



Community Facilities Planning Committee

Falmouth Town Hall, 271 Falmouth Road, Falmouth, ME 04105, 781-5253

Community Facilities Planning Committee

Meeting Notes Thursday, May 5, 2010

Councilor Breen
Committee Chair

Councilor Pierce

Marsha Clark

Judith Currier

Phil Kaplan

Analiese Larson

Tim O'Donovan

Mark Soule

Steve Tenney

Staff

Lucky D'Ascanio

Albert Farris

Theo Holtwijk

Nathan Poore

Lyn Sudlow

Consultants

Cushman &
Wakefield

Institute for Civic
Leadership

Oak Point Associates

Spatial Alternatives

Committee members present: Councilor Breen, Councilor Pierce, Marsha Clark, Judy Currier, Phil Kaplan, Tim O'Donovan, Mark Soule, Steve Tenney, Analiese Larson

Advisors/Town staff present: Nathan Poore, Lyn Sudlow, Lucky D'Ascanio, Theo Holtwijk

Consultants present: -

Others present: Councilor Chase, Chantal Walker

Cathy opened the meeting at 6:32 PM.

1. Meeting Notes

Upon a motion from Teresa and second from Judy, the meeting notes of the March 18th meeting were unanimously approved.

2. Review of April 5th Forum

Cathy asked what the committee thought of the April 5th forum.

Judy thought the forum was well done. She also watched it on TV. She thought the public asked some good questions and noted that there was some negative feeling. She felt that those who wanted to "sell all" of the Plummer-Motz-Lunt property had a concern with taxes. She mentioned a letter in The Forecaster where someone asked what would happen if nothing was done. She felt that the turnout was good and that most people were positive. She thought that Cathy had done a very good job moderating the event.

Analiese stated that she could not be there as she had a conflict with a school board meeting that night.

Steve echoed Judy's comments. He thought the event went well. He was disappointed that not all councilors could be there as the forum was a very good opportunity to be educated on the project.

Tim echoed Judy's comments as well and stated that he was pleased with the attendance. He also thought that Cathy had done a good job leading the event.

Marsha said she felt the same.

Phil said he felt the same as well. He had a few side conversations and felt that people got excited and engaged with the proposal.

Lyn felt that the forum was great.

Nathan thought that a very good job was done with the follow-through. People last year asked for more details and got them at the forum.

Cathy asked if committee members had any side conversations.

Steve mentioned that he talked with two people both of whom wanted to volunteer to make the Community Recreation Center happen.

Teresa felt that the swimming pool advocates did a good, measured job stating their position.

Lucky felt that Cathy had done a good job and that she was impressed with the attendance.

Councilor Chase stated that the Committee had done a thorough and excellent job with the event, but that he had his opinion on the recommendations. He stated that the Committee had researched the project well.

Cathy moved on to review the keypad and on-line survey results.

She asked Theo to review the handouts he distributed. Theo mentioned that Mike McDade was able to determine how many people had watched the video of the event on-line and for how long. Most all people watched the forum program for less than five minutes.

Mike was also able to report how many people had gone to the committee's website to look at the materials posted there. 129 views were made of the Forum presentation page. About 50 people or so explored some of the other information such as appraisals, financial analysis, and cost estimates.

Cathy explained that she asked Theo to research this as there appeared to be a bigger discrepancy between the keypad feedback at the forum and the on-line survey than in 2009, when there was some discrepancy, but not as much.

Committee members asked if there was any evidence of duplicate voting. Theo explained that he and Luck had reviewed all responses sorted by IP address, and that, upon mutual agreement, they removed ten or so responses as they appeared to be suspect. They erred on the side of caution and removed as few as possible. Some duplicate voting may still have occurred, and hard copies of surveys were also made available, but Theo did not think the issue was widespread and did not affect the overall results.

