

From: [Carol Tuveson](#)
To: [Karen Edwards](#)
Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2020 6:11:58 AM

Dear Planning Board,

First, I wish to thank you for the difficult task you have taken on, and the Corona virus has not made it easier for any of us. I apologize for any covid frustration that slips into my concerns.

Listening to the 10-28-20 Planning Board meeting it seems like you, too, are struggling to determine how best to approach the times we are heading into. While it seems like you rely on past models for solving our financial future, it feels like a seismic shift is happening which is impacting the efficacy of these models. I am not sure we can continue to build our way into financial security. Already I see huge shifts in how we do business. We live in a university town and have tons of resources available to us to help figure this out. What are the projections for the future for how commerce will occur? What will UNH be like in a few years as it too struggles with changing its business model? Is there a population decline coming in the college-age demographics? How many students are taking this time to rethink what they want to do with their future and will it include college considering the high price tag? So many things impact how we move forward as a town.

Portsmouth, Dover, and Newmarket were commercial/industrial centers from their beginnings. Durham grew around the University and has always relied on it. Trying to make it other than what it is to broaden the tax base hasn't worked well in the past, and still doesn't seem to be working very well from what I hear you say. For every new tax dollar that comes in, it feels like the town services required to meet the new enterprise's needs consume most of the money. When the Rte. 4 bypass was constructed years ago, a huge complex (I can't remember the name as it has changed hands so many times) was built near the town cemetery. At the time, we were told that this would solve our tax issues. It feels like this building has been sitting empty more than it has been used, and it failed to live up to its promises.

The Plaza has been in the works for a very long time, and the design keeps changing. In the bigger world it seems like malls are now fading into a thing of the past as more and more stores go out of business, or change their business model away from malls. How many businesses will rely on a smaller office footprint as they allow their employees to work from home? With UNH seeking to have more students live on campus, why would we approve yet another student housing facility? And I am very disappointed with the PB's willingness to abandon the 3-story limit (4 with conditions) that the townsfolk worked so hard to get in place. This massing of buildings does not feel like it belongs in town. The architecture conflicts with surrounding structures and it won't matter what color it is.

I know that I'm privileged to live in a safe community protected from so many hardships that folks face daily in our state and around the world. When I hear about the need for drive-up services being almost critical, I have to wonder what has happened to our problem-solving abilities, our walkable community, our priorities? I remember when filling your gas tank was a drive-up service, yet we have survived the move to self-service. Change isn't the worst thing, it is just plain hard.

And why are we making the zoning more developer friendly? Have the townspeople requested this? Can we hold off changing the zoning until we are past the covid restrictions and can exercise our democratic rights in person? The inference in the Oct. 16, 2020 Friday Updates that the "highly engaged citizenry" of Durham make it more difficult for developers because of our "restrictive zoning" was insulting. This is our town. It is our responsibility to speak up, especially if Durham considers itself democratically run. I have watched over and over as developers from outside come into town, purchase property at stunningly high prices, attend meetings with a bevy of lawyers, finally get their projects approved with promises all around, then ignore those things that they deem inconveniences and the town either ignores the issue and/or has no recourse. A few years later they have flipped the property and now the issues are ours. Again, why would we want to make the zoning more developer

friendly? Every year or so there is another big project on the table that is a "must have" to keep taxes down. It feels like a merry-go-round that never stops spinning.

My bottom line is, I am tired of being told that the Town has to do all this building to keep our taxes lower, that building is our only option. We are not a poor town. The Town's portion of the tax bill is under 30%. We all gripe about taxes, but they are essential to take care of our community and provide the services we all rely upon. I would rather pay more in Town taxes than see more open land developed and the character of the town I grew up in destroyed. All I ask of the town is to consider what is a need and what is a want, then look at holding the cost down on the "wants" as we bump through this time of uncertainty.

Sincerely,
Carol Tuveson
11 Watson Road

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10