



Long Range Planning Advisory Committee (LPAC+)

**Thursday, November 8, 2012
Minutes**

Attendance:

Name	Present	Name	Present	Name	Present
Rebecca Casey	√	Bud French	√	Hugh Coxe	√
Paul Bergkamp	√	Kurt Klebe	-	Jim Thibodeau	-
Steve Hendry	-	Sandra Lipsey	√	Julie Motherwell	-
Rachel Reed	√	Sam Rudman	√	Steve Walker	√
Claudia King	-				

Council Liaison:

-

Staff present:

Theo Holtwijk

Others present:

Councilor Varney,
 Tom Churchill (property manager for the Falmouth Shopping Center),
 Mary Costigan (counsel for the owner of the Falmouth Shopping Center),
 Jonathan Culley (developer),
 Ben Devine (developer),
 Tony Donovan (developer, realtor, and a member of a group exploring train transportation to Auburn),
 Beth Franklin (realtor),
 David Hembre (architect),
 Andy Hyland (architect),
 Elise Kiely, (realtor),
 Lois Lengyel (realtor),
 Mike Payson (developer),
 Mark Sengelmann (architect),
 Matt Teare (Director of Development at Ocean View), and
 Chris Wasileski (project manager at Ocean View).

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM.

Theo welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming.

Becca Casey facilitated the event, introduced herself, and the attendees did the same. Becca told the group where the committee was in the Comp Plan process and what its major themes in the draft vision were. She stated that the committee hoped to have a conversation with real estate developers, architects, and realtors on future residential

and commercial real estate development in Falmouth. She pointed out the questions the committee had for the guests to comment on:

1. What (residential/commercial) building products would you want to design, build or sell (or expect to see built) that will cater to the Falmouth market over the next 10-20 years?
2. Where in Falmouth do they see potential for that?
3. What opportunities does the draft vision statement provide for that?

Becca noted that certain themes had emerged during LPAC's work including the aging of our population; the notion of connectivity among neighborhoods; and, the vibrancy of the Town's commercial district.

Tom Churchill stated he hoped to see more use of solar energy and the removal of overhead power lines in the commercial areas.

Jonathan Culley said he hoped for more residential density around the Route 1 corridor and cited examples of neighborhoods such as Falmouth Flats and the Town Landing neighborhood. He realized that density was a concept that was not embraced by all. He felt that Falmouth had a role to play in the region. It had done a good job of land conservation, but was also the nearest suburb to Portland and should provide for dense residential development. For example, he felt that the Pleasant Hill neighborhood needed to be much denser than it is today.

Andy Hyland agreed with that, and noted that the market will determine how dense that could or should be. He mentioned the points-based zoning system in Boulder, Colorado, where points are obtained for building in-town, or building in an energy-efficient manner, etc.

Beth Franklin also agreed with Jonathan and felt that natural gas would help to promote more dense development.

Elise Kieley stated that development should be encouraged where infrastructure is present and agreed that natural gas would be an additional benefit. She noted that Falmouth was a desirable community and offered a diverse landscape. She felt that the highway access – to I-295 and Turnpike - that Falmouth enjoyed was unique as Cumberland and Yarmouth do not have that.

Tony Donovan said he was working with a group on a rail project near Lunt and Middle roads. He envisioned passenger rail service to Auburn with stops along the way, including one in Falmouth. He felt that rail service presented unique development opportunities.

Ben Devine wondered what Falmouth wanted to be. Does it want to provide the best lifestyle for the people that reside today in the community? What type of experience does Falmouth want to provide?

Jonathan Culley stated that he saw a place for multi-family development in Falmouth. He noted that his family sees Portland as "their" town and go there for restaurants, for

example. He also agreed with Ben that Falmouth needed to determine what it wanted to be. On the one side are people who like Falmouth just the way it is.

Becca asked the group what people are looking for.

Mike Payson stated that people want to have a variety of options available to them. The extent to which these are provided depended on what Falmouth wanted. Should Falmouth grow from a residential perspective, and, if so, what are the pros and cons? Should it preserve more open space? Should it develop more commercial space?

Paul asked what viewpoint the group had on that.

Mike Payson added that the Town could dictate development by using tools such as placing a cap on the number of units that it is willing to issue building permits for. This would occur if the Town sought to affect development beyond just letting the market dictate. He stated that it would be nice if there was more affordable housing.

