

**Great Barrington Master Plan Committee (MPC)**  
Minutes of January 13, 2011

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**Call to Order**

Co-Chair Michael Wise called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM. He announced that the meeting is being recorded.

The following members were present (alternate members without voting power at this meeting are denoted with *italics*): Walter Atwood, Barbara Bailly, Ryan Caruso, Jim Clark, Richard Dohoney, Shep Evans, Jonathan Hankin, Paul Ivory, Bill Meier, Mary Beth Merritt, Jack Musgrove, *Vivian Orłowski*, , David Shanahan, Karen Smith, *Christine Ward*, Michael Wise

The following members were absent: Suzanne Fowle Schroeder, Michele Gilligan, Don Goranson, and Deborah Phillips.

Mr. Wise indicated that tonight's Recording Secretary is Mr. Atwood.

Mr. Wise asked members to initial the sign-in sheet. He suggested that when members would like to speak they should raise their hand or name cards so that they can be recognized by the Chair.

**Approval of Minutes of December 9, 2010**

Ms. Merritt asked whether members should respond to the email with amendments to minutes. Mr. Wise indicated that was acceptable and would simplify matters, but at the meeting the changes should be formally accepted. Mr. Rembold agreed to forward the minutes to everyone in Word format.

Mr. Hankin and Mr. Wise corrected several typos in the December 9, 2010 minutes. A motion was made by Mr. Hankin, and seconded by Mr. Musgrove, to approve the minutes as amended. All in favor; none opposed.

**Timeline and Schedule**

Mr. Rembold indicated that there were two main revisions to the master plan project timeline. First, the schedule was shifted so that Great Barrington's three town-wide forums coincide with the sub-regional forums scheduled by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for the purposes of their regional plan. The packet that was emailed and handed out at the meeting includes a fold-out timeline for everyone to follow. The first forum is tentatively scheduled for July of 2011. The second town forum would occur almost one year later in roughly May 2012. This is the time when we are starting to refine the vision, goals, and strategies that we'll be working on. The last public forum would be in December 2012, in order to review what would hopefully be a fairly complete draft of the Plan.

The second main change was to stretch out Phases 2 and 3, to build more time in to the public outreach components, as was suggested by this MPC. These Phases would occur over a nearly one-year period. This includes a series of town-wide forums, surveys, interviews, topical workshops, etc. to be an interactive year of gathering input and feedback from the community at large.

Ms. Orłowski pointed out that many people are away in July. Mr. Rembold said that this is scheduled in July for two reasons—one, to get input of second homeowners, and second, to line up with Regional Planning's scheduled session. Mr. Musgrove indicated that July 10 is the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Parade.

Mr. Meier said he was concerned that people will be confused by the local and the regional planning process. Mr. Rembold stated that the first forum will be a good link, because we'll hear first from regional planning about the trends and issues on the regional level, and we can have those on our minds as we then turn to our local plan and examine the issues at our local level. As we get further into the process we should be able to craft our goals and strategies in way that build from, not conflict with, those being discussed for the region. Mr. Wise said he hoped that this will be a two-way process, where if we come up with something of value at the regional level, it can be incorporated into that plan. Mr. Rembold reminded the MPC that BRPC will have a staff person at our future meetings so that we can have that two way dialogue and try to avoid any confusion.

### **Review of Plan Resource Packet**

Mr. Rembold briefly discussed the list of resources that the MPC members should be familiar with. One item which he will print out for everyone is the town's current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). Also included in tonight's resource packet is a one-page handout of the State's 10 Sustainable Development Principles. He suggested that this is a good checklist of "smart growth" actions that our plan should tie into as much as possible. Also included are overview sheets from the American Planning Association including "Plan Making, A Primer," and "Thirteen Features of Good Planning." He asked that MPC members review these and keep them at hand as they are valuable guides. Lastly, there is a print out from BRPC called a "Berkshire County Snapshot" which is useful for review. The upcoming meetings will present more in-depth information on demographics and trends.

