

MINUTES

Master Plan Steering Committee

TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH

Wednesday, November 13, 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

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 October Minutes. A motion was made/seconded (Zeller/Kelly) to approve the October 9, 2013 with all in favor.

Chair Chollet noted the second item on the agenda was an informal discussion with Dan Reidy from the UNH Cooperative Extension to review the Extension's Profile/Visioning Program and talk about how it could be applied to meet Peterborough's Vision Chapter update objectives.

Chair Chollet welcomed Mr. Reidy. He thanked her as he distributed copies of visioning programs done for the towns of Henniker and Derry New Hampshire. He also distributed the Vision Plan from the town of Brookline, New Hampshire noting "I personally see Brookline as the most relevant to Peterborough but you can take any approach you wish."

Mr. Reidy told the members visioning program were one or two days in duration. He noted single day session were generally on a Saturday with the two day sessions beginning Friday night and resuming on Saturday. He spoke briefly about having break-out groups to focus on what the initiators had deemed important and then regroup and report back to the larger group. "It is a very succinct way to approach it" he said.

Mr. Reidy went onto tell the members how Brookline had chosen 6 breakout areas to gather data on. A brief discussion about the lifespan of strategic plan followed with Mr. Reidy noting "it differs but the 5 to 10 years is certainly what the state would want" adding "most action plans are on a 5-year rotation to check progress but some towns have gone 10 years and well beyond with their chapters."

Char Chollet noted "planning is a constant thing going on with some chapters lasting longer than others." She noted "I see our job a little differently" adding "we (the Master Plan Steering Committee) function as an arm Planning Board so we might do other things as well." She noted independent studies and putting committees together adding "but historically since I have been on the Committee we have worked hard getting outside people working *with us, for us.*" Ms. Olenik agreed noting "we have not created an action plan but we make recommendations to the Planning Board and the Community, we do not implement." Chair Chollet interjected "that could change but that is how it is right now."

The members listened as Mr. Reidy reviewed the importance of trends that have happened from a chapter since it was written or updated. He noted “stagnation, changes or slowdowns need to be identified. You need to check in with your community.” The members agreed and cited the status of the current economy. “We need to know where we are right now” said Chair Chollet adding “we also need to re-write the Economic Vitality Chapter and how things are different but before we do that we need to come to some kind of shared thinking with the town and report where we are now.”

When asked if he had a formal presentation Mr. Reidy replied “no, I think just answering your questions is better, similar to the Library Forum.” He noted the Committee could craft questions they felt would get the best answer of how to move forward. Mr. Zeller interjected that at the Library Forum there was input from all kinds of people “but in the end it is still going on. When does it get done?” Mr. Reidy replied “it is a bit of a chicken and egg thing. Chair Chollet asked “so how would you deal with that?” Mr. Reidy replied “use the same format (as the Library Forum) feed them, orient them and then break into groups and have discussions” adding “break them into groups they do not choose. That way you get full discussion and good ideas.” Mr. Zeller asked “and we design the group topics?” with Ms. Olenik interjecting “I hope so.” Mr. Reidy noted “you work with Peter (Throop) to design the topics. Mr. Reidy emphasized the importance of *planning* the event not just showing up at the event. “In the end it creates a report that has a tremendous amount of value.” He also noted it was important to involve people in the community to be facilitators and recorders “not the planners, we want to keep them on the quieter side of the event” he said.

Chair Chollet asked for some clarification on the process with Mr. Reidy replying “this group plans the event” adding “you may have some outside people join you for input.” Mr. Throop asked “so in other words form a steering committee?” Mr. Reidy replied “it would probably be helpful in reaching into the community.”

Mr. Kelly asked (with regards to the event itself) “to what extent do you bring in the facts? Would we have a prepared list of facts to put on the table?” Mr. Reidy encouraged ample visuals including maps to show what has gone on in the past ten years. “Do this at the beginning” he said adding “so they do not interfere with the breakout discussions.” Mr. Kelly confirmed “actual facts rather than feelings. The things that actually get connected to what happens.”

