

WASHINGTON PLANNING BOARD
Master Plan Subcommittee – Working meeting
Minutes
July 29, 2013

Committee members present: Jean Kluk, Steve Terani, Jim Crandall, Nan Schwartz, Annie Bissonnette, Lolly Gilbert, Carolyn Bullock, Bob Williams.

1.0 The meeting was called to order by Jean Kluk at 6:30 PM.

2.0 Kluk welcomed the new committee members, made introductions and thanked everyone for joining the Planning Board members in the project. She distributed notebooks and materials to everyone. Kluk stated that Aileen Chute had let us know that she was unable to be involved at this point because of her other commitments.

3.0 Approval of Minutes: We looked at the minutes of the previous meeting held on July 15, 2013. Crandall made a motion to approve with a few typos to be corrected, Terani seconded, all voted in favor of approval.

4.0 We reviewed and discussed the importance of the Master Plan and the update process. Kluk explained that the MP is the basis and guiding document for the future of the town and drives the Planning Board's efforts on Land Use Ordinance changes, Subdivision Regulations, and the Capital Improvement Plan. NH RSA 674:3 recommends updating the Master Plan every 5 to 10 years. Our last update was done in 2006, but consisted solely of adding the Natural Resource Inventory and Conservation Plan to the document. Our last community survey was done in 2003. She spoke about how the Planning Board does the update with the help of community members. It requires a lot of community input along with input from Town departments, committees and Boards. We are anticipating a 2-year project with 2 Phases.

5.0 We reviewed and discussed the project phases and timeline and our goals for Phase I: Community Input. We discussed the role that UVLSRPC (Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission) could play in the project. They can run workshops and community sessions for us and have lots of data available to share. Bissonnette asked if they could help with compiling the survey data and come up with percentages for the data. Schwartz said they could help us with this, if we need to use them. They charge \$55 an hour for their services but they share information and advise us at no cost. Bissonnette asked about budget for the Master Plan update and Schwartz said we have some money in the budget to cover printing and mailing costs and what services we might need from the RPC. Everyone felt that developing community awareness of the project is very important. We can use the town website, announcements and other materials for this purpose.

6.0 Kluk said that the community survey is our first undertaking. She explained that previously we sent out a request to all departments, boards, and committees for suggesting questions for the survey and August 1st is the deadline for them to reply. We will consider their suggestions when we craft the survey. The survey will be sent to every property owner in town with a due date for returning to us and we will then tabulate the data. Bullock suggested that we send the surveys to all the departments, committees, etc. when we send it to the community; all agreed that this was a good idea. Kluk spoke briefly about ways we can get people to come to workshops and visioning sessions. We will be holding multiple workshops for different community groups to attend and have input. It was suggested that we could put up a white board in the Town Hall and Library for anonymous input.

Afterward, we will take all the information gathered and summarize into the Master Plan. This will be Phase 2 of the project. Williams asked about whether approval of the Master Plan goes to Town Meeting, Kluk explained that we hold a Public Hearing and then the Planning Board votes to adopt the document.

September 3rd is the Planning Board meeting where we will ask them approve the survey prior to mailing to all property owners, so we are aiming to have our survey done by that date. Our next meeting will be a working session to come up with the survey questions.

Next, we reviewed and discussed potential categories of questions for the Community Survey. We looked at the handout that showed the MP chapters. Crandall asked about chapters versus survey questions. Kluk explained that the questions should relate to the chapters we want to cover in the MP. We looked at the NH town data sheet. Bissonnette asked why we were looking at the surveys from the three towns we choose to look at. Kluk explained that they are similar in size and region and some of them were worked on by the RPC. Bissonnette asked if we can compile percentages and facts to educate people and we felt we could do that.

7.0 We discussed our approach and goals for our next meeting which will be a “survey development” workshop requiring about 3 hours. Kluk feels that an important concept for the survey questions is that questions need to provide direction for the town’s future growth, thus the answers need to give us actionable information. For example, we should be interested in future population (which is relevant to capacity of services) so perhaps we should be asking the “part-time or seasonal residents” if they plan to move here permanently in the future and if so, in what time frame. Everyone should look at the materials provided: Goshen, Tamworth, Dorchester and Washington 2003 surveys, and come up with lists of questions they like. We will make copies of responses from town departments, boards and committees with suggested questions or compile into one document. Schwartz will send to everyone as soon as this is available. Crandall feels we should keep all the questions from the 2003 survey so we can identify trends. We will attempt to do this but change the format. Everyone likes the chart format that Tamworth used.

Bissonnette requested that we ask the RPC what would be the best target percentage for response to get a valid survey. Schwartz will do this. Williams asked if we had considered doing an online survey to get a higher response rate, especially from non-residents. Kluk said we had looked at Survey Monkey and didn’t feel that they had the ability to restrict the responses to one per household. We don’t want people to be able to do the survey more than once and skew the numbers. Williams said we should aim for 25 to 30 percent response rate (or higher). He will look into other survey services that we could use. Gilbert felt this might be a good option to offer. She felt that we should label the mailed survey in a special way so people won’t throw it out when it comes in the mail.

Kluk suggested that for the work session we divide into small groups that each selects several categories they are willing to draft. We could then rotate the categories through each small group. Bullock suggested that a white board with the entire group making suggestions would be quicker and more efficient. We all agreed to go this way.

The original date we picked for the work session was not going to work for the majority so we settled on Friday, August 9th at 8AM for this work session. Terani wanted us to consider Camp Morgan Lodge or the School for this session. We discussed and decided that the School’s multipurpose room might be best. Terani will ask the school board for permission to use the space. Schwartz will send a reminder, once we have secured the space.

8.0 Kluk asked if committee members had additional questions. Bissonnette asked how will we determine what our definition of success will be? Do we set our goal as creating a great survey with great participation or providing the Selectmen with something they can use and drive what they do? Kluk explained that this process is the jurisdiction of the Planning Board and it does drive what they (PB) do. Bissonnette feels that the Selectmen need to be aware of what we are doing, so they can use the information, also. The information will touch on economic development, natural resources and limits to development, among many other areas of interest to the town. Terani feels it is very important to be able to get this information out to the town and

used by everyone. Crandall feels that it is not the responsibility of this committee to prioritize the suggestions given by the survey takers, but to inform the town. Bullock feels that success would be getting the most people to participate and give ideas and opinions. She felt we could make calls to make sure that people respond to the survey. We can do a Nixle announcement and give people our numbers to call if they have questions. Everyone agreed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nan Schwartz
Planning Board Secretary