements (e.g. front façade entrance type, principal entrance location, horizontal and vertical divisions, transparency, and roof type).

Having reviewed the general building form requirements for a storefront building, Schoon then walked the Committee through an exercise of how these requirements would be applied to the vacant lot at 1200 Meadow Road, which is located on the southwest corner of Meadow and Cherry roads.

Regarding building form requirements, Schoon and Oberholtzer also briefly noted other façade design requirements such as blank wall limitations, interior side and rear façade treatments, materials and colors, windows, awnings and shutters, and balconies.

Schoon then pointed out the proposed land use section as well as the street and block section of the proposed code amendments. The proposed land use section would not use the SIC Manual classification as the remainder of the Zoning Code currently uses, and which the Village has talked about getting away from. The street and block section discusses the standards in creating a new street through the Meadow Plaza property, the purpose of which is to create an additional vehicular and pedestrian realm that would connect the core part of the downtown with the north part of the commercial area in the downtown.
Schoon reviewed the proposed parking regulations, which would base the number of required parking spaces for a use based upon the Village’s standard parking requirements for uses but would allow for adjustments. In the VG1 Core District, a property owner could use the parking standards that currently exist for the special parking area in the Village Green Overlay District. For the remainder of the downtown, the required number of parking spaces could be adjusted downward by such factors as shared reduction, cooperative reduction, on-street parking credits, public parking credits, transit credits, and car-share credits. Member Marcus stated that seemed to be an appropriate approach as some of these factors were considered in the granting of the recent parking variation for his project at 1312 Shermer Road.

Schoon concluded the review of the proposed form based code regulations by stating the sign regulations would remain the same except that projecting signs would be allowed throughout the VG districts, as they currently are only allowed in the core area, and a new type of pedestrian-scale pole-mounted sign would be allowed in all VG districts.

Schoon then asked Committee members to reflect on the Village’s recent review of the building at 1312 Shermer Road. Based upon that experience using the Village’s current zoning and design regulations, what are their thoughts about a form based code approach? Members Elfant, Jordison, Cyphers, and Elisco all expressed the opinion that Member Marcus’ building was consistent with the draft form-based code regulations. The Village was very fortunate for that fact; because a different developer may not be so thoughtful in with its design. Member Jordison stated that she thought having the form-based code regulations would have provided the applicant a more clear picture of what was expected and could have possibly saved time and effort.

Schoon concluded his presentation by suggesting the Committee focus on the following questions:

- Does the Committee still support pursuing an overall form-based code modification for the downtown, or should we explore amending existing zoning regulations & design guidelines to encourage redevelopment?
- If the form-based approach is desired, does the proposal contain a proper balance between requirements (“shall” do) and guidelines (“should” do)?
- How would the Committee like to approach the Board regarding its preferred approach?

Member Elisco stated that the form-based code approach is on the right track. We need to create a clearer picture of what we want for the downtown and the form-based code will do that. Member Marcus stated that there are challenges owning property and operating a business in the downtown, but he believes the proposed standards could create more certainty for developers and create a more exciting downtown. Member Cyphers stated that the form based code will set expectations for development and is the right approach. We need to be thoughtful and strategic regarding how to approach the Board with the proposal. He stated the proposed regulations aren’t about being the “pretty police” but are about encouraging economic development and prosperity in the downtown. Other members voiced their agreement. Member Elisco stated in
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presenting the form based code we need to focus on our vision for the downtown. He added we need to increase residential density and need something to make this happen. Member Elfant agreed and stated the form based code will allow us to increase overall density in the downtown in a way the community can support. The form based code is about creating a vision. Committee members stated that thought has to be given to how the proposal is rolled out to the public and how the development community and property owners are involved in the process. The Committee members also agreed that it would be important and beneficial that they all attend a meeting in which the plan is presented to the Board of Trustees so that the Board can see the plan has the support of the committee.

Schedule and Next Steps
Committee members will forward their comments regarding the draft code amendments to Schoon, and Schoon will work with Oberholtzer and staff to refine the code amendments. Staff will then bring the draft code amendments back to the Committee to review one more time prior to the Committee making a recommendation.

Other Business
There was none.

Adjourn
On motion made by Member Elisco and seconded by Member Elfant, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted –
David Schoon