

Master Plan Steering Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 19, 2015

Members Present: Didi Chadran, Joe Hutchinson, Lucy Wallace
Liaisons Present: Joe Theriault, Jaye Waldron
Planning Board Present: Michelle Catalina, Erin McBee, Kara Minar
Planning Board Consultant: Bill Scanlon

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

Administrative: The minutes of February 19, 2015, March 5, 2015 and March 9, 2015 were approved as presented.

Meeting between RKG and Town: Kara Minar gave an overview of her meeting earlier in the day with Town Administrator Tim Bragan and Craig Seymour of RKG regarding the status of the contract (which ended on February 15, 2015) and possible steps forward. She acknowledged that the MPSC was caught between the deadline of June 30, 2015 for use of the funds, the constant delay of delivery of documents by RKG, and the desire for a quality product. She also acknowledged the vote of the MPSC not to extend the contract.

According to Craig, Judi Barrett is “burned out” and cannot continue to be the project manager for RKG. He has proposed his retaining the services of Darlene Wynne, a contract planner to act as the project lead, working 30 hrs/week to get it completed on schedule. Judi would help Darlene at some undefined level. Craig believes the work is 75% complete, although RKG has only billed the town for about 50% of the contract price.

One option, therefore, would be for the contract to be extended to June 30, 2015 under the terms suggested by Craig.

A second option was discussed: that the contract be terminated with no further payments to RKG (the MPSC feeling that the work was not close to 75% complete) and that individual consultants be retained to provide assistance on particular sections, such as Devens and the C District. Joe H. noted that Brown Walker had provided the name of another firm in New Hampshire that could do the Devens analysis and that MRPC could provide some services as well. As long as the funds are obligated by a contract before June 30, we could use them after the end of the fiscal year.

A third option would be for Bill Scanlon to be contracted for additional hours (above the 20-hour per week contract he currently has with the Planning Board (PB)) to assist the MPSC in completing the plan.

A fourth and final option was also considered: a hybrid of options two and three. The MPSC would take on a considerable amount of writing of other sections, perhaps by reorganizing the plan from the current chapter format to the required elements.

With these four options on the table, there followed a lengthy and spirited debate on the pros and cons of continuing with RKG, where and how to find other quality consultants

willing to take on small sections/low cost contracts, and how to produce, at the end of the day, a quality document that the PB could use as a road map for the next 10 years.

Issues raised and discussed included:

1. The MPSC has tried repeatedly to work with Judi's sliding schedule and adjust its own response time, to no avail.
2. Judi was often unprepared or late in delivering documents. Case in point: the Devens workshop. The power point, to be handed out at the meeting, was not delivered to the MPSC until 4 AM the day of the workshop. The maps provided by RKG were incorrect. Finally, we never received a summary form Judi of the findings of the workshop.
3. Lack of face time with Judi has led, in large part, to the breakdown of communication. If we continued with RKG, we would expect Darlene at every meeting.
4. Devens is a major issue to be addressed, yet RKG has not even addressed it in either the working papers or draft Chapters 2 and 3 in the way they proposed (the Devens "matrix: or "criteria"). The Devens framework is not useful and is incomplete in a number of ways. In short, the MPSC does not believe RKG willing to fulfill its obligations with respect to Devens. Therefore, on this matter alone, RKG's contract should not be renewed.
5. Separate the Devens piece out to another firm and let RKG finish the balance of the plan.
6. Quality of final product is uppermost. MPSC has lost faith in RKG's ability to deliver a quality product.
7. To date, the town has appropriated \$135,000 to the master plan update (\$35,000 for Phase 1 and \$100,000 for Phase 2). The town is expecting a plan that addresses its major areas of concern: assessing Devens' impact on Harvard (with or without jurisdiction returning to Harvar); the C District; and meeting our housing needs and requirements.
8. There is enough with the drafts received to date for the MPSC to pick it up and finish the plan, especially if it is organized by required elements as opposed to the synthesis and analysis Judi had shifted to with the chapter format.

At the end of the meeting the MPSC agreed it needed to meet ASAP with the missing member and liaisons to bring them up to speed on tonight's meeting and recommend a way forward (particularly if the MPSC was going to take on a more major role in writing the plan). Kara advocated for another joint meeting of the PB and MPSC, but Michelle, Erin and Lucy felt trying to find a suitable meeting night for so many people (5 PB, 5 MPSC and 4 liaisons) would be problematic and time-consuming. The best course would be for the MPSC to meet on its own. Obviously, any PB members would be welcome to attend, but it would not be a joint meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.