

**Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC)  
Regular Meeting**

**Minutes of September 29, 2009**

Members Present: Patrick Babcock, Charles Blanchard, Alan Curboy, Sandra Gibson, Quigley, Chair, Steve Dalberth, Penny Dumas, Heather Hart, Heather Hendrick, Ginger Peabody, Matt Rousseau, Bruce Smith and Maryann Thorpe.

Members Absent: Chris Rovezzi

Consultant: Ralph Willmer, VHB

Staff: Jean M. Bubon, Town Planner, Diane Trapasso, Administrative Assistant

Ms. Gibson-Quigley called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. She thanked everyone for their interest in participating in this planning effort. She provided everyone with background information on the consultant selection process and the MPSC formation. She indicated that as part of the formation of the MPSC, the Planning Board determined that there should be two members of the Planning Board on this Committee and that she would be Chairing the Committee. Ms. Dumas is the other Planning Board member serving on this Committee. She then introduced Mr. Willmer as the Project Manager.

Mr. Willmer provided an overview of his company and the types of work that he has been involved in including several other Master Planning efforts.

Introductions

All members and staff present introduced themselves to the group and provided the following information:

- How long they have lived in the town or owned a business in town;
- Whether or not they represented a local organization and if so what organization;
- Why they applied to serve on the Committee;
- What their top two to three planning issues are; and
- They described one thing about themselves that had nothing at all to do with this process or the town.

Organization of the Committee

Ms. Gibson-Quigley presented an organization chart to the members showing the proposed organization. As proposed the Committee would have a Chair and two Co-Vice Chairs. The Co-Vice Chairs would oversee five MPSC members each. Each MPSC member would head up one plan element working with various Focus Group volunteers. The MPSC

members would report back to the Co-Vice Chairs who would then report back to the Chair who would then make sure that all timelines are being met on various tasks. Ms. Gibson-Quigley suggested organizing the committee at the next meeting.

Mr. Willmer explained that there would be monthly meetings of the MPSC that would last about two hours each. Meetings would begin at 6:30 p.m. and would generally be held at the Senior Center. This entire planning process is projected to take about one year. Public outreach will be conducted via public meetings, survey and project website. MPSC members will be responsible for reviewing draft chapters of the plan.

Mr. Willmer provided an overview of the elements of a Master Plan and also provided background information on the history of master planning and the plan as defined in Massachusetts statutes. He stressed the importance of implementation of a plan and said that VHB would work with the MPSC to identify sources of funding for implementation for example, grants that may be available. All members were provided with a copy of a section of the RFQ that was issued for Master Plan Consultants. This section detailed what the town wanted included in each plan element. He also provided an outline from the Bedford Master Plan that VHB is in the process of preparing.

Ms. Gibson-Quigley indicated that the Planning Board selected VHB in part, because the Board believed that they had the ability to listen to participants and guide them through this process.

#### Overview of Immersion Day

All members were provided with an overview of the Immersion Day that was held on August 24, 2009. Mr. Willmer indicated that consultants from VHB and RKG (a sub-contractor) and CMRPC (the consultant working on the Commercial Tourist District Revitalization Plan) toured the Town and then interviewed many elected and appointed officials, department heads, and business owners over the course of the day. The consultants compiled the results of the interviews and developed a list of strengths, challenges and opportunities based upon those interviews and that information was contained on the handout provided to members.

#### Overview of the Planning Process

Mr. Willmer provided an overview of the public forum and explained how a Vision Statement can be developed from the insight gained during that session. He explained that a Vision Statement is generally limited to one or two paragraphs. The Vision Statement can be reviewed and amended if required as the plan progresses.

Mr. Willmer explained that after the public forum it would be expected that one plan chapter per month would be drafted; each chapter would typically contain between 20-25 pages. The drafts would be distributed to the Committee one week in advance of the meeting for review so that members could be prepared to discuss the chapter at the meeting.