Lois Lengyel stated that the housing options on the lower end of the cost of a home were very limited. She wondered where affordable housing fit in, or if it even does fit in. She felt that past efforts towards developing affordable housing had not been carefully thought out, especially regarding transportation.

Matt Teare stated that with density, many things were possible.

Beth Franklin felt that the density at Ridgewood replicated that of The Flats and that there was a diverse mix of people there.

Andy Hyland commented that Ridgewood was a 90-acre site of which 70 acres was left undeveloped. He felt that was critical so wildlife would have sufficient habitat. He noted that this was a development where there was density that allowed open space to be in a contiguous group that benefited wildlife, as opposed to open space that was fragmented

Jonathan Culley felt that the Flats were more of a traditional neighborhood and had no open space as part of it. He felt it was important to conserve land in the western part of Falmouth. He noted that in Portland's R-3 neighborhood, one can build on a 6,500 sf lot and that by that standard Ridgewood was not dense enough. He also mentioned cottage style building around a courtyard with shared parking that is common in the northwest US. He did not know if that could work here or if apartment buildings could work, particularly apartment buildings with elevators.

Tony Donovan stated that through his work he has found that "Generation Y" is not interested in cars. They are more interested in technology. They can afford houses but are looking more for living spaces with services, e.g. spaces close to amenities. In addition, he stated that Baby Boomers are now looking for places where they can "get out of their cars" and hence are looking for living spaces that include walkability.

Matt Teare commented that Falmouth was hard place to do development. He was referring to the permitting aspect. There is often a community reaction to a proposed diverse development.

Ben Devine stated he lived in downtown Boston and does not use his car much during the week. He felt that this was not realistic for Falmouth. He thought that a corridor where Falmouth could focus on for walkability was along Route 1 from Waldo's to the Falmouth Shopping Center.

Others commented that they saw opportunities in the Ledgewood, Middle Road, and Pleasant Hill area, where neighborhoods existed that could be built upon.

Mike Payson felt there was an opportunity to add more housing diversity. He felt that Falmouth had various neighborhoods with character, but that over time, the community had lost affordability. He saw opportunities for attached housing closer to Route 1.

Elise Kiely stated she had a concern with affordable housing built as a block. She noted that there were currently 110 homes on the market from \$185K and up. She felt the affordable housing inventory existed already but that many homes needed renovation. She said that these could be made more available if the Town were willing to take a silent second on the mortgage. She commented that buyers rationalize a location if the home they are buying is new. In general, she would like to see affordable housing spread throughout the community.

Matt Teare suggested that a small project that was a little different be tried here and there and see how that goes. He cautioned against doing a master plan.

Sandra asked what steps the group would recommend to encourage good development.

Tony Donovan stated flexibility in zoning.

Elise Kelley posed the question whether the Town, because it is a public entity, should be involved in housing.

Mike Payson stated that tax credits for housing is one way to accomplish affordability. He agrees with those who believe that affordable housing should be interspersed throughout housing in general, and he thought that zoning was a good way to effectuate this goal.

Matt Teare commented that earlier attempts at Master Planning had not been greeted with much enthusiasm in the Town.

Ben Devine commented that the Council and the planning department did not always appear to be on the same page.

Rachel asked for some example communities where things appeared to work better.

The group mentioned various other communities, including South Portland, Scarborough, Westbrook, and Brunswick.

Mark Sengelmann saw an opportunity for more density along Route 1 with buildings close to the street, where one could feel the density. He felt that was less applicable in the exit 53 area.

Chris Wasileski was concerned with his contemporaries who could not afford to come to Maine. He felt that the quality of place in Falmouth was a very valuable asset. He noted that there was no real defined grid pattern of streets where one could walk to all sorts of cool stuff. But he noted that a more affordable housing option was compensated by the fantastic proximity to the ocean, biking opportunities, the city of Portland, and soccer fields. He felt a need to attract a broader base of people, especially younger ones.

Beth Franklin mentioned the growing network of footpaths to get to destinations, such as the schools. The Town had made a concentrated effort to improve on that.

Mark Sengelmann felt that what was needed was flexible zoning. Approve a project if it meets most standards, not necessarily every standard. He commented that the ordinance requirement for classic New England forms did not allow a lot of progressive architecture.

Tony Donovan mentioned form-based codes as a possible approach.

Matt Teare stated that OceanView has had success with an overlay district approach. Perhaps that could be expanded in key locations to get some projects going.

Andy Hyland felt that the Village Design Guidelines were helpful. He recommended results-based zoning.