Analiese said she felt that reading many of the comments was depressing. She felt that those comments were rude and that people were hiding behind their computer. Marsha was also struck by the rudeness and hateful comments that were made.

Theo noted the feedback received on certain questions.

Judy asked what the feedback was regarding how much land people wanted to sell at Plummer-Motz-Lunt site. With the on-line responses, the 5 acre option recommended by the committee was top vote getter (27%), followed by 20 acres (24%), 0 acres (19%), 10 acres (15%) and a sizable contingent that had no opinion or did not know (14%).

Cathy asked if anyone had further questions about the survey data. There were no more questions.

Theo stated that despite the tone of some of the comments, they gave a useful idea of what concerns people had, with taxes, with their local government, regarding OceanView, etc.

Cathy mentioned that Councilor Payne had made an effort to reach people on his e-mail list and encourage them to participate in the survey. She said that a footnote was added at the bottom of this message that reflected Councilor Payne's own opinion and his concern for taxes and spending. She felt that this may have influenced the results that came back.

Steve was also struck by the rudeness of the comments and the lack of education on the issue that came through. He did feel that legitimate concerns were expressed and that the fiscal part was important.

Chantal agreed that legitimate concerns had been expressed and wanted to think of options to address them. She felt that public service announcements and Forecaster articles or messages may be helpful.

Judy responded that, if the Town waits to do something because the timing is right for some, the buildings will still be vacant. She felt the on-line comments were insightful as well as depressing.

Mark felt that the fiscal concerns expressed were valid. But he felt that the Council should push forward regardless of those opinions. He also felt that campaigning for a bond issue was not the task of this committee. He thought that the mentioning of a pool by the swimming advocates left a bad taste in some people's mouths.

Cathy went back to the charge of the committee. She felt the key issues were how much land to sell at the Plummer-Motz-Lunt site and if portions of the project should be phased.

Chantal asked if the recommendations were draft recommendations. Yes, the committee responded, they were. Part of the charge was to take public input, some committee members said, and if the committee makes changes to the recommendations based on that input, people will respect that.

Phil stated that he wanted to focus on the people who came to the forum and on what they said. He felt that only possible changes should be considered if there were major contradictions to the committee's recommendations in the survey results. He felt that the committee should trust in what it had come up with and not react out of fear.

Nathan stated that the on-line feedback was tempered from what the forum participants had said, but that there still was overall approval of the committee's recommendations. He noted that the committee could not have asked for more approval at the event. He commented that at elections people may also be uninformed, just as they may have been at the on-line survey, and that their vote would likely be based on what campaign may have gone on. He felt it was significant that both groups – keypad and on-line – supported the recommendations.

Mark felt that the on-line survey numbers were encouraging to him. He felt that they were enough to go forward with, what he called, a "modest attempt" at making facility improvements.

Councilor Chase stated that he had been talking with OceanView and had encouraged them to take a more active role, but that they had wanted the committee to lead the way. He felt that OceanView really needed 5 acres and would pay well for it. He wondered if there could be separate questions at the referendum, one for Town Hall, another for the library, etc. He felt that the program as a whole was overwhelming. He said he was behind the recreation center, but that there were a lot of reasons not to move Town Hall, and that he had fought against that for 50 years. He did not fight the move of the Police Dept. to its own facility, but he missed not seeing them at Town Hall. He felt that the library should campaign for itself. Because space was becoming available at Plummer-Motz-Lunt did not mean that one had to make such a big push, as it was a residential neighborhood. It was asked if Councilor Chase was in favor of selling more land at Plummer-Motz. He replied that he felt that leaving 10 acres for the Town may not be enough. He was in favor of having a design-build project for the entire 20 acres. He felt that a contractor could come up with a good commercial plan. He clarified that and said he meant that tall residential buildings for OceanView would be OK, but not retail commercial. He was still in favor of doing a 5-part referendum question.

Cathy again referenced the committee's charge and felt that a package of recommendations was what the Council had asked for, that the facility needs had to be addressed as a whole and not piecemeal.

