

**Master Plan Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Georgetown Public Meeting
Regarding Economic Development
March 13, 2007
11:00 AM**

Attendees: Sarah Buck, Town Planner; Jack Moultrie, Planning Board; Harry LaCortiglia, Planning Board; Pat Ratay; Steve DeSisto; Jason Mello; Jim Crosby; Joe Knapp; Larry Ogden; Richard Lappin; Jim Lacey; Linda Meiggs; Erika Johnson, Daylor Consulting Group; Michele Kottcamp, Planning Board Assistant.

Ms. Buck addresses the group - The Planning Board is charged with producing a Master Plan. Within that plan, we are also looking at the National Avenue issue. Since Erika Johnson is gathering data at this stage, we thought it would be a good idea to have her meet with this group to obtain any comments or concerns from the Georgetown business community.

Ms. Johnson- The Town has a 2004 Community Development Plan. We are writing a few new sections to that plan. While you have an economic section, National Avenue is a big issue that we are looking into in more detail. The comments already received from the Town have been excellent. They have been very positive. I read all of them and they are very helpful. I don't have a lot of data on the retail businesses in town for the retail section of the Master Plan. When looking at the benefit of Big Box retailers, they think regionally rather than locally.

Ms. Buck – I will be looking at the draft for what steps we ought to be taking from the Master Plan. We would like to know how other communities are increasing their tax base. There are certain communities that are rural with good access to Interstate 95 that would attract businesses. How does someone find commercial real estate in this town?

Mr. DeSisto of Coldwell Banker Commercial- There were many hassles and a lot of harassment given to the shopping center as well as Dunkin Donuts before they were given approval to open their businesses. The I-93 and I-95 corridors are where the businesses start. It tends to begin in Danvers and then doesn't begin again until Newburyport. The traffic pattern is really I-93 and 495. These are the only places for available land. We need other businesses that want to settle here. There is 10 miles of dead space between Danvers and Newburyport on I-95.

Ms. Johnson- Pertaining to National Avenue – there is not a full feasibility study on the sight.

Mr. Crosby – Do you look at the impact to the business community?

Ms. Johnson- From a broad perspective, we would say what is or is not good for the Town. Based on what is available in town, we will say what is appropriate for the town. A lot of residents from the Town want to preserve a small town feel – that is a choice the town makes (increasing small businesses vs. larger national chain development).

Ms. Buck- There is a Public Hearing on zoning amendments scheduled for April 4th. The Board is proposing a zoning amendment called Major Development Review, which would require developments that exceed certain thresholds - over 30,000 s.f. of new space for example - to provide the town with analysis of the impacts created by that development and gives the town the ability to approve or deny based on evaluation of those impacts. The Planning Board has been pursuing this.

Comment to the effect that there is little developable land left in Georgetown anyhow.

Mr. Moultrie- There is open land on Tenney and Carlton Drive. There is also talk of an 80 acre parcel that is behind Tenney Street at the end of Longview. It belongs to Paul Shore.

Mr. DeSisto- All that area on Long Hill road has changed. It could be industrial and commercial. There is no reason why this area won't increase the tax base for the Town.

Ms. Buck- What is the potential tax revenue to the town through economic development? It would be interesting to look into that. The value in residential land is worth substantially more now than commercial.

Mr. Moultrie- Speaks about residential re-evaluation and indicates that Georgetown is reviewed every year by the Assessors. If you doubled the business rate in the Town then Steve [Mr. DeSisto] is right. You do not want to not attract new businesses here.

Ms. Buck- We definitely want business development, but may not be able to count on commercial tax revenue to really offset the increasing deficits we're getting through new residential development. Somehow the state has to give us another source of dedicated funding. I think it is good to encourage business but not solely for the tax base. We need to think about the range of benefits that come to the town through having local businesses if we are to know what kinds of businesses to encourage.

Mr. Moultrie- I personally think the Town has to sell itself to attract new business.

Mr. LaCortiglia- What does the Town have to offer? To be business friendly, the Town should have a place to host guests.

Mr. Ogden- We get no service from the Town. There is no benefit. Five years ago, Groveland was an easier sell.

Mr. DeSisto- Unfortunately, the Town of Groveland can do and offer a few more things than Georgetown.

Ms. Pat Ratay- What are these other towns doing like ours? Rowley has Rte. 1 and Middleton has Rte. 114 for commercial development.

Mr. Jim Lacey of The Georgetown Alliance- Because there is nothing currently now between

Danvers and Newburyport there is potential for development.

Mr. Ogden- But you need a draw.

Mr. Richard Lappin with The Georgetown Shopping Center- When you look at Hamilton with a higher disposable income, they have a potential for growth in their downtown.

Mr. Moultrie- The key to economic development is sewerage.

Mr. LaCortiglia- It was identified back in 2004 but nothing was done.

Ms. Buck- Unlike the existing Community Development Plan, the complete Master Plan includes an implementation section that should give the Planning Board direction to move forward on these issues. This will address that issue.

Mr. LaCortiglia- You will not see a walkable and livable downtown without proper sewage. CPC funds could very possibly study what is feasible.

Ms. Buck- Smart Growth Grants may help. We should ask for funding to explore the fiscal and design impacts of a more dense downtown.

Mr. Ogden- There are two geographical problems with sewer – high water table and where to put it.

Mr. LaCortiglia- For the greater downtown good, you may need to take some land for the sewerage.

Mr. DeSisto- The cost will have to be assumed by the town.

Mr. Moultrie- You have to be able to sell it.

Mr. LaCortiglia- It is necessary to have a mixed-use downtown to make it a successful and vital downtown.

Mr. Moultrie – All towns have their attributes. “Rural” doesn’t describe this town anymore.

Mr. DeSisto- Mixed use in a downtown is a wonderful thing.

Mr. LaCortiglia- The mixed use could even be used for Affordable Housing.

Mr. DeSisto- It is important to note that affordable housing is not for the poor. It is determined at 20% less than the average income. This means town employees, teachers, firemen, etc. could benefit from the affordable housing.

Mr. Moultrie responds to a question from Mr. Crosby– Unfortunately, regionalization of the schools was not of interest to the Town fathers. I don’t see any obstacles, where the town could

combine purchasing power, not services, with other towns. We are working on a plan like the plan used for Police and Fire that is shared between towns. However, it may not always work well.

Ms. Buck- There was a 2003 audit done by Suffolk County. If the uncontrolled costs that are state mandated were taken out, our municipal spending would show a negative growth. This showed we are running on a negative growth in revenue. Considering that the median household income is approximately \$70,000 and the median tax bill \$3500, we are trying to run the town at only a .5% [should have stated 5%] tax rate.

Mr. DeSisto- Healthcare, pensions, etc are increasing problems with more people retiring and healthcare going up. There was a big discussion about an override at the meeting I attended in Haverhill last night.

Ms. Johnson- We will be looking at school enrollment and space needs for the Master Plan. Within the next few weeks, we will have something to look at.

Ms. Buck- On March 20th, there will be a draft and analysis on the web and in our office for anyone to review. On March 27th, there will be a Master Plan meeting. Meeting Minutes from this meeting as well as all the Master Plan meetings will be posted on the website.

Ms. Buck thanks everyone for attending and contributing to the discussion and closes the meeting at 12:05 PM.