

WASHINGTON PLANNING BOARD
Master Plan Update Subcommittee – Working meeting Minutes

April 15, 2014

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

Visitor: Dan Reidy

1.0 The meeting was called to order by Jean Kluk at 2:00 PM, in the Town Hall.

2.0 Kluk opened the meeting and said that she felt we are getting more official and we are now posting our meetings and need to approve our minutes. There were no issues with the March 25th minutes so they were approved. Terani asked if Schwartz wanted to hear right away if members had an issue with the minutes and she replied yes.

Dan Reidy signed the “Memorandum of Understanding”. Schwartz made copies for Reidy, the Selectmen and our files. Kluk will bring the signed document to Michelle so a check can be issued for Reidy.

3.0 Kluk recapped our progress since our last meeting. The Elementary School has been reserved for the workshop on the 21st of June and also for 3 potential training dates. The WES art teacher has agreed to work with the elementary school kids to do artwork depicting their favorite things about Washington. She said that when meeting with the Selectmen last week they expressed concerns about the breakout groups at the workshop. They felt that people with certain interests would not be happy if they are randomly assigned to a topic group at the workshop. Reidy said that they have always done random assignments of people to topic groups. It helps to get a balance of people with no stacking the decks; this helps avert people skewing the groups. Bissonnette said that we should explain that we are making a basket of information, many people have already contributed in a group they have interest in, now we want others’ opinions. Reidy said that our purpose is to get information and data, action groups can be created in the end if you want. He feels you use the smaller breakout groups to get information, which is then brought back to the larger group where the most important ideas are chosen. Kluk said our topics overlap in many ways; Land Use and Rural Character, for example. She suggested maybe having two small group sessions to let people cover two topics. Williams commented that the Selectmen said that we are asking people to come and there are only 1 in 6 chances that they will get to talk about what they want. He said there are a number of important issues and we should take advantage to talk to people and get their thoughts on the Safety Center and Town Hall. He commented that the Selectmen were exploring community services for the Police, Fire and Rescue and we should get public opinion on that. Crandall said these things aren’t relevant to the Master Plan. Bissonnette said that people need to have a voice and give the town actionable data. We need to find the town priorities through data gathering, it will give us deliverables to give to the town and help steer the ship. Williams said that the data from the survey along with additional feedback from the forum would help put the issues forward. Crandall said we are looking to solicit information from the town. Reidy asked if we are seeking data or direction (the will of the people)? Williams said we have data. Kluk said that this is a visioning process for the townspeople. Reidy said it is also about the use of tax dollars and planning the community they envision. Gilbert feels that random assignments are best. Crandall said he imagines people getting up on a soapbox to advocate for their topic. Kluk said that there are no spokespersons, we are there to take notes with the kids facilitating, and this would be a listening session.

Bissonnette asked how many people we hope to attend, we had 25% participation for the survey, and there are usually about 150 people who attend Town Meeting. Reidy said 150 would be a good amount for the workshop. Bissonnette asked about using rewards for coming like consumer-marketing groups do. Kluk said we have a list of magnets to bring people out (kid’s art show, door prizes, food, etc.) Crandall commented that if people already did the survey we already

know their opinions; do we need them to come?

Bullock suggested that Reidy speak with the Selectmen about their concerns with random selection and we will let people know in advance that that is what is being done. She said that it is not our job to end up with solutions to problems; we are looking for a vision, goals and objectives. Kluk said that once the small groups conclude everyone comes together in a large group where the smaller groups present and you get general comments from the large group. Reidy said you can have voting at the end to combine ideas and get the top priorities, people can choose more than one priority.

Crandall thinks we should tell people that it would be random beforehand. Everyone agreed that they are comfortable with randomly chosen groups. Reidy will plan to speak with the Selectmen about how it works.

Reidy suggested we examine the schedule for the workshop. He suggested the breakout sessions should be either 1 to 1.5 hours for shorter sessions or for in-depth sessions, 2 hours. Kluk stated that what we get from the sessions are for the Planning Board's use, but we hope the Selectmen will be supportive of what comes out of the groups. We decided to schedule random small groups followed by a larger group where the small groups report followed by a discussion.

Reidy said he would craft a schedule that we can consider at our next meeting consisting of one focus group and a larger group discussion after.