Mike Payson noted that less restrictive projects often get referred to the Town Council for a decision and that projects got hung up when they reached the Council.

Ben Devine commented that in 50 years there had not been a new 50,000 sf building built in Falmouth and that the trend was with a smaller, denser retail setting.

Becca asked the group what it felt the chance of another large employer, such as TD Bank, locating there.

Chris Wasileski mentioned that with or without such a development he was concerned with growing traffic on Falmouth Road.

Sandra asked how the current through-traffic on Route 100 could be better supported.

There was a comment that the area lacked the necessary infrastructure.

Rachel noted that despite TD Bank's presence the West Falmouth Crossing did not appear to be a commercial success.

Mark Sengelmann commented that the area had quite restrictive zoning with large setbacks and that the zoning had a preclusive effect on development. The area felt more open, especially with the Turnpike exit/entrance there.

Mike Payson added that the area did not appear to have enough residential density and that the commercial development of Route 100 would be predicated upon residential density

Ben Devine stated that there not many large tenants out there. He mentioned Wright Express as one example, but did not see Falmouth going after that with a TIF.

Elise Kieley noted that there was more highway noise in West Falmouth and more train noise, and that noise was a deterrent for those looking for housing.

Andy Hyland recounted a past planning effort in Falmouth where he worked in a group on West Falmouth on a new neighborhood with alleys. He felt that that had been a mistake, and that it was important to observe what is already in an area and build on that.

Tom Churchill felt what was needed was flexibility in zoning. He felt that multi-family zoning would also help to retain a balanced tax base as less dense zoning may not pay for school education. He envisioned walkable places with a sense of community consisting of 2 bedroom units. He wondered who made the decision on such things, and commented that the group had spoken about “town” (the community) as well as “Town” (local government) and that it was important to distinguish between the two.

Theo asked what advice the group had for the committee.

Mike Sengelmann stated clarity and consensus. He felt there were divergent visions on the Council.

Jonathan felt the Town should not be wishy-washy. He said that Portland is very specific what it wants in its plan and that that was helpful. Portland wants to build X units on the peninsula by Y year. He is currently involved in a 39-unit project on a 17,000 sf lot.

Tony Donovan mentioned a federal sustainable initiative aimed at creating livable communities. He felt that transportation should be seen as an essential ingredient of land use.

Mark Sengelmann recommended that the Town “unlock” zoning. NIMBY’s should be made into YIMBY’s (Yes In My Back Yard). He realized that might be hard to accomplish.

Matt Teare stated that currently the easiest development to do was to put a cul-de-sac on a 20-acre parcel, and that hardest development was infill as there was no incentive to do that. He felt that Falmouth needed density and certainty (of approvals).

Lois Lengyel recommended zoning flexibility. She felt the town seemed stuck right now, relative to commercial development and affordable housing.

Andy Hyland said that no innovations could be expected to come from conventional zoning. He emphasized that we look at the character what we have built so far and enhance that.

Ben Devine cautioned for unintended consequences. He recommended that one push for positive results. He felt that the 50 year old building he was working with presented a great opportunity, but needed flexibility. He felt that nothing would get approved in Falmouth unless it was well done. He noted that Falmouth was lucky that all the major players were local and recommended that the community harness that.

Beth Franklin agreed with what had been said. She felt there was an opportunity to have more conservation subdivisions with homes on 1/3 acre with 3,000 sf home on it. She anticipated that transportation would more of a problem, and be more expensive, in the future.

Elise Kieley also agreed. She felt that certainty was important for commercial development.

Matt Teare stated that if the Town was aggressive with land conservation, it should be equally aggressive with density. He mentioned Lincoln, Massachusetts as a community that has done that well.

Chis acknowledged that certainty was very important, as well as a clear process to get approvals. He also felt that maintaining the quality of place was critical and that Falmouth should build on its strengths. He noted that the transportation mix (including bike paths) was also important.

Sam thanked the group and stated he was thrilled with the conversation and noted the balance that needed to be achieved between flexibility and certainty.

Bud asked for a clarification of Mark's comments regarding Route 100. Mark clarified that there was no building presence along the road and that that hindered a walkable, dense development there.

Sandra also thanked the group and noted that many chapters had been touched in tonight's conversation. She felt that the low mill rate that the community was enjoying was a matter of partnership. For her it was question of how, who, and where do we attract what we want to attract.

Becca thanked the guests for coming and encouraged them to check out the draft chapters on-line.

The meeting was adjourned around 9:00 PM

Draft meeting notes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, November 14, 2012