Mark noted that the availability of the Plummer-Motz-Lunt site came up after the committee had started and that the committee had delayed its work to incorporate that component.

Analiese felt that the survey contained very good data points which showed overall agreement with the vision. She was ready to move forward.

Steve wondered if any changes needed to be made as he doubted this was the best package. How could it be a better package, he wondered. He had a little more faith in the on-line polling as the forum participants were self-selected. However, he did not know how to scale the proposal back. He was also struck with the unsentimental opinion of respondents regarding keeping Town hall and the library in the current locations. He felt it was tough balancing act, but was not convinced that the best proposal had been arrived at yet.

Analiese noted the responses to Question 11 regarding the proposed Town Center. At the keypad polling 88% were very much in favor or in favor. The on-line survey showed 55% very much in favor or in favor.

Cathy commented how conservative the Town had been regarding keeping the mill rate flat. She said this was unusual compared to other communities. The mill rate is currently \$12.35 per \$1000 and this proposal would add \$0.26 to that. She felt that this increase does not maintain existing services (like

most tax increases typically do), but actually provides new amenities. One gets a good deal for their money, she observed.

Steve noted the tax increase in 2013 due to the school bond. He wondered if the concern expressed by some taxpayers was with the amount of the tax increase proposed, or whether it was with any tax increase. The sense of the committee was that the concern was with any tax increase.

Mark felt ready to make the committee's recommendation. He felt it would be a shame to sell the Plummer-Motz-Lunt property.

Steve felt that multiple referendum questions did not make any sense as the proposals parts were intertwined and serve as a package.

Mark felt that additional Town properties could be sold to generate income, such as the former Brown property on Route 88.

Steve felt that voters needed to be educated on the needs of the library. As staffing at Town hall is shrinking, some may ask why the space there is proposed to be increased. The current square footage is 17,000 sf. The proposed space is 23,000 sf.

Cathy noted the benefit of co-locating the library and town hall on the same site, where the possibility of shared services and efficiencies could be realized. She wondered how the Town would deal with shared public-private use of the Plummer-Motz building, if such were to come to pass.

Steve wondered how the questions on Town Hall should be answered. The committee's sense was that it was small increase in floor space, that the current building is mechanically deficient, that asbestos abatement is required, that some offices are in closet-like spaces, and that overall it is not a good space.

Marsha stated that there was no "do-nothing" option. Cathy concurred and stated that in a do-nothing option the Town will continue to spend money on the existing Town hall.

Nathan recounted how the facilities project had come into being. In 2007 there was a proposal from Rotary for community meeting space and the library had proposed to expand on-site and acquire two residential properties for a cost of about \$4M. The net cost of the current proposal, he said, is also about \$4M, the same as the cost for the library a few years ago, but in the current case there are additional benefits to be obtained.

Analiese felt that the Town Hall proposal was the hardest sell. She wondered if, with a move, there were additional opportunities for regionalization. She saw rate increases in other communities, and if Falmouth had the space available, it might then have the ability to take additional services on.

Mark felt that still something needed to be done, and that, if it was not the committee's proposal, it would mean wasting more money in the long term.

Tim agreed with Steve. He felt that the fiscal concern was there all along. He questioned the appraisal values for Town Hall property.

Marsha was ready for a revote by the committee. Once the Plummer-Motz-Lunt property is gone, it is gone, she stated. She felt the Council should allow the committee's proposal to go to referendum.

Steve felt that the fundamental question was to keep the Plummer-Motz-Lunt property or not.

Councilor Chase asked the committee if it thought its proposal would pass. The group did think so. Councilor Chase felt it would be rejected by a 2-1 vote. He stated that the committee had spent a lot of time on it and agreed that the voters should make the decision.

Cathy felt that the Council should not vote for it, because the committee had spent a lot of time on it, but solely do so on its merits.

