

MINUTES

Master Plan Steering Committee

TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH

Wednesday, January 14, 2015 – 5:45 p.m.
1 Grove Street, Peterborough, New Hampshire

Members Present: Mose Olenik, Teresa Cadorette, Sue Chollet, James Kelly, and Tyler Ward

Staff Present: Peter Throop, Director and Laura Norton, Administrative Assistant, Office of Community Development.

Co-Chair Chollet (Ms. Chollet) called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. welcoming the members and staff.

Minutes:

Ms. Chollet noted she has not been at the November meeting and asked if anyone who had been present to make a motion to accept the minutes. A motion was made/seconded (Cadorette/Olenik) to approve the Minutes of November 12, 2014 as written with all in favor.

Vision Survey – Preliminary Results including initial reactions, themes and demographics:

Ms. Chollet began with “I hope everybody got a chance to review what Peter sent out” adding “my sense is to review this section by section to look at what we see, what we are surprised by, any concerns we might have and what makes sense to us.” Mr. Kelly interjected “I have a quick question” and referring to the handout asked “what does *mean* mean?” Mr. Throop replied “in this case it means weighted average.” Mr. Kelly asked “so the lower the mean the better?” Mr. Throop replied “yes” adding “usually it is done in opposite scales but not this time.” Ms. Chollet noted “I think the percentages make more sense” with Mr. Throop adding “and it is easier” pointing out when the questions were sorted based on weighted average “the most important ones are at the top.” Mr. Throop also thanked the members for their assistance in the data entry process with a special recognition to Ms. Cadorette and Mr. Zeller for their contributions. He reminded the members “we are not done, it will take a lot of time to finish formatting and highlighting the results.” He noted over 600 to the survey (375 responses in paper form) were received “but not all of them were complete.” A brief discussion about why so many forms were incomplete followed with Ms.

Cadorette noting the age demographics may have been a factor. Mr. Throop agreed noting “we had the heaviest replies from the “over 65” age category.” Mr. Ward asked if the comments were reflected verbatim with Mr. Throop replying “yes” adding the only editing was to remove comments that were derogatory or unrelated to the question. Mr. Ward noted one question asked about listing Peterborough’s important characteristics to making Peterborough a place where you would want to live for the next 10 to 20 years “and one reply was Liz Thomas. I thought that was pretty awesome actually” he said. Mr. Throop agreed and noted “we only removed a few comments that were not constructive. “We are not interested in one person’s opinion against another” he said. The members then reviewed the percentage results and comments from the survey.

Ms. Cadorette cautioned the members to ignore Columns O and P on the chart as they “were not reflective of the responses.” Mr. Throop interjected “I would definitely ignore them.”

As they went through the results Ms. Chollet interjected “the property taxes is certainly a theme” with Ms. Olenik adding “and an art center.” After a brief discussion about the responses Ms. Chollet noted “going through things tonight the rankings are obvious.” She then asked the members “thinking ahead to the chapter do we want a huge chapter with everything mentioned”? adding “and if so how much ranking do we need in terms of what is most important? Mr. Throop noted the results would be presented in the form of a written report with graphics “that will identify the things that jump out as key themes.” He went on to note “from there you put together a dog and pony show and take it out to the groups in town and have a discussion of what people think it means.” He looked around the room and said “and then you take that and turn it into a chapter.”

Mr. Throop noted “the 2003 priorities involving the New England charm and character have not changed, they are still important.” He noted Question 2 of the survey and pointing out the top four responses of quality of schools, local employment, vibrant downtown and small town character “are the assets that attract people here.” Mr. Kelly pointed out the 2003 Economic Vitality chapter was written before the economy problems beginning in 2008 noting “you may see similarities but I see differences.” Mr. Throop acknowledged that other things have risen in importance “and this research adds credibility to invest time, energy and resources into it.” He also noted a rebirth of the Economic Development Authority “with 7 new members it has blossomed and is flourishing” he said and invited the three Co-Chairs to attend the EDA meeting in February “for a bit of a roundtable and sharing of what initiatives are going on in town that may contribute to our economic vitality.” Ms. Chollet again voiced her concern when she said “I think

one of our responsibilities as a committee is to make sure the vision chapter reflects what the *people* want.” She went on to cite the input from the forum and the follow-up survey. As for the dog and pony show Mr. Throop mentioned she said “I think we can tote this around but we are not taking opinions from small groups.” Mr. Throop replied “I appreciate that comment” adding “I look to you guys as to how to disseminate the information.” A brief discussion about the response percentage and the demographics of the responders followed.

