

Town Center Plan Committee
Meeting Minutes – March 31, 2014

Present: Stephanie Carver, Chair

 Peter Curry

 Skip Murray

 Stephen Parkhurst

 David Sherman

 Jamie Wagner

Absent: Lee Rutty

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes. With minor changes to the draft, Peter Curry moved to approve the minutes of our March 10, 2014 meeting. Steve Parkhurst seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

2. Public Comment.

June and Paul Farrow, 1208 Shore Road. Mrs. Farrow had questions about the proposed ordinance change which would affect the lot on the other side of Town Hall. She asked for clarification on the proposed change.

In response, Maureen O’Meara explained the background regarding this proposed amendment.

Paul Seidman, 27 Oakview Drive. Mr. Seidman spoke about wetlands alteration for a town green. He asked whether this proposal could “be put to the public” and asked “how would the public know about this?”

In response, committee members explained that there would be numerous opportunities for public review and comment.

Suzanne McGinn, 1180 Shore Road. Ms. McGinn expressed her view that the safety goals in the draft report were “awesome.” She questioned whether the summary in the draft report regarding “gathering places” was accurate and thought it was potentially “misleading.” Specifically, the reference to the public’s overwhelming desire for a “green space” from the survey may not be for a town green. She wants there to be statistically significant survey before the committee proceeds with adopting this goal. She has referred to these surveys before regarding preserving habitats and the attractiveness of the current downtown. She stated that the committee should give less importance to its survey that was only completed by 78 people. She also expressed concern about the vernal pool located on the 4-acre lot next to Town Hall.

Sara Lennon, 54 Cranbrook Drive. Ms. Lennon proposed that the committee recommend to the town that it buy the Cumberland Farms property. This would address traffic flow and safety issues and this could be a beautiful green space. This lot is “more strategically placed” than the lot next to Town Hall.

Paul Seidman, 27 Oakview Drive. Mr. Seidman stated that if green space is a goal, it should only be pursued if it does not destroy natural habitats.

Jamie Wagner responded to this comment. He said that if this lot were to be developed anyway, “wouldn’t you rather get green space or a town green out of it?”

Peter Curry also explained the development plan as conceptual only. A discussion among committee members ensued regarding the concept plan.

3. Draft Report Review.

Maureen gave a brief introduction to the draft report. She explained that portions of the report were sent to the public works director (related to infrastructure). She also heard from the town manager, who suggested that any of the recommendations include cost estimates.

The committee discussed cost estimates and decided that these would be helpful, and directed Ms. O’Meara to obtain them. Although there was concern expressed that the cost estimates could “overshadow some of our recommendations,” Mr. Curry stated that they would provide a “helpful context” and give us “more of a sense of reality.”

David Sherman suggested that the committee members listed at the front of the report not include those who had resigned (Diane Hessler and Mary Townsend), and perhaps we include a footnote to explain that they participated in the earlier meetings, but then resigned.

The committee then reviewed the draft report page by page. Ms. O’Meara explained that she tried to fit all of the 1993 goals, as well as what we’ve discussed, into seven total recommendations. The committee was very receptive to narrowing the number of goals. She also noted that the goals and recommendations were not in the order of priority. Mr. Sherman acknowledged that, but suggested that the “Primary Commercial Area” goal not come first in the report.

- a. Vision Statement (page 4 of draft). There were no comments on the draft.
- b. Summary of Goals (page 4). Members of the committee made modest editing suggestions. Ms. O’Meara will incorporate them into the next draft. Generally, there was consensus on the goals, with some adjustments to the language.
- c. Goal: Primary Commercial Area (page 5). Mr. Curry suggested separating the background information and the recommendation into two paragraphs for ease of reading. The committee agreed with that approach.
- d. Goal: Pedestrian and Vehicular Circulation (page 5). Ms. O’Meara explained how funding of sidewalk improvements that connect to the Town Center, but are not in the district, could still be funded through a TIF. There was discussion about bicycle usage and safety, and the committee agreed that the report should make reference to “preserving and exploring

opportunities for bike usage in the town center.” The committee liked the second recommendation’s reference to “Cape’s main street,” with the goal that this section of Route 77 should be more like a main street than an arterial. Mr. Curry stated that the recommendation should be that the Town Council more aggressively pursue lowering the speed limit in this area with MDOT. Ms. Carver agreed.

- e. Goal: Gathering Places (page 6). The committee discussed the proposed ordinance amendment that would affect primarily the lot next to the Town Hall (near the CELT property). It was noted that even without this amendment, the developer could develop the property anyway. Mr. Wagner noted that the report could include other options for a town green. Mr. Sherman agreed that it was fine to include other options, but the lot next to the Town Hall is an opportunity that the Town Council should consider. Ms. Carver stated that there are not many (if any) other properties with wetlands in the Town Center district. The impact of this ordinance change would not be great. Mr. Murray also noted that the concept of a town green on the lot next to the Town Hall presents us with a unique opportunity.
- f. Next Goal – Visual Appeal (page 7). In short, recommendation no. 5 states that we should keep the Town Center District and design standards in place. Recommendation no. 6 speaks to developing design standards for Town Center infrastructure, such as sidewalks. The committee was in general agreement with this goal and the recommendations.
- g. Next Goal – Infrastructure Financing (page 7). After much discussion regarding the table on page 9, Ms. O’Meara responded that she would make this section clearer in response to committee members’ questions and suggestions. Ms. Carver stated that it should be clear that TIF dollars should be used for infrastructure only. Ms. O’Meara also explained that if the Town Council decides to accept this recommendation, it is important to submit the application by April 1, 2015 in order to capture the increase in tax valuations that may occur on or after April 1, 2014.
- h. Appendix A. The committee agreed to include the charge as Appendix A.
- i. Appendix B. A map of the Town Center zone should be included.
- j. Appendix C. After much discussion, the committee decided to leave in the “evolution” of the Town Center for background purposes, with the inclusion of additional businesses.
- k. Appendix D. The committee decided to include minutes of the public forum and the survey.
- l. Appendix E. The committee agreed this summary of Town Center properties should be included.
- m. Appendix F. This summary of town’s infrastructure should be included.
- n. Appendix G. This will include articles that the committee reviewed.

4. Next meeting. The committee agreed that two meetings will be needed to complete its work. Our next meeting is April 14th, at which time Ms. O'Meara will have a revised report based on today's feedback. The committee also scheduled a follow-up meeting for May 19th (instead of May 12).

5. Second Opportunity for Public Comment.

Paul Seidman, 27 Oakview Drive. Mr. Seidman raised a number of comments and questions, and Peter Curry suggested that he reduce them to an e-mail. Mr. Seidman asked (i) whether the vernal pool on the lot next to the Town Hall should be inspected this spring to determine if it's a significant vernal pool; (ii) what can the owner of that property do now, under the current zoning ordinance; (iii) should we pursue a town green near the library campus; and (iv) will a green space in between the CELT property and Town Hall be used?

June Farrow, 1208 Shore Road. She asked questions about the proposed green space on the lot next to the Town Hall.

6. Motion to Adjourn. Steve Parkhurst moved to adjourn, and Skip Murray seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

David Sherman, Minutes Secretary