

MINUTES

Master Plan Steering Committee

TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH
Wednesday, October 9, 2013 – 5:45 p.m.
1 Grove Street, Peterborough, New Hampshire

Members Present: Mose Olenik, Sue Chollet, Beth Alpaugh-Cote, Alan Zeller, and James Kelly and Ivy Vann

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

Chair Chollet called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. noting the first item on the agenda was approval of the August Minutes. A motion was made/seconded (Chollet/Kelly) to approve the August 14, 2013 Minutes as written with all in favor (Ms. Vann recused herself as she was not at the August meeting).

Discussion on Master Plan Update Priorities

Chair Chollet told the members “I wanted to meet with Peter and discuss our work plan” adding “and Mose and Beth were there as well.” She reported a good discussion about the Economic Vitality Chapter “and the need to get revised and updated this year.” She also told the members they had talked a lot about the Vision Statement completed in 2005. She noted they all thought before any more updates to the Master Plan, “it is a good idea to check with the community and say this was our vision then and ask is it still our vision today?” Chair Chollet looked up and said “this makes sense to us and is our recommendation before we move on to update any other chapters.”

Ms. Olenik interjected “it is clear this will be more than just an edit but it doesn’t have to be as grand as 2005.” Chair Chollet agreed noting “we don’t need to start at the very beginning.” Mr. Throop noted the availability of the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Cooperative Extension Education Program community profile program and visioning program to assist the Master Plan Steering Committee with the process. “For a small amount of money the program will provide a facilitator who will help us organize the project.” He noted the program facilitator would be available 3 to 6 months and would lead a one or two-day event that would result in a large group of people responding to guided questions. “Then those responses would be organized in some fashion” he said. He noted the group may break into smaller focus groups to discuss specific topics and then report back to the larger group. He went on to say “the UNH Extension collates all and writes it up in a report.” He showed the members two examples, one from the Town of Derry (a one-day workshop) and the other, the Town of Henniker (a two-day workshop). He passed the reports out for review noting “the experience can be quite powerful for those who participate.” He admitted it still represented a fairly small percentage of the town’s population but “you use that with other techniques to gather people and use those opportunities to get input.”

He mentioned a series of natural resource oriented workshops in Frankestown each attracting different people with different interests. One on local agriculture and foods where “all the famers and their families came to learn from the speaker and then contributed what they felt were the important issues. With a different topic for each workshop, we were able to get different points of view from people with different interests.”

Ms. Vann asked about the possibility of using online survey tools. “There is a load of them to choose from, I have used Survey Monkeys” she said adding “they don’t take long and are easy to do.” Ms. Olenik noted the relationship the UNH Extension has had with the town Library and asked if the Committee would be eligible for their services. Mr. Throop assured her that the town was eligible to use their service. Ms. Chollet suggested a survey for the entire community with Ms. Vann noting an online process would be most efficient. Ms. Chollet noted the importance of the older people in town noting “remember we are headed to a graying population, we need the input of the older people.”

Mr. Throop interjected “the other thing is the UNH process of recruitment and how you design the process is essential. That is why it takes 3 to 6 months. You have to build your steering committee for the event which is usually up to 12 people to help design and essentially do the recruiting of people who represent the different facets of town.” Ms. Chollet agreed and added “and you have improved buy-in.” Mr. Throop agreed and mentioned targeting the service and civic groups in town to “get on their agendas, go to them and invite them to the event” he said. The members agreed and noted the surveys could be brought along and collected after the meeting generating a buzz of excitement and an opportunity to help set the future course of the community. “There are a lot of techniques to the process” said Me. Troop adding “and UNH will walk us through them.”

A brief discussion about the cost of the program as well as additional funds for survey and mailing costs followed. The also briefly discussed the first steps of getting out and talking to key people in the community. All the members agreed to include representatives of organizations dealing with the social issues of young families as well as elder care issues. Ms. Chollet noted “we want to get those key players to get proper representation.” She went onto say “this may be getting into the weeds a little bit but we should also offer babysitting services during the program.”

Mr. Throop noted he had tentatively put Dan Reidy from UNH Cooperative on the November agenda. Ms. Chollet again noted “we need to remember all the little things that we can do to increase the attendance and diversity and childcare is one of them.”

Mr. Kelly noted he had read the Vision Chapter and found it full of optimism but that the last ten years had not done a good job of painting that picture. He asked “so now what? Are we going to do it all over again? Is that worth it? Or should we address more specific issues in town?” He reiterated what they have heard over and over again, “the population is getting older” he said adding “shouldn’t we be more specific rather than go out and create another generically optimistic document?” Mr. Kelly concluded by noting “I am not sure we have accomplished anything other than a lovely picture.” Ms. Chollet replied “my understanding of a vision chapter is subtitled *what do we want? Where do we want to head?*” Mr. Kelly reiterated that the current

vision chapter was very optimistic “there is nothing specifically wrong but why would want to create another optimistic view?”