With regards to the breakdown in the age categories Mr. Throop noted breaking it down into four basic sections. Ms. Cadorette interjected “I already did that” and noted the following:

Ages 0-19 years represented 22.5% of the population
Ages 19-34 represented 7% of the responses and 8.7% of the population
Ages 35-54 represented 27% of the responses and 29% of the population
Ages 55-64 represented 24% of the responses and 18.5% of the population (and)
Ages 65 and older represented 41% of the responses and 21.1% of the population

Mr. Throop suggested that the members think about the implications of the percentages and said “I wonder if perhaps the older population actually read what comes to their mailbox versus tossing into the recycle bin, like what happens at my house.” Ms. Chollet interjected “well this is very helpful, well done and thank you Teresa.”

The members continued to review the survey noting good entry level jobs, high-speed broadband internet and affordable day care were common themes as well. Ms. Chollet noted “to attract young people we need high quality schools, day cares and activities for young families.” She went on to note that Questions #4 “surprised the heck out of me” (this question dealt with steps to take to protect the town’s historic character with “somewhat important” beating out “very important in four of five categories.)

The members discussed future growth and development, enhancing livable and walkable qualities of the downtown, future housing needs, economic vitality challenges, attraction of young people to town, and what the town should look like in 20 years. Mr. Throop noted one comment that read “stop the focus on downtown and Depot Square.” Ms. Cadorette pointed out a bigger discrepancy on big box stores “with almost an equal amount of people for them as against them.” The members also had a brief discussion about high-speed broadband internet service, the lack of regulations to get the internet up to speed and being at the whim of the (telephone) pole owners without any real incentive for them. Mr. Ward talked about the frustration many residents (old and new) have over this issue. “It is a

priority for a small rural town to survive” he said. Mr. Throop agreed adding “but there is also significant cost in developing that infrastructure.” Ms. Cadorette spoke briefly about the population densities in several areas where she felt Comcast was in violation. Ms. Chollet asked about reporting that information to the Attorney General’s Office with Ms. Cadorette replying “at least point it out to them and hold them to their contract.”

As the members continued through the survey they discussed enhancement of the livable and walkable qualities of the downtown (mixed-use residential and retail, bike lanes, improved street lighting), current and future housing needs (housing designed to meet the needs of young families, housing communities with shared facilities, affordable senior housing), economic vitality through building or retaining current businesses while attracting new local business (attract new business and industry, enhance high-speed internet capability, encourage farm production and sale of local products), retaining and attracting young people to the region (affordable daycare and after school programs, “makerspace” facilities, more diverse entertainment option, good entry level jobs with opportunity for advancement), and what townspeople thought the town should be like in 20 years (an outstanding retirement community, a great place to raise a family, an arts and cultural center in the Monadnock area). The member also briefly discussed the demographics of age, own/rent housing and occupation.

Mr. Throop noted the importance of thinking regionally with Mr. Ward noting the focus of the Chamber of Commerce on tourism.

Next Steps:

Mr. Throop asked “any thoughts as to our next steps?” adding “it is my sense that by the next meeting we will have a report and the Cooperative Extension folks will come in and do a presentation.” Ms. Olenik asked “does the town have a Facebook page?” Mr. Throop replied “yes.” Mr. Olenik went on to note the importance of how they disseminated the results to the public. “They want to know the emerging key roles and goals as much as we do” she said. A brief discussion about additional surveying followed with Ms. Chollet cautioning “we need to be weary of small group answers, they cannot run the chapter.” Mr. Throop agreed noting “using the approach of this is what the survey said and we can ask *does this ring true for you?* It is a way to validate the results and helps with the buy in.” Ms. Cadorette noted the approximately 600 people who responded was remarkable.

Updates on Other Committees:

Mr. Throop gave a brief update of the Planning Board’s subcommittee on agri-tourism which was formed to create an amendment to the petition article on agricultural uses in the Agricultural Business Enterprise District. “We have a

working draft of the amendment that we will be meeting on it tomorrow.” Pointing out several challenges of the ordinance Mr. Throop said “I am still in the trees with it, the forest is out there somewhere.” He then briefly reviewed the potential meeting and public hearing dates with the members. He briefly reviewed the rekindling of the EDA membership and their enthusiasm for collaboration with other organizations and entities for economic vitality for Peterborough.

Next Meeting:

February 11, 2015 at 5:45 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant