

CCPC Meeting Minutes

Date: May 25, 2010

Meeting started at 7:00pm at Town Hall

Attendees: Margaret Woolley Busse, Susan Benson, James Snyder-Grant, Celia Kent, Sahana Purohit, Bill Marathias, Dean Cavaretta, Roland Bartl, Dimitri Papathanasariou

Introductions – background & information

Committee Name Change – Master Plan Committee; original name of “Comprehensive Community Plan Committee” was trying to capture the entire process that has synergy and sustainability. Everyone was tired of Master Plan and image it conveys. Suggestions: Integrated Planning Committee (IPC), Planning Council (PC). Selectmen ultimately review.

Vote on Committee Officers – will wait till committee is more familiar with the members. Officers needed are chair, vice-chair and clerk who writes notes. Clerk responsibility can rotate. There are 5 committee members. The role of Associate Members (per Roland) is that they participate in discussions and only if full member not present does the associate member vote.

Open Meeting Law (Roland) – basically means that every business of the committee has to be ‘open’:

- o posted for public knowledge on town clerk’s calendar, on website;
- o all conversations and votes to be done in open meeting;
- o casual conversation ok as long as not quorum (3 out of 5);
- o chained conversations are not permissible – must bring ideas to next open meeting.
- o emails good for conversations about scheduling meetings, logistics,
- o as soon as proposals on the table, don’t start a conversation via email because not public
- o Focus on transparency
- o Can have ‘blog’ which is publicly viewable but not a valid way to exchange information or opinions

“Conflict of Interest” training - Every committee member in Acton has to do online training about conflict of interest law – link contained in materials provided to committee. Need to provide signed forms

1998 Master Plan: Who is using it? What was achieved as an outcome of Master Plan? Roland said did evaluation of recommended actions from Master Plan. For ex., Nara and rail trails were in the original plan. 1998 plan didn’t set priorities and asked for too many things. Approx. 50% of recommendations were implemented in some way which is quite good. Those actions not done were either too ambitious, costly, or a decision to change priorities was made. The entire analysis should be on the website for review. Initially was used by the committees but less so since it’s dated.

Project objective is to create Master Plan for next 10 years. Target is to vote on it at Town Meeting in 2012. Consultants scoped timeline as June 2011. Need PR work prior to Town Meeting. State requires specific categories addressed (full list in Phase II SOW document)

Goals of New Master Plan

- Margaret stated the goal is to have the new master plan be very user friendly and able to be used as a guide by committees moving forward.
- Plan needs to identify priorities of recommendations.
- The 1990 plan took 3 years, the 1998 plan 2 years to develop. This plan needs to be less of a wish list and include priorities in each category or overall priorities in order to drive action. Priorities will be created with public process. Need to build some flexibility into plan in order to address issues of sustainability.

The Board of Selectmen needs to embrace the new Master Plan. Roland commented that BoS turnover can make it difficult for a master plan to be fully embraced by the Board.

Phase I process thoughts -- the committee was too large; role and decision making capability and authority wasn't defined. At times, the Committee's lack of clarity made it difficult for the Planner's Collaborative to remain true to their mission.

Planners Collaborative were the only consultants who responded to the RFP for Phase II. In the meantime, the town froze funds as a result of the economic environment. Initially decided to unfreeze funds for just data-gathering for Phase II then recently (6 weeks ago) Steve decided to unfreeze funds for the entire project. Funds were originally approved at Town Meeting. Now Steve can hire a consultant and we can move forward.

"Existing conditions survey" is needed so we know what we have now -- land, open space, all the mandatory elements. Starts with demographics, land use analysis -- technology will change how we gather and store information (ex., GIS system). Will data be linked in a variety of ways? What part of the data collected would be useful for town staff to keep up-to-date, and what data should be collected as a one-time effort? Committee should discuss methods of analysis and sharing of information with consultant.