Ms. Merritt suggested that the MPC consider endorsing the 10 Sustainable Development Principles and moving forward with them as a common framework. Mr. Ivory noted that makes sense since these are fundamental to state grants and the regional plan and that it seems they are almost obligatory; they are not radical and they make sense. Ms. Smith stated we need some vision points or a mission statement that we all agree on, as principles, in order to move forward. Mr. Clark pointed out that it is a good framework for us but it is a work in progress. Mr. Wise suggested that an agenda item for a future meeting might be agreeing to or setting a sort of vision statement.

### **Outreach and Public Participation**

Mr. Rembold shared a document entitled Public Participation Activities and Goals that he hopes helps begin the conversation about our outreach strategies. These take into account three overarching goals of a media and outreach campaign: (1) to generate excitement and enthusiasm to get people involved, (2) to provide information and also receive information, and (3) to promote diverse and broad involvement from all interests, ages, and groups.

Mr. Rembold suggested the MPC brainstorm some outreach strategies. The following vehicles/venues and ideas were voiced:

- Town meetings- distribute informational materials at Town Meetings and public meetings
- Telephone system – The CTY automated system is a new, unique, unexpected, and therefore effective way to announce important events.
- Radio – WSBS and WBCR are always looking for new programs and materials. WSBS has Wednesday morning programs. This would be great for when we break into subcommittees and have particular topics to discuss.
- Newspaper – columns and articles can highlight our topical reports and recommendations.
- TV – go to the studio and video tape a round table discussion and/or particular issue.

Ms. Smith pointed out the importance of getting the Master Plan idea out to the public with a recognizable and understandable message, or tag line, so everyone knows what we are doing, and there is a “buzz.” Ms. Merritt said we ought to tie our efforts into the energy of the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events. Mr. Shanahan noted that some people will not take a master planning effort seriously, so we need to make it interesting. Mr. Meier suggested that we show the highlights of past plans and what they have helped accomplish or what is still to be done. That way people know that these are valuable and viable documents.

There was discussion about getting youth involved in our effort, including the High School. Mr. Rembold said he would meet with the Guidance Department to set up a meeting about using their internship and W.I.S.E. program to make the connection. He thought a photo or video journal project might be a good experience for students. Ms. Orłowski noted that Williams College students in a planning course completed a “food shed” study about agriculture and the local economy, and perhaps a Simon’s Rock class or student could undertake something similar—these are great projects that we don’t have the manpower to do on our own. Mr. Ivory said we need to clarify what we want from students and from volunteers, and identify intersections between our needs and their curricular needs.

Mr. Rembold said he hoped somebody from the MPC with experience in campaigning, branding, or in media relations would help him with outreach and messaging at each step, for each event. Ms. Orłowski and Ms. Smith both volunteered to assist. Mr. Wise suggested that each MPC member also be aware of media worthy events, stories, and connections to be made.

Mr. Wise brought up focus groups as a participation strategy. Mr. Rembold said these small discussions help people speak more frankly about controversial issues and is a quick method of drilling down into more detail about complex topics or sites. Mr. Atwood said he would assist in organizing meetings and would help at the meetings themselves.

Mr. Rembold said he would ask the MPC’s help in writing the questions for certain groups, so that we could make sure we ask the right questions, and frame them correctly.

Mr. Clark asked a question about how proactively we as the MPC should get particular owners or developers involved in our town planning. Mr. Rembold responded that sometimes it is valuable to contact landowners or developers directly to see what their intentions are, what opportunities or constraints there might be for that area or parcel of land. Where there are parcels or developers with the potential to have large changes on the Town, it is best to get their input during the master plan process.

Mr. Wise asked whether this plan is appropriate for listening to and incorporating interests of this type. Mr. Rembold said that we want to encourage the type of land use that makes sense for our community, and we do not necessarily know what that is yet. When we hear from the community, we can make broad land use and development policy. This might affect areas in general or parcels specifically.

