

Great Barrington Master Plan Committee (MPC)

Minutes of June 23, 2011

Great Barrington Fire Station
37 State Road, Great Barrington

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Co-Chairperson Michael Wise. He announced that the meeting was being recorded and asked members to sign in and pick up their materials for the evening. He designated Richard Dohoney as the recording secretary. He noted that the Planning Board appointed Barbara Bailly as the new Citizen-at-Large member of the Committee and that the Council on Aging would designate a representative to take her place as an Alternate.

Members present (alternate members *without* voting power at this meeting are denoted with *italics*): Barbara Bailly, Andrew Blechman, Richard Dohoney, Shep Evans, Michele Gilligan, Jonathan Hankin, Bill Meier, Mary Beth Merritt, *Vivian Orłowski (Alternate)*, Deb Phillips, David Shanahan, Karen Smith, Michael Wise

Members absent: Ryan Caruso, Jack Musgrove, Suzanne Fowle-Schroeder (Alternate), Paul Ivory, Christine Ward (Alternate)

Also present: Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Minutes of May 26, 2011

After a motion by Phillips, seconded by Smith, the minutes were approved.

Subcommittees Task Force Reports

Wise asked the three remaining task forces to present their summaries.

Transportation report: This task force was not prepared to give a report.

Services/Facilities: Bailly summarized utility infrastructure, including water and sewer systems. She noted that past plans have recommended that the quality and quantity of water supply be protected and that land development be managed so that growth does not necessitate expansion of the systems. Hankin suggested that the 1997 Plan and Planning Board efforts since then have encouraged more compact growth in existing centers. Currently Housatonic water has capacity for 85 new hook ups, and the GB Fire District will be updating its system on Main Street. Gilligan asked whether there are any issues with capacity and quality of the GB water supply. Shanahan pointed out that the GB Fire District has been searching for a secondary water source. Merritt added that Taft Farms has a substantial water supply but the restrictions on using the land for agricultural purposes (APR) have not allowed for development of that source. Bailly said these issues might be something that needs investigating.

Past Master Plans said little about the Fire and Police Depts. Since the last plan, there have been two new school buildings – the regional middle and elementary schools – and the high school is considering renovations. The Mason Library has been renovated and there are plans to renovate the Ramsdell Library in Housatonic, pending funding. The Fire Department is a volunteer department; if recruitment declines, consideration of a paid department might be warranted.

A wide range of services are provided to seniors at the Claire Teague Senior Center. Usage of the center has increased markedly, and the programming has expanded, in recent years.

Health care is provided at Fairview Hospital, CHP, East Street, Timberlyn Heights, Berkshire Meadows, GB Rehab, and Fairview Commons. There are few health care options in Housatonic. The old school in Housatonic could be considered for such a use.

Bailly discussed Town-owned buildings, including the old Fire Station in the process of being sold.

Implementation: (Dohoney, Gilligan, Wise)

Wise summarized the recommendations of the 1997 Plan, with a focus on some of the tools that were recommended. He noted that implementation often requires changing rules and regulations, or establishing a new organization to undertake some project. Implementation could use financial tools, like taxes, fees, or funding sources and structures. Some methods are less formal, like issuing promotional materials, lobbying to change state laws, improving procedures, coordinating staff or programs, better using existing powers (like special permits, design guidelines), etc.

Wise suggested that our current process should carefully analyze the implementation strategies of the past plans, assess what worked or what did not, and judge which actions in this current plan are likely to be successful, how we measure their success, and what changes or supporting actions might be required to ensure success.

Rembold referred the Committee to his June 24, 2010 memo to the Planning Board, which was a reexamination of the 1997 Plan and which listed the implementation actions of that plan, and whether or not those had been accomplished. Where there were discrete regulatory actions suggested, particularly zoning, there was at least an effort to get these to Town Meeting. Some were not passed, some were. But broad policy suggestions tended to be dropped and there was less success following through on those types of issues.

Wise and Smith both advised that if this plan makes recommendations similar to those of past plans, and they were not implemented in the past, we need to find out why not.

Phillips suggested that the Master Plan Committee should not dissolve after writing the plan. Instead, this committee or a similar committee should monitor the plan every six months or year, keeping other boards and commissions on task and keeping action items up to date. Wise added that a recommendation to this effect might be a necessary part of the plan.

Hankin noted that the 1974 plan identified specific buildings or businesses and tied recommendations to these. Unfortunately many of these no longer exist and it is difficult to understand where or what the recommendations were, exactly. This plan should include some better way of identifying sites, companies, etc., including pictures, map references, or other ways of ensuring what we do now is usable, can be interpreted, 20 years from now.

Existing Conditions

Rembold gave a brief presentation on historical and cultural resources, energy and climate change, transportation, facilities, and town finance. The PowerPoint slides were distributed to the Committee and are included with the record.

Discussion of July 14 Vision Workshop

Rembold discussed the roles and responsibilities of Committee members at the upcoming workshops. He presented the draft agenda and handed out fact sheets and flyers for members to distribute to generate attendance.

Adjourn

On a motion by Gilligan, seconded by Phillips, all in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:55 PM.

Next Meeting

Thursday, July 28 at 7:30pm, at the Fire Station, 37 State Road

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

- Reports and PowerPoint from subcommittees:
 - Services/facilities
 - Implementation
- At a Glance Fact Sheets
- Flyers for July 14