



Acton 2020 Committee Minutes  
Date: July 28, 2010, 7:00 pm  
Location: Town Hall, Faulkner Rm 204

Attending: Margaret Woolley Busse, Jim Snyder-Grant, Celia Kent (minutes-taker), Bill Marathias, Roland Bartl, Kristen Alexander

**I. Confirm Committee Name**

Planning Board chose the name Acton 2020 over Acton Today Tomorrow Together. Roland inquired whether we are the Acton 2020 Committee working on the Acton 2020 project. We decided that the project is called Acton 2020: Comprehensive Community Plan (Acton 2020 for short) and that we are the Acton 2020 Committee

At last Monday's meeting, BoS approved the committee charge and did not comment on name (which can be interpreted as signifying approval).

**II. Approve Minutes**

Minutes approved as amended by Kristen, with the title corrected to read "CCPC Meeting Minutes" (rather than Meeting Notes).

**III. Minute-taking schedule and format**

Discuss principles behind taking minutes. Kristen shared notes on meeting format which she adapted from a section of the open meeting law (distributed). A list of documents and exhibits used at the meeting should be attached to minutes, but the staff will provide that list so it doesn't need to be included in the minutes themselves. Minutes should highlight decisions and the salient points of the major issues discussed, organized under the relevant agenda item. They do not need to record everything said. In other words, the minutes are not meant to read like a transcript.

We'll take turns taking minutes, going in alphabetical order by first name.

**IV. Review/finalize revised "roles" document**

Reviewed revised roles document prepared by Planners Collaborative (PC). Agreed that document would serve as a good working guideline for accountabilities of consultants, committee, and town planning department.

**V. Village Land Planning Group**

Terra Friedrichs called Margaret to explain the creation of a Village Land Planning Group and to ask how it should interface with the Acton 2020 Committee. It is not a formal committee, but may seek that status. Celia attended the meeting and briefly described the concerns and what was discussed. The Village Land Planning Group is interested in exploring ways to insure that Acton protects its long-term interests in its villages through strategic land purchase. As the owner, the town will then have more power to insure development consistent with village master plans. Current zoning strategies have failed to generate development in line with the goals and, in some areas, allow a density and type of development that seems to threaten aspects of particular villages that are highly valued.

Roland explained that Acton doesn't currently have a structure in place in buy land to help manage development but that other communities do, so it is possible. He also explained that a challenge with zoning is that it has to be uniform throughout the entire village district. Although you might want to encourage more density in one area over another (for instance in the commercial section on Rt 111 of West Acton Village rather than on the section of Windsor Ave with Victorian homes) you can't do that kind of spot zoning.

*Decision:* Celia indicated her interest in the issues the Village Land Planning Group are investigating and it was agreed she would serve as the Acton 2020 liaison to the group.

#### **VI. Prioritize data gathering in inventory analysis process.**

Margaret commented that she didn't find the law (MGL Chap 41, section 81D on Master Plans) helpful in guiding the type of data required – the language is very open-ended. She said it would be helpful to review the draft list Jim Purdy had mentioned as the starting point for what PC would work on. Jim Purdy has shared it with Jim Snyder-Grant. It is modeled on an excel list which Terra organized and to which Roland added. Jim S-G can share it with the committee, with the proviso that it was developed just as a draft.

Margaret asked whether we should add data elements related to sustainability. All agreed that would be useful. Jim suggested someone could contact NSTAR and see if they can give us total town energy use by rate type for town. Margaret added that it would be helpful to get comparable data from other towns. We need real data to set a target.

*Action items:* Jim will ask the Green Advisory Board for their advice about what key data they think should be collected within the next week and share it with Roland and Kristen. R/K will talk with PC about incorporating these data elements into their information collection efforts. Roland will give PC a heads up this list will be coming.

#### **VII. Sub-committees (renamed Advisory Groups)**

Margaret described her idea that topic or theme-focused sub-committees could be a way to involve people who have specific expertise and interest. Acton 2020 will benefit from their expertise and the outreach process will help develop buy in for the final plan. She has lists of people from the initial interview process who would like to participate in this way. These groups could be composed of representatives of existing town boards/committees whose scope is relevant to the topic as well as other interested parties.