Ms. Vann replied by noting “actually I think legally we *do* have to do it.” The members reviewed the Master Plan Steering Committee framework for action to be taken with Ms. Vann noting “the vision chapter is the center of what we do in the other chapters which are in need of a road map going forward.” She also noted the Planning Board relying on the Master Plan Steering Committee for zoning recommendations. Mr. Throop asked “is it useful to ask what has changed over the past ten years?” Ms. Chollet agreed noting “the town may have new priorities and the Vision Chapter is the foundation that the other more specific chapters take their action from.” The committee had a brief discussion about the changes over the past ten years and the aging elements of the infrastructure. Mr. Throop noted the example of aging fire apparatus with Ms. Chollet adding “and their housing.” Mr. Kelly asked “so do we start by looking at what we wrote back then? Start there? And gauge where are we today versus 10 years ago?” Ms. Olenik noted the chapter *should* be optimistic. “We don’t want to say this community is going down the tubes in 10 years.” Mr. Kelly argued while optimism is good “it is realistic to have something to work towards as well.” He noted in the current chapter “Peterborough sees itself as the center that provides services and facilities to the surrounding region. That is what it says.” He noted “that may have been true back then and we are still a center for some things but we are not the same economic center” adding “it would be wonderful to be realistic and not just optimistic.” Mr. Kelly concluded “the reality I come back to is the population is shifting and we are losing jobs. The young people are not staying; the vision statement should address how to reverse this direction *not* how wonderful we are.” Ms. Chollet replied “the Vision Chapter statement is determining where we are and setting the course.” A brief discussion about the statutes of the Master Plan (what chapters were mandatory what ones were not) followed. Mr. Throop told the members “it is clear in the statute that if you want zoning you must have a Master Plan and it must have certain chapters.” Mr. Zeller interjected he had looked it up (RSA 67.2) and Vision Chapter was a mandatory chapter.

Mr. Kelly asked again why the Master Plan Steering Committee could not (should not) draft the chapter and then get input on it via public hearing. “That is not a viable approach” replied Ms. Vann. Mr. Kelly asked “so you have to totally recreate it?” Ms. Vann replied “no, but it is never a good idea to create a baby in a vacuum.” Mr. Throop noted the importance of including and representing the community values and wishes. “We want to include them and engage them” he said. Ms. Chollet added “the purpose of the Vision Chapter is to find out what the people want not for us to frame it.”

A motion was made/seconded (Vann/Alpaugh-Cote) to start the process of collaborating with a UNH Cooperative Extension Educator with the idea of doing a public visioning process this winter. Ms. Chollet, Ms. Alpaugh-Cote, Ms. Vann, Ms. Olenik and Mr. Zeller were in favor. Mr. Kelly simply noted “I am in favor of listening.”

The members briefly reviewed the motion to make sure the content and intent was to *actually pursue* a public visioning process. They reviewed the motion with Ms. Vann noting “we are not just having tea here. This is a first step.” The members agreed the motion and vote were legitimate. Mr. Kelly changed his response to “I abstain.”

Review and Discuss the Master Plan Vision Chapter

Mr. Throop began by noting the 2003 Vision Chapter of the Master Plan was done from January to March of 2003 adding “it is time to redo it.” He went on to give a brief history of the document when Ms. Chollet interjected “should we discuss this now or have we all read it?” Mr. Kelly interjected “what is the purpose of going through this?” adding “to see what might not fit? I thought we were going to create a new one.” Ms. Chollet agreed noting “I am not sure it is worth going through” with Ms. Vann adding “me either, not if we are going to take the UNH Cooperative step.”

Mr. Throop told the members the UNH Cooperative Extension Educator was Dan Reidy, the same gentleman that was involved with the Library and the 1833 Club. “He is familiar with the town already, that gets you ahead.”

The members then informally discussed the types of participants they would like to see on the subcommittee. This list was extensive and included individual involved in management positions, healthcare, and downtown merchants. Chair Chollet noted the importance of including groups or agencies “that interact in places we do not.” She noted the River Center, Hospice groups, and the Food Bank. Other suggestions included the Schools, the Chamber of Commerce, Municipal Committees (such as the Heritage and Conservation Commissions), the Arts Community (Arts Alive and the Sharon Arts Center), Business incubators, and Recreation and Infrastructure professionals.

After the list was determined Chair Chollet interjected “why don’t we just put down young people? We need to involve the young people.” Mr. Throop suggested the students at the High School may be willing to participate. Another member mentioned town employees. Chair Chollet interjected “yes, those who work here but do not live here, that would be interesting.”

The members agreed that whoever made up the subcommittee their focus would definitely be on the extension program. Chair Chollet noted other chapters of the Master Plan had been created and updated by very vibrant subcommittees adding “that is the way to do it.” Mr. Throop agreed adding “otherwise you end up doing it all yourselves.” Chair Chollet concluded “this is a good start; we will discuss the scope, approach and timing next time.”

Other Business

Mr. Throop reported he had two items, the first of which was the updates of the zoning amendments and the Business/Industry District.

He told the members there was a public hearing Monday, October 14th on the *Innovative Subdivision Design* ordinance (created to replace the Open Space Residential Development ordinance), *Home-Based Business* (written to replace Home Business, Professional Uses and Customary Home Occupations and Home Industries); *Workforce Housing and Enlargement, Change or Replacement of Nonconforming Buildings*. He added a public hearing on the *Traditional Neighborhood Overlay District* and *Business/Industrial District* would take place a week later on October 21st.

Mr. Throop gave a brief history of the proposal developed in 2005 described the Planning Board’s effort to implement the objectives of the Master Plan as it related to Economic Vitality. This

included the consolidation of five zoning districts into three to simplify and streamline zoning as it related to business opportunities in town. He noted that while some uses were added, “others were dropped including Office, Personal and Professional Services and Research and Development.” He went on to note the Millard, Brookstone and NEBS buildings in the District adding “and now with the changes at EMS you have to ask what is likely to go in there?” He also touched on some uses that may *not* be appropriate (i.e. assisted living) for the Business/Industrial District and concluded “we will see what the Planning Board wants to do.”

Next Meeting

November 13, 2013

The meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant