

Master Plan Implementation Committee

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 23, 2015

Members present: Deb Paul, Mary Wing Soares, Mike Speltz, Ted Combes, Tim Seikmann, Sue Joudry
Also Present: John Vogl

I. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:09 pm by Deb Paul

II. Discussion re: Opportunities to foster Community support of Agriculture

D. Paul opened the discussion on community support for local agriculture. She introduced that this topic was a major area of focus for the Committee and that tonight she wanted to brainstorm ideas that the town might implement in the future. She explained that in her opinion, the way to do this was by strengthening the notion of the town center as an “agricultural destination”. Further, She said that the historic values of the center and the readily accessible trails created a venue that should be promoted and better utilized. D. Paul cited case studies from Pennsylvania where vendors utilized “tiny homes” to store their products and form a temporary sales area reminiscent of a village center. She said a key decision for the group is setting the boundary for the extent of Londonderry’s town center. Within that area, the Town could permit small scale storage spaces for the sale of farm goods and products, including regular farmer’s markets. Members discussed the merits and practicality of small vendor spaces and touched on such themes as maintaining the structures, parking/access, liability concerns and their impact on the local farms already operating in Town. T. Seikmann questioned whether such markets would be seen as complimentary or as competitive with the existing store fronts such as Mack’s Apples and Sunnycrest Farms. D. Paul said that she had spoken with farmers who thought the idea would be complimentary; the farmers already are in communication with and each other and also actively support each other. She said the idea here was to create a singular place for vendors and products in our historic center. M. Speltz said the Lion’s Hall property was an ideal space to conduct such a market event as this type of event should be concentrated to an appropriate venue. Richard Flier, 41 Adams Road, made the case for communicating with farmers directly to get their direction and feedback on what services/opportunities would be most beneficial. R. Flier further explained that the Town needed to investigate up and coming types of agri-tourism that would make Londonderry a destination to larger markets including the greater Boston MA area and draw customers from afar. He described an idea for a combination of agricultural plots and a private bunk-houses where visitors could rent private spaces on farm properties in order to experience the farm lifestyle and work their own plots. R. Flier further explained that the farming experience could be enhanced by featuring side trips/excursions to seasonal events and as well as catering by local farms and farm-friendly businesses.

D. Paul compared the idea to that of a “green pearl” where regional agricultural opportunities are cross-promoted through a consistent, thematic message across a wide variety of venues.

Members came to consensus that more discussion was needed, with specific input from the farm community. J. Vogl said the group needed to determine the level of demand and interest for farmers markets before deciding where to site one. He also said the Town needs to identify what could be accomplished through public policy and what needs belong in the private sector and where the middle ground is. Members agreed the next step should be to host a public session with farmers to ask questions and get feedback on the policy directions they are most in need of and which would be most complimentary to their operating plans.

J. Vogl distributed an email he received from Mike Speltz that presented a list of questions to determine if a community is “farm friendly”. The checklist was distributed by the NH Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture and the UNH Cooperative Extension and organized questions in terms of Practical Land Use Ordinances and Regulations, Fair Enforcement of Local Regulations and Understanding and Encouraging Farming. M. Speltz said the goal was to review the questions and use the answers as a tool for identifying whether the town is either meeting, or falling short of meeting, agricultural goals. He and J. Vogl said the checklist provided a good tool to determining how “farm-friendly” Londonderry really is. The results could be used to structure future recommendations. All agreed to review the questions and discuss at future meeting.

III. Other Business

No other business.

IV. Adjourn

M Wing-Soares made a motion to adjourn at 8:40 pm. Second by M. Speltz. Meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Minutes prepared by John Vogl