We need content-focused committees as well as functional committees (the latter to manage outreach, run events, etc). Discussed how these committees would function. They would be subject to open-meeting law. How can we encourage participation and minimize the logistical challenges of posting meeting times and preparing minutes, etc? Perhaps we should organize our own meeting agendas around specific themes and invite those interested to attend that meeting to share ideas. Interested parties would form an advisory group in order to prepare. They would likely need to have at least one preparatory meeting. That preparatory meeting can be arranged by one of the Acton 2020 committee members who can manage the open meeting requirements.

*Decision:* Decided to call these content-focused groups "Advisory Groups". Each member of the Acton 2020 committee will be assigned to an advisory group and organize a preparatory meeting.

Discussed whether to organize the advisory groups around the master plan elements detailed in the MGL Chapter 41 description of the elements to be included in a master plan (e.g. land use, housing, economic development, open space and recreation, etc.) OR to use the core values summarized in the Phase I report. The value of using the core values as the organizing principle for the advisory groups is that we emphasize the value of the work already done and use it as the foundation for the next phase of work. Also, using the core values as the starting place encourages a kind of integrated approach to tackling the issues.

*Decision:* We will create six advisory groups around the following themes:

1) preserving town character, 2) planning for sustainability, 3) improving connections, 4) community gathering, 5) inclusion and diversity, 6) preserving and enhancing town assets  
Participants will be encouraged to attend the October public meeting and the advisory meetings will begin after that. Sustainability will not be the basis of a separate advisory group, but be a theme potentially woven through all groups.

Discussed the creation of the functional sub-committees. Roland suggested that we have at least two, one focused on outreach and one focused on event coordination. Also began to consider different groups who might be asked to volunteer to help with events, such as the League of Women Voters. Margaret asked whether we should consider reaching out to the Acton Republicans and Acton Democrats as well, simply as groups who may want to contribute their time for the town. There was some concern expressed that it may be hard to avoid the appearance of partisan politics.

*Decision:* We will create two functional sub-committees: 1) Community outreach (including web site and other forms of electronic communication like facebook), 2) Public event coordination (help with outreach, set up, and facilitation of public meetings). Jim will take on role of web-manager.

*Action Items:*

1) Margaret will create an excel chart listing the advisory group name with spaces to list potential participants from her interview lists and from relevant town committees, 2) Roland/Kristen will provide a list of the town standing committees and their membership as well as other town-related boards such as the Housing Authority and Water District, 3) Jim will write a description outlining the responsibilities of the outreach sub-committee, Margaret will start drafting descriptions of the advisory groups, and Kristen will write a description for the Public event coordination sub-committee.

## VIII. Website Strategy

Jim reviewed the electronics plan distributed in advance of the meeting. He suggested the facebook page and blog would have essentially the same information as the web page. Celia wondered whether there were other approaches or possibilities for use of the facebook page that would be a useful way to engage kids (mentioned concept of posting photos as way of kids

documenting what they like or don't like about the town). Margaret suggested Demetri would be a good resource for ideas about how to use facebook creatively.

*Decision:* Web site name will be **Acton 2020.info**. We will maintain the old Acton outreach site as reference. (Roland said cost is \$10/year).

*Action Items:* Jim will ask Mark to register this web site and will develop a site mock-up to discuss with the committee. PC ran the Acton Outreach site last phase. PC likely to want access and can help with design. Kristen will ask the town staff to set up the town web site for the group (was simply waiting for the official name) and will ask about changing the name for the town email list. Jim will also start mocking up ideas for the blog and facebook page.

**IX. Community Outreach Event in October**

Postponed discussion of the event until next committee meeting

**X. Next Steps**

Focus on agenda item IX next meeting as well as sustainability metrics, strategies for populating the advisory groups, and assigning a committee member liaison to each. Use first meeting in September as opportunity to meet with Planners Collaborative to discuss the October event. Keep August 25<sup>th</sup> meeting on the books for now as we may need it.