Kluk feels we need to be ready three weeks in advance of the workshop. We discussed possible schedule ideas and exhibits and presentations we might want to have at the workshop. Reidy mentioned maps, charts, demographic information and community information for displays.

Williams said that if we schedule an hour for introductions and information, 2 hours for small groups focused, productive time, some time for lunch and then an hour to reconvene and discuss, it will probably make a good workshop. Reidy said that pre-registration for the workshop is important both for planning the focus groups and for food. He suggested on-line registration and drop boxes around town. Then we can have nametags made up with group assignments before the workshop.

Bissonnette asked about having standard formats for the group facilitators and Reidy said he would do this during training. Bullock asked if starting at 8:30 AM is early, everyone thought it should be fine.

We discussed getting the word out to the town. Bissonnette asked how many people use the town website, Schwartz didn't have any figures. She said there are the Nixle system, Web News alerts and also the town website for helping to get the word out. Williams said that in the survey 80% of the 300 people that answered the question about the town website said they had used it. Kluk had mocked up a mailing piece for a save the date card. Crandall said it would have to be larger to send as a direct mail piece. Kluk will look at the USPS site to get dimensions and talk to Barbara Gaskell about printing prices. We will settle on the time and agenda of the meeting by April 22nd so we can get the mailing piece done. Reidy will send the schedule to Kluk and she will send it on to everyone. We settled on April 30th, Wednesday at 6:30PM for our next meeting.

4.0 We discussed contacting the student facilitators for the workshop. Kluk spoke again to Noah Denslow, who had spoken to 4 of the recommended students and they were interested. Kluk asked for help in contacting the students. Gilbert and Crandall said they would contact two of them. Kluk and Schwartz will divvy up the rest.

5.0 We reviewed the progress of committees on their focus group topics. Several groups had information and possible questions based on what was in the survey. We shared our work and will send electronic copies to other members. We discussed whether we want questions or just statements that people can react to. Reidy suggested we do handouts and summarize information for people. Bullock said we should have a copy of the LUO with us. Williams suggested taking bullet points from the survey, listing them out and asking people what it means to them. Reidy said that we could craft a hand out a sheet with topic statements; look for strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to discuss and bring the top five back to the large group for open discussion. Williams asked what we should be doing, do we glean from the survey and go deeper to find out

what it means? Terani and Bullock put together pages on Recreation and Economic Development, they started with some definitions, went through the survey and took anything with a 50% or more favorable rating to work up for their list of questions. Kluk felt this was a good approach for everyone to take. Bissonnette said we should provide background on the LUO but not the LUO itself. She asked about tying things to the town budget and let people know how much of the budget goes to certain items or events. Reidy said we are looking for vision not, budget problems and impact feasibility for certain items. Williams said that those things were covered by the survey; people said the things they valued in our services and what they were willing to pay more or less for.

Kluk asked everyone to email electronic versions of our notes and questions to each member when we feel ready to share what we have done. Kluk will also share our work product with Reidy. Bissonnette said that she would try to meet with the Historic Society and ask if they wanted to do a short presentation. She is looking into historic districts, heritage districts, village districts, etc. She felt that in the survey there was so much support for “no development”, she wants to find out what that means.

Kluk went over the demographic information she gathered. Washington has 54% seasonal residents, the 60-70 age group is large right now. Gilbert said this is cyclical; Washington has been at this level before. Kluk had comparisons of other towns in the county and also towns of a similar size to us, and lots of really good data. It shows that Washington is growing at a 25.5% rate in the last 10 years as opposed to the county, which grew at 8%. Reidy felt all this could be good on a poster boards for the workshop. Reidy talked about other things we could display at the workshop and said maps are always a great thing to have. Schwartz will get all the Natural Resource Inventory maps to display. Reidy suggested a map that people could put a pin in showing where their house is.

6.0 In wrapping up, Kluk said that we should all look at the survey and pick out questions that pertain to our topics and we should glean any information and messages from the survey. We should then dig deeper and come up with some “Did You Know?” kinds of facts and figures that relate to our topics.

Note: Our next meeting will be April 30th, Wednesday at 6:30PM.

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Nan Schwartz
Planning Board Secretary