The members briefly discussed the increasing elderly and decreasing student populations, what has happened to the tax rate compared to other towns and whether or not the tax issue is relevant to Master Plan visioning *or* a product of it. Mr. Kelly reiterated personal wishes without understanding the facts results in a chapter that is too optimistic and unreasonable. “We need to be a bit more substantive and factual” he said. Chair Chollet noted “the facts of where we been, where we are now and where we are going.” Mr. Reidy added “yes, look at what has been accomplished or how circumstances have changed.” Mr. Kelly noted “it can be done but we should do it in advance.” Mr. Zeller suggested “a well-crafted executive summary might be of assistance.” Mr. Reidy advised the Members to evaluate what was written 10 years ago and ask is it still valid or not. “That is what you are going to be talking about.” With respect to factual data Mr. Kelly interjected “10 years ago we just put the wishes forward.”

Ms. Olenik asked about the logistics of the event as well as follow-up. “Do you come back occasionally to meet with the Committee? She asked. Mr. Reidy replied “yes.” Mr. Kelly asked about drafting the final document with Mr. Reidy explaining the Cooperative Extension creates the final document “and how you use it is totally up to you” he said. Mr. Kelly asked about the timeline with Mr. Throop interjecting “we need time to plan and time to recruit, I envision early April” he said.” The Members briefly discussed the timing of the event in relationship to Town Meeting in May. They also discussed designing questions appropriately, refining the information and building a consensus. “Ultimately we are looking for the sense of the community values and interpreting them into a set of priorities” said Mr. Reidy. When asked how long it would take the Cooperative to create the report Mr. Reidy replied “2-3 weeks.”

Mr. Throop suggested “if you want a steering committee we’ll be better off doing it sooner versus later” adding “recruitment for the event is part of the process and using Town Meeting as a recruiting tool may be a strategy to employ.”

Mr. Reidy noted “there is no magic bullet, no right way to do it” but taking away the obstacles (noting childcare and providing food) improves participation. Chair Chollet noted “April is 5 months away” and asked “is this doable?” Mr. Reidy replied “yes, for me it is.” He went on to note “most of the work is in the hands of the steering committee. You want to be thinking about the people you want to recruit.”

Mr. Throop interjected “also be thinking about other things you can do and suggested the possibility of a survey. “I feel that is an important thing to do.” Ms. Olenik asked “will people respond to a survey?” Mr. Throop replied “it depends on how you do it” noting good success by getting on the service group’s agendas (Rotary, Lion’s Club, etc.) and giving a 5-minute overview of the event, passing out the survey and collecting them before you leave. He also advocated mailing a postcard for an on-line survey tied to a web link.

With no other questions the Members thanked Mr. Reidy for coming in and wished him a good evening. Chair Chollet then suggested they discuss their thoughts about proceeding. Mr. Zeller began with “I may be biased but I have worked with Dan before, he is a professional. He will get the most out of us.” Mr. Kelly agreed noting “he is a complete bargain.” Chair Chollet look to Ms. Olenik and said “Mose you have worked with him how was your experience?” Ms. Olenik replied favorably. Mr. Throop added he had spoken to Carol Ogilvie who also worked with him on the Library project “and she recommends him.” Mr. Kelly noted “what a great way to engage the community” with Ms. Olenik interjecting “and still stay objective.” Chair Chollet added “which is what we need to learn to do as well” adding “it is the town we need to hear form, not ourselves.” “He is tried and true” concluded Mr. Zeller.

A motion was made/seconded (Zeller/Olenik) to recommend the employment of Dan Reidy and the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension to help facilitate the vision process for the Master Plan with all in favor.

Chair Chollet concluded by noting “I think this is great.”

Other Business

Chair Chollet briefly reviewed what the Members should be thinking about for their next meeting. “Sort out the next first steps we want to talk about” she said, “how to spend our time.” She also noted they should be thinking about potential steering committee recruits. Ms. Olenik asked if they should be thinking about general topics for the forum with Chair Chollet replying no, that would be jumping ahead, we should concentrating on what to do to get this started.” Mr. Throop agreed adding “my sense is that we want to identify people we want to invite” adding “we’ll need a script for the invitation.” Mr. Kelly asked “will you draft that?” with Mr. Throop replying “I could if that is your preference but I think it would be better coming from the Committee.”

Chair Chollet suggested she and Mr. Throop get together and draft the invitation. Mr. Kelly suggested they include a timetable to manage the whole process. Chair Chollet also noted they would need to decide the most effective time to facilitate the forum (before or after Town Meeting). “I am not sure what the answer is” she said. Mr. Throop noted he would speak with the Town Administrator for her point of view on the timing. “She may come up with something we have not thought about” he said.

The meeting adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton
Administrative Assistant