Mr. Shanahan stated that we need to bring development interest in line with what makes this area so attractive for people to come and live. Mr. Evans added that we need policies to a good mix of uses, to encourage a balanced community.

Ms. Smith pointed out that the MPC is a visioning board. We are collecting and organizing the community vision. Right now, what we are trying to do is to enlist the community to share their vision. Then other boards and committees will enact those regulations and procedures to implement that vision.

Mr. Wise said yes, but we also need to deal with facts. We must gathering both vision and facts. That is also the role of the MPC.

Mr. Shanahan said we need to consider the level of Town services, and our future needs and expectations, when we talk about land use. Mr. Rembold said we will be talking about Town finances and budget, particularly capital budget planning, as we move ahead over the next few months. Mr. Wise asked that Mr. Rembold send the Town's budget to the MPC, perhaps comparing previous, current, and future projections. Mr. Rembold informed the MPC that the Selectmen and Finance Committee will be meeting over the next few months to put together budgets for the coming years.

Mr. Hankin asked about mapping. Mr. Rembold indicated that maps would be presented over the next several meetings.

Mr. Wise said that showing maps and posters of land use trends would be excellent ways of capturing public interest.

Mr. Hankin asked how focus groups would be identified. Mr. Rembold said that we have already put together a long list of stakeholders and potential focus groups. Ms. Smith suggested that Mr. Rembold contact Berkshire South because they have put together a list of focus groups in the past.

Ms. Ward asked whether the MPC would vet focus group questions first. Mr. Wise asked the same question with regards to surveys. Mr. Rembold indicated that yes he would ask the MPC's input when determining the types of information we need from these groups and the questions we will ask. Those tasks are built into the project timeline.

Ms. Smith suggested discuss posters and graphics with Neal Webber's class at Monument.

Mr. Wise asked whether anyone in the MPC would be interested in making a blog for the master plan. Ms. Smith suggested that we should encourage people to come to meetings and focus groups, or open office hours. Mr. Dohoney, on the other hand, said it gives another venue for people to raise ideas, good and bad, whether or not we consider the ideas further. If they come to a meeting to express their views, then that is better. Mr. Shanahan said that blogging would help us engage youth. Mr. Rembold indicated that the Town is interested in the concept of social media like Facebook, but the Town must first develop some policies and weight the time commitments of the exercise before the MPC establishes an official Facebook page. He suggested it would be a good project for a student—that way it would not be associated officially with the Town.

Other outreach ideas included a film festival of movies filmed in Great Barrington. Mr. Hankin stated he would talk to the Berkshire Film Commission about this idea. Mr. Rembold will discuss with the Mahaiwe and Triplex, and coordinate too with the 250<sup>th</sup> Committee.

### **Subcommittees**

Mr. Wise suggested that the next four or five meetings will be devoted to particular topics. Mr. Wise asked that the MPC organize itself into working groups or subcommittees. He asked that members review the timeline handout and those 9 required elements of a Master Plan (see the presentation from the first meeting), and come to the February meeting ready to volunteer to help Chris with particular topics they want to learn more about. These could be pared off into small, unofficial subcommittees that investigate a topic, gather data for the benefit of the MPC, enrich the discussion, and report to the MPC as a whole. Other groups might include media and organizational. Please come ready to volunteer.

Mr. Hankin and Mr. Shanahan said they would help with land use.

Ms. Merritt handed out pamphlets about the Agricultural Committee's "Keep Farming" effort. This effort will provide many opportunities for the MPC members to get involved and explore the link between agricultural issues, economic development and land use in general.

### **Other Issues**

Mr. Wise addressed the issue of email etiquette. The MPC agreed that it will share topics of interest that are relevant to planning in our Town. Please avoid ongoing emails containing controversy and deliberation. You may reply back to the author of the email, but do not "reply all" to an email.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be Thursday, February 24 at 7:30 PM.

### **Adjournment**

At 9:00 PM, Mr. Musgrove moved to adjourn. Mr. Dohoney seconded. All were in favor.