Mr. Willmer stated that he would make copies of plans prepared by VHB available if members of the group wanted to review a current Master Plan. He also advised members that the 1988 Master Plan, current zoning bylaws and other documents were all available on the town website.

### General Discussion

Ms. Aniko Fata (Focus Group Volunteer) questioned how the MPSC would know what to plan; was there a point when it was determined what amount of budget would be available for items contained in the plan. Mr. Willmer explained that this is a long range plan that will be implemented over a period of years. VHB would help the Committee understand the costs that would be associated with the recommendations contained in the plan and they would also help the Committee understand the different sources of funding that may be available.

Ms. Hart asked how the plan would get accepted. Mr. Willmer explained that the Planning Board must adopt the plan. Some towns choose to bring the plan to Town Meeting for acceptance but that is not required. Some communities also choose to have an Implementation Committee to oversee implementation of the plan and in some towns that group reports annually to Town Meeting.

Ms. Hart questioned how this Committee would make the document available once it was adopted. Mr. Willmer said that would need to be discussed but normally a certain number of hard copies are produced and it can be placed on the website for viewing and discs could also be made available.

Mr. James Cunniff (Focus Group Volunteer) stated that in the past, long term implementation of plans was handled to some extent through the Town Administrator. He would assign certain Department Heads tasks as part of their annual goals. Ms. Gibson-Quigley thought that occurred with the Dialogue for the Future, but that was a Board of Selectmen planning study.

### Public Forum

After discussion the Committee agreed upon Saturday, November 21, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. as the time for the Public Forum. Ms. Gibson-Quigley stated that Mr. Durgin offered the Junior High School cafeteria and library. Ms. Peabody suggested that each member should invite 5 people and that a notice should be placed in the paper. Mr. Willmer stated that was a good idea and in addition the Committee could develop flyers, post the notice on the website and send notices home with students. Mr. Rousseau offered to contact Steve Tieri, media teacher at the school for assistance. Ms. Hendrick belongs to the Mom's Club and will get the word out that way too. Mr. Curboy suggested using the Reverse 911 and the portable message board. Ms. Dumas, Ms. Hendrick and Mr. Rousseau agreed to work on publicity. Mr. Willmer will draft a flyer that he will forward to Ms. Bubon for distribution.

### Community Survey

Mr. Willmer stated that he would be using the University of New Hampshire (UNH) Survey Center to conduct the community survey. He would generate draft questions and get the input of the MPSC on those questions. However, it would be up to UNH to determine how to frame the questions so that they would be in a scientifically valid format. MPSC members should think about questions they would like to pose and provide any specific questions to Ms. Bubon to be compiled and forwarded to Mr. Willmer. He would also provide some survey samples to the group so that everyone could gain a better understanding of the types of questions normally included on surveys. Ms. Dumas thought it was important to define terms that people may not be familiar with; for example even the term commercial may not be clear to some. She also thought that it was important to know where the respondent resided in town. Mr. Blanchard suggested a map drawn into quadrants with a question in the survey asking the respondent to identify the quadrant where they reside. Ms. Hart thought it was also important to think about the amount of time people would spend on a survey. She noted that on-line surveys let you know how long it will take to complete and will give an indication of the percentage of the survey completed.

### Project Website

Mr. Willmer stated that after discussions with Ms. Bubon it seemed to be more practical to have VHB maintain the website with a link from the Sturbridge Home Page and Planning Board Page on the Town Website. There will be links to all the documents, meeting notes and photos of events.

A banner will be developed and that will be used on all communications and the website for the project. Mr. Willmer will provide samples to the MSPC and the group will decide which one to use.

It was suggested that a Sign in Sheet would be used at all meetings for members of the public in attendance. Additionally, Ms. Bubon will compile a list of email addresses and phone numbers for distribution to the group.

On a motion made by G. Peabody, seconded by B. Smith and voted unanimously, the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.