

Master Plan Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
June 24, 2014

The meeting was called to order by Joe Hutchinson at 7:10 PM

Members Present: Joe Hutchinson, Didi Chadran, Victor Normand, Lucy Wallace

Liaisons Present: Joe Theriault, Jaye Waldron

Guest: Bill Scanlan, PB Planner

Minutes: The minutes of June 10, 2014 were approved as written.

Action Item List: Joe H. distributed a chart of tasks/deliverables with assigned leads from the MPSC and status – an Action Item List. He will update it for our meetings and include Judi in its circulation. Joe T. suggested attaching it to the meeting minutes as well.

Survey Update: Joe H. reported that there had been 237 respondents to the survey – about ¼ of those who responded to the Phase I survey. He said Judi had promised to provide the survey results to the MPSC a week after it closed (so we should be receiving results this week). It was agreed that additional analysis/correlations would be useful, but that we need to see initial results before suggesting further analysis.

Long Term Debt: Joe H. discussed the handout present at a recent meeting led by Town Administrator Tim Bragan regarding known, anticipated, and not-yet-in-the-queue capital projects. He has sent it Judi, as well, as this should be included in the master plan discussion of the town's capacity to address its needs. There was a discussion regarding the impact (positive or negative) of Devens' jurisdiction on the town's long term debt. Victor raised the issue of debt being carried by MassDevelopment for Devens. He stated that the town should have assurance that should it resume jurisdiction of Devens it would not assume any Devens debt.

EDC Forum on C District: Bill Scanlan gave an overview of the recent EDC forum on the C District. He estimated that 50 people attended the forum, most of which were from the abutting neighborhoods. His role at the forum was to present options for design guidelines. While most present were opposed to locating a grocery store on Ayer Rd, Lucy noted that Jim Stevens (chair of the EDC and forum moderator) seemed to keep pushing it. The pros and cons of "by right" and "special permit" development were considered. While the former may be more attractive to potential developers, that latter is often more reassuring to abutters as there is opportunity for more public input. Victor noted that while what residents want for retail activity on Ayer Rd is important, businesses need to know there is a market. He considers Ayer Rd marginal for retail markets.

MRPC Grants: Bill Scanlan has secured two grants from the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC). The first, for \$25,000, is to study the Town Center's "livability": parking, pedestrian access, and traffic circulation. The final product would include recommendations (apparently with sufficient detail) for implementing improvements. Work under this grant will take approximately 3 months; funds are available through September 2015. The second grant, for \$10,000, is to develop design

guidelines and possible zoning amendments for the Town Center. These funds must be used by the end of 2014.

Joe H. raised several concerns. Would the work under these grants free up funds RKG had allocated to the Town Center to be used for other work under the master plan? Could the funds be redirected to the C District? Bill felt the funds could only be redirected by reapplying next year. Judi needs to be “the cook” managing these grants (with Bill) to assure the work fits into the master plan and is not seen as outside the master plan. Lucy wondered if the grants could be held off until completion of the master plan and then used to further the recommendations contained in the final Master Plan. Joe H. reported that there will be a meeting with Judi, Bill and himself to further discuss coordinating these efforts.

Fall Forums: Given the recent EDC forum and the two MRPC grants focused on the Town Center, Joe H. wondered if, in addition to the planned forum on Devens, we should have two additional forums. Lucy wondered if all three topics could be covered in a single day-long forum. Joe T. asked about the purpose of the forums; Joe H. replied they would be used to test the findings and recommendations in the working papers. The Devens forum would be an opportunity to test the “tool” or criteria for assessing jurisdiction of Devens. In order to provide input to the Master Plan, they would also have to be held before the end of September. Victor noted that we would have very poor turnout unless there was something specific for the public to react to. General consensus was there is general planning fatigue on the part of the public and, therefore, we should put the forums on hold for now.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 PM. The date of the next meeting was not set.