

Great Barrington Master Plan Committee (MPC)

Minutes of August 25, 2011

Gilligan Residence
320 State Road, Great Barrington

The meeting was called to order at 7:50 PM by Co-Chairperson Michael Wise. He designated Jonathan Hankin as the recording secretary.

Members present: Barbara Bailly, Andrew Blechman, Ryan Caruso, Shep Evans, Michele Gilligan, Jonathan Hankin, Paul Ivory, Mary Beth Merritt, Bill Meier, Vivian Orłowski (Alternate, not voting), Deborah Phillips, David Rutstein (Alternate, not voting), David Shanahan, Suzanne Fowle-Schroeder (Alternate, voting), Karen Smith, Michael Wise.

Members absent: Richard Dohoney, Jack Musgrove, Christine Ward

Also present: Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Minutes of July 28, 2011

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

Outreach and Engagement Activities

Neighborhood Outreach

Rembold passed out maps dividing the town into 11 neighborhoods, assigning one or more MPC members as captains of each based upon their residence. Per Rembold, each neighborhood should have some kind of get together — house party — to bring the master planning effort to the grass roots. It is hoped that reaching out in this fashion we will be able to engage those people who might otherwise not be inclined to come to larger, more formal visioning sessions. These neighborhood groups might serve as outreach for other events, provide their own vision, might also be a forum to test specific goals when we get to that point in the process. Rembold will try to attend all neighborhood gatherings.

Merritt asked what is the timeline for this activity? After general discussion, it was agreed we should try to hold a gathering in each neighborhood prior to Thanksgiving, being mindful in scheduling of holidays, the school term and other events, in order to maximize attendance.

Blechman volunteered to be in the neighborhood abutting his as well.

There was discussion of the map that had been circulated by Rembold providing geographic representation of those attending the first visioning session. MPC members were shown in blue, other attendees were shown in yellow. Smith wanted town employees to be added to the map based on residence. Wise asked if the map could be expanded to contain names and addresses of attendees to facilitate the outreach for the neighborhood gatherings. Rembold will develop talking points for the neighborhood gatherings before the next meeting.

Interviews and Focus Groups

Wise opened the discussion by asking who will organize the interviews and focus groups. Rembold said he would help. There was much and heated discussion about how we can involve those residents, often natives, who feel excluded and disinclined to involve themselves with master planning process. It was

emphasized by Shanahan, Phillips, and Smith, that we must reach out to them where they congregate whether that be church, VFW, Great Barrington Sportsmen's Club, or the Brickhouse Pub. Phillips cautioned that if they are approached with an attitude, fear, or discomfort, they will not speak forthrightly. Fowle Schroeder suggested that the schools would be good to add to the list as a place where people congregate.

Rembold discussed both the Survey from 1994 and his draft of a one-page survey. He suggested that they might be used in focus groups as a way of getting people talking. Orlowski, mentioned her recent introduction to "appreciative inquiry" a technique developed at Case Western Reserve University which leads by asking participants for a positive experience that they have had. This allows people to get out of a problem-solving mode and energizes them, through their positive experience, to find common threads. Merritt countered that we have to allow concerns to surface. Phillips opined that people want to have their concerns heard. Wise remarked that if people responded 0-4 in the survey, Smith should work with them and 5-10 the Orlowski approach might work. Fowle Schroeder suggested that the one-page survey might be amended to include: "What is a recent positive experience you have had?" Merritt expanded to add "What would you do to improve (upon) it?" Rembold will revise prior to next meeting. This general survey can be used in ad lib discussions. A longer, mail-out survey may follow based upon the effectiveness of this survey as a tool.

Interviews and Focus Groups

People volunteered to participate for the following:

Town staff	Phillips, Smith, Rembold
Town boards	Rembold
Public services	Caruso, Rembold
Health	Gilligan, Orlowski, Rembold
Educational	Meier, Smith, Rembold
Regional	Wise, Rembold
Housing	Bailly, Blechman, Rembold
Businesses	Phillips, Wise, Rembold
Agriculture	Merritt, Orlowski, Rembold
Historic	Ivory, Rutstein, Rembold
Open space/Rec	Caruso, Evans, Rembold
Arts/Culture	Blechman, Wise, Merritt, Rembold
Hospitality	Wise, Rembold
Restaurants	Wise, Rembold
Seniors	Bailly, Blechman, Gilligan, Rembold
Youth	Phillips, Smith, Rembold
Land Use Pros	Hankin, Shanahan, Rembold
Non-profits	Blechman, Orlowski, Rembold
Key Individuals	Blechman, Hankin, Phillips, Rembold

Several groups were suggested to be added to the list: Rotary, Greenagers, VFW (both), Bridge, ESL classes, tourists, DFW including Fish and Game, Great Barrington Sportsmen's Club, Housatonic Valley Association, second home owners, Kilpatrick Athletic Center at Simons Rock.

Board's and Committee's Agendas

Will be discussed at next meeting. Smith mentioned that the Parks and Rec Commission had been working to get the neighborhoods to take "ownership" of facilities in their area. Each commissioner takes responsibility for one park.

Adjourn

Hearing a general consensus, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 9:03 PM.

Next Meeting

Thursday, September 22, at the Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road at 7:30pm.

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

- Preliminary list of interviewees and focus groups (dated 9/15/2010)
- Generic Survey (2011, 1 page)
- Survey Sample (1994, 3 pages)
- Map of MP Committee members