

Great Barrington Master Plan Committee (MPC)

Minutes of February 23, 2012
Fire Station
37 State Road, Great Barrington

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Co-Chairperson Michael Wise. Bill Meier was designated as recording secretary.

Members present: Barbara Bailly, Andrew Blechman, Ryan Caruso, Shep Evans, Jonathan Hankin, Paul Ivory, Bill Meier, Mary Beth Merritt, Deborah Phillips, David Rutstein (Alternate, voting), David Shanahan, Karen W. Smith Michael Wise.

Members absent: Richard Dohoney, Suzanne Fowle-Schroeder, Michele Gilligan, Jack Musgrove, Vivian Orłowski,

Also present: Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Minutes of January 26, 2012

Wise and Rembold corrected several typos. After a motion by Hankin, seconded by Evans, the minutes were approved as amended.

Draft Vision and Goals

Rembold outlined several revisions to the draft Vision statement.

Smith noted that the Vision statement can be described as a Mission statement. It expresses the mission of this Master Plan in way that people can easily grasp. This is what people will read of the Plan if they read nothing else. She thought it was a little overwrought and seemed like more of a marketing piece; it should be brief and straightforward. Others disagreed.

Wise reminded the Committee of several items from last month's discussion that have not yet been emphasized enough. One was acknowledging our town's role as a regional commercial and service hub, and an explicit connection to the Regional Plan now underway. Phillips said that this issue is reflected in our town budget. We spend money that we would not spend if we were not a hub. We need to keep this in mind when we make investment or budget decisions.

Wise said education is also not yet emphasized. Since the quality of the educational system is an important element in families and businesses decisions to locate here, it should be prominent. It should include mention of public schools, private schools, vocational training, and colleges. Phillips said that good education options are important to fostering our desired demographic mix, with plenty of young families across a range of incomes.

Hankin mentioned a recent statistic he read that one in four (1 in 4) households are single-person households. He said that is an important demographic that we cannot ignore. Meier said that he is amazed at how many Simon's Rock graduates stay in the area after they leave school.

Wise reminded that the town will need to make difficult spending decisions, and we need to keep these ideas and goals in mind as we do so. We have to support young families and individuals entering the

work force but also an increasing aging population. Smith mentioned that the Parks Commission is shifting from spending on swings and playgrounds for children and more on amenities or equipment for older adults. There are more old people than young people in our town. Phillips said we must support both, but we need to balance our decisions so we do not neglect one demographic or the other. Hankin agreed saying age diversity is desirable.

Wise offered the issue of economic gardening for discussion. Evans said we need to make sure we have the right infrastructure in place, whether it's charging stations for electric vehicles, broadband internet, shared office space, natural gas to Housatonic, and cell phone service in Housatonic. Merritt and Phillips said a group of people investigated what assets the community needed, or what could be built on. It was called asset based community development.

Timeline / Upcoming Activities

Rembold gave an overview of the next few months and specific topics he is working on. These are historic preservation, arts and culture, economic development, and open space/recreation.

In May we will have a second forum at which we present our Vision statement, our overall Principles, and the key initiatives for each topical area.

In the meantime at the next two Committee meetings, the task forces will reconvene to update their previous work and generate specific strategies.

Other Issues and Concerns

Smith mentioned that a group of volunteers has put together a list of service providers and resources. This South County Resource list is in draft form and on the town website. She asked folks to review it and correct / add any information by emailing her. Go to http://www.townofgb.org/Pages/GBarringtonMA_BOS/South%20County%20Resource%20List%202012%2023%202012.pdf for review it.

Adjournment

On a unanimous vote, Wise adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

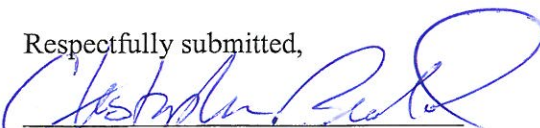
Next Meeting

Thursday, March 22, 2012, at the Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road at 7:30 PM

Materials distributed or presented for this meeting:

- Draft Minutes of January 26, 2012
- Revised Draft Vision Statement

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher Rembold, Town Planner