Roles:

- Planning Board -- Margaret reports back to the Planning Board; PB has regulatory responsibilities; need to go to them when there are critical junctures in the process. Under the law, it's the Planning Board that votes on the Master Plan so they need to be comfortable with it first.
- CPCC
 - This committee should be the overall steering committee that drives process and decides what ultimately should be done and not.
 - The role of this committee is to review docs produced to make sure that it accurately reflects the town and its input. Our task is to make sure the consultant stays on task and that the output and process stays in tune with the best interests of our community. Acton is unique and we need to value our perspective regardless of recommendations by the consultants concerning other towns. We need to ensure that the proper committees are consulted as needed.
 - What would we vote on? Examples of what we would vote on is the "existing conditions" doc and whether it's released to the public.
 - We need to pitch for community's approval; PB appointed by Board of Selectmen so we need to make sure we have Board of Selectmen's endorsement.
 - What is the role of our committee vs. Planning Committee vs. Consultant? Want to make sure that we lead with the help of the consultants, rather than have the process be lead by the consultants.
 - Roland is the project manager; he pays the bills and works with the committee to ensure decisions and responsibilities are fulfilled by the consultant. Planning department helps where needed.
 - Need to have conversation with the consultants to ensure it's understood that this committee is driving the process. They aren't making the decisions on their own but help to identify issues and potential conflicts that we need to understand and help resolve.
 - What is the committee's role in contract process? Roland would like members to address issues and questions with consultant next week when we meet with consultants. Will get finalized prior to the contract. Only costs are not flexible to change.
 - Recommendation: they should help us to develop Master Plan vs. they are creating Master Plan
 - They should mention Finance Committee -- should we recruit Finance Committee member for this? **Should recruit Finance Committee liaison.
- Committee/sub-committee structure -- subcommittee is a way to participate and give ideas, priorities but a way for the committee to remain nimble but include people. Sub-committees will be formed and we

need to have a clear role and assignment for their charter. Need to make sure we focus the subcommittees on specific goals.

Review of Planner's Collaborative (PC)

- Margaret received questions and complaints re: PC – people had issues with the results so Margaret discussed issues with individuals
- PC excelled at facilitating meetings and doing community outreach
- Some people expressed concern with their analytics and the way they interpreted data – for ex. Xuan Kong (School Committee) was concerned with the way PC coded open-ended questions; need ability to categorize.
- If accusations are serious enough to warrant seeking other consultant services, entering a new RFP process would delay the project and it would be unlikely we would meet the 2012 town meeting target.
- PC's Original survey was more specific but the committee added more open-ended questions which made it more difficult to code and draw definitive conclusions.
- Goal of Phase I was to provide a vision with Daphne as Project Manager. Jim will be project manager of Phase II. So PC's change of management reflects the different emphasis of Phase 2.
- RE: Phase 2 Plan – #1, #5 – us or them, #2, #3 need to be more specific
- How to avoid scope creep? We need to make sure that the consultants feel comfortable pushing back and letting us know when our requests or instructions threaten to dilute the focus of the project
- First meeting with consultants is next Wed. before contracts are signed. We will need to clarify roles and responsibilities. Ask "how will you specifically address the issues with data analysis?"
- Need to make sure that PC team includes an expert in analytical analysis – discuss at first meeting.
- Need to evaluate bios of PC to ensure that capabilities of consultants match our needs; will get full resumes, experience, projects Does our committee need oversight of data? Suggestion that Kathy (or other Acton resident/committee member who is an expert at data analysis) to help interview the technical person on the PC committee. Also consider including Kathy in the process at specific milestone reviews where data is collected and analyzed. This will help address the concerns that Margaret received and to ensure we have oversight of the data.

Next Steps

- At next meeting with consultants will stay later to review
- Propose 2 committee meetings/month – 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of each month -- July 14th and 28th

Action Items:

- Should recruit Finance Committee liaison.
- Committee Members to review "Conflict of Interest" Training and provide signed forms
- Provide copies of Full RFP Response from Planner's Collaborative prior to next meeting
- Prep for next meeting's -- after receive notes, people to send questions to Margaret for next meeting with consultants
- Next meeting Wed., June 2nd.
- Updates/corrections to Committee Contact List

Meeting adjourned at 9:00pm

Minutes submitted by: Susan Benson