Mark wondered if the Town missed other opportunities when committees proposed proposals that the Council ultimately did not act on.

Councilor Chase noted that there never was push to expand Town Hall and that its abutters were concerned.

Steve mentioned that he was Church Trustee and that the church envisioned early intervention with the Town on any zoning proposals for the property, but would not stand in the way of reuse of the building.

Cathy noted the changes that Falmouth has gone through. Recently the Town's population has grown 30% and will continue to do so as several hundred lots have already been approved for building that are as of yet unbuilt. She felt that change happens, and that either a community can put the brakes on or it can work to shape that change.

Tim noted the lack of sentimental attachments that people seem to have.

Phil felt that the Town needed to have more identity and a vision, and that the proposal provided that.

Lucky noted that the on-line voters represented 1/10th of the voting public.

Tim thought it was good that the committee was aiming for the November 2010 election as that promised to have a good turnout of voters (as opposed to the June 2011 election).

Cathy noted on a flipchart the components of the committee's proposal.

Properties to sell: 5 acres to OceanView, current library building, current Town Hall, Pleasant Hill Fire Station.

Properties to renovate: Plummer building for Town Hall, Mason/Motz wing for recreation center, Lunt building for the library, conversion of the stone dust area into green space.

There was some discussion if the Lunt additions were needed for the library as had been questioned by Councilor Armitage. Lyn stated that they were needed in the plans as drawn up by Oak Point Associates. Some areas just do not lend themselves to, for example, the children's area. Marsha concurred and said that not doing the additions now would "bite us" later.

The committee noted that the food pantry should also be part of the proposal.

Judy asked about additional parking needs. Additional parking is proposed for the Lunt/library building.

The proposed café was discussed. There was sense that a business person such as Mike Leavitt or Adam Shapiro should be asked about its potential. Mark said he was not supportive of the café idea. Marsha felt that the café was a distraction.

Cathy made a list of the ideas for which the committee wanted to leave the “door open:” push carts provided by enterprising local businesses, café, farmers market.

Marsha felt that this list would add fuel to the fire. Phil said that, on the other hand, it would get people excited about the potential. Analiese felt that the list should be held back, but that the committee should be prepared to address these ideas when questioned by the Council.

Cathy asked for a show of hands in favor of the committee’s proposal as outlined on the sheets. All committee members raised their hands. Chantal Walker, Councilor Chase, and staff did not vote.

Cathy mentioned that the next step is to go to the Council on May 10th. She felt that this would be the first and only time that the committee would have to make its case, and that it should take its time to do so.

Teresa concurred and felt that the entire presentation that was done at the forum should be done for the councilors, especially as some could not attend the forum.

The committee also agreed to show the 2009 video again by way of introduction and as a reminder of the changes that had since taken place.

Teresa opted out presenting the Town hall piece, so she could focus on her role as councilor. Phil agreed to present that piece. Cathy, as chair of the committee, will lead the presentation. Theo was solicited to present the keypad polling and on-line survey feedback. Nathan will present again the financial slides, Chantal the library slides, and Steve the Recreation Center slides.

There was a suggestion made that the Council should get bids early, so the financial uncertainties would be reduced as much as possible.

Cathy said that the Council would be asked to send the proposal to referendum and do the additional advising that was suggested. Teresa said that the key question was: should the Council decide this issue or should the voters do so.

Nathan noted that the bonding for the library may be complicated due to its private status. There was some discussion how the agreements between the library and the Town should be worked out. Cathy envisioned the Council chair and the library board chair getting together to work issues out and that that would result in a Memorandum of Understanding between the two parties.

Judy stated a “thank you” to Cathy for her leadership for the duration of this project. The entire committee concurred with that and applauded Cathy for her effort and leadership.

Cathy then adjourned the meeting around 8:49 PM.

Draft Meeting notes by Theo Holtwijk, May 7, 2010.