

**HARVARD PLANNING BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 11, 2015
APPROVED: MAY 4, 2015**

Chairwoman Kara McGuire Minar opened the meeting at 9:00am at Emma's Café in Stow.

Members Present: Kara McGuire Minar, Erin McBee, Don Graham, Michelle Catalina and Fran Nickerson

Others Present: Liz Allard (LUB Admin.) and Bill Scanlan (Town Planner)

Towner Planner FY16

Members discussed the role of the Town Planner to date. The Request for Proposal (RFP) needs to be clear on what the expectations are of the Planning Board (PB). Members discussed the need for the Planner to have office hours. Graham stated he sees the role as one of deliverables and not hours. Some felt a Planner could be just as effective remotely. The RFP needs to indicate there will be an initial probation period of time spent in the office with a reduction in the in-office time requirement. Nickerson asked about grading the categories within the RFP and therefore giving a starting point when discussing how the process is going. Member agreed the RFP should rank the priorities of the PB for Fiscal Year 2016, establish Planner guidelines, and detail the chain of command not only for daily activities, but for overall communications with other boards, commissions, municipal staff and the general public.

ACTION: Members will review and send comments to Allard on the existing RFP for discussion at April 27th meeting

Master Plan Recommendations

Members agreed at this point the goal is to complete the Master Plan in the best way possible. The Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) is urging the Planning Board (PB) to sever its ties with RKG. Members discussed the pros and cons of cutting ties with RKG, along with the need for a warrant article at special town meeting to extend the sunset date of the funds. With Hutchinson ending his term with the PB and not running for a second term, Catalina does not think there is anyone else on the MPSC that is willing to take the lead on this project; if McGuire Minar is willing to chair the MPSC it may work. It may take up to six months at this point to complete. The members agreed to ask the MPSC to get together a tight Request for Proposal (RFP) for the Devens piece of the plan. Any new RFP should include details on the quality of the product and penalties for not completing within the agreed upon time lines. Catalina suggested the PB sever the contract with RKG without spending any additional funds, then try to do the Devens piece; this will preserve the existing committee and give a show of faith in the committee itself. Graham agrees with Catalina's comments. McGuire Minar feels communication breakdown in the process and not having things in writing have caused tension of the overall process. Members agreed there needs to be new leadership with a new contractor. The Members agreed Hutchinson should continue on the committee in some aspect, but truly a member of the PB should lead this process.

ACTION: McGuire Minar will become the PB representative to the MPSC;
McGuire Minar will discuss with the Town Administrator and the Finance Director on how to sever the contract with RKG;
Warrant Article to extend the sunset date of the funds for Phase II of the Master Plan
Invite MPSC to April 27th meeting to discuss moving forward

Planning Department Bylaw

McGuire Minar does not think the Planning Board is at a point to develop a planning department. Catalina can't see how this position would take priority over a facilities manager. As the thought was in creating a department to see to it that the Master Plan was implemented, it was noted that the 2002 Master Plan Steering Committee then became implementation committee with specific tasks being contracted out. Scanlan thinks there are plenty of volunteers in town that can carry the weight of implementing the goals of the Master Plan. McGuire Minar suggested the implementation fall on whichever board or committee a goal is assigned to, with updates periodically to the Planning Board; such as a monthly agenda item as a check-in. Members agreed to hold off on any further discussion of this subject until the Master Plan is complete.

ACTION: Follow-up on how the Master Plan is going to be implemented once it is completed

Revisions to Chapter 133

After an explanation to the newer members of the Board on how the Planning Board had initially decide to make revisions to Chapter 133, the members agreed to begin the process of a complete review of the document with a potential of creating two separate documents (one on how the PB functions and one on filing an application with the PB) in July and taking small sections at each meeting until it is completed.

ACTION: Begin review of Chapter 133 at each meeting of the Planning Board in July 2015

FY16 Grants

Unified Planning Work Program Grant - Scanlan stated Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) would like to get started on the Town Center Traffic Study in early May. Unfortunately they were unable to conduct the traffic around the Town Hall prior to its close and move for the renovation project. Scanlan was asked to remind MRPC that the traffic study must be completed by June 10th, as a large number of Town residents leave town for the summer. Members wondered now that Town Hall has moved to its temporary location how MRPC will duplicate the traffic around Town Hall with that of the traffic around the temporary Town Hall at the old library. Scanlan has received some responses to the Boards request for members and will follow up with others to determine their interest in participating. This study has a deadline of September 30, 2015. Members discussed who would direct the committee and agreed a member of the Planning Board should be a part of the committee. Scanlan stated the Department of Public Works Director has requested traffic counts be conducted in specific locations in the center as part of this process. Nota had sent some locations where he would like to have new counts. All agreed that pedestrian traffic should have a focus on the study.

ACTION: Scanlan to follow-up on committee members;
Appoint committee members;
Begin meetings in early May

Council on Aging Grants – Scanlan will contact State Representatives to any determine if there are any available funds for the improvements to the Hildreth House.

ACTION: Scanlan to follow-up on available grants

Complete Streets – MRPC will forward the information when it becomes available

ACTION: Scanlan will follow up with Brad Harris at MRPC

District Local Technical Assistance Grant – Is currently available from MRPC. Allard mentioned the use of this grant to assist in dealing with climate change as detailed at the annual environmental conference hosted by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners last month. Catalina wondered if these funds could assist in updating Chapter 125-35 Open Space & Conservation – Planned Residential Development. It appears this provision of the Protective Bylaw is not very clear with a lot of “if” and “could” throughout it.

ACTION: Allard will forward information received at MACC to members for their review for a potential bylaw on this subject matter;
Scanlan will follow-up with MRPC to determine what types of projects other communities have used these funds for to determine if either of the above mentioned items could be addressed

Affordable Housing Plan

Scanlan was asked to review the existing plan to determine how it needs to be updated in regards to the 2010 census. There is a need to look at affordable starter homes, as well as over 55 homes. Need greater understanding of the concept for these types of development. Include best practices from other communities of attracting right size housing.

ACTION: Scanlan will update the Board at the May 18th meeting on what is needed to update the existing Affordable Housing Plan

Devens

MassDevelopment is proposing zoning changes at Devens that will have an effect on Harvard. Members agreed a small working group made up of members from the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, the Economic Development Committee, and the Devens Economic Analysis Team, to review and report on the proposed changes. Scanlan was requested to review the proposed changes and report to Board on May 4th. McGuire Minar will contact the chairs of the above mentioned boards to solicit volunteers.

ACTION: Scanlan will review the proposed zoning changes and report to the Board on May 4th;
McGuire Minar will contact the chairs of the various boards to conduct a working group

Protective Bylaw Amendments

Members discussed potential bylaw amendments for annual town meeting 2016, which would include adding assisted living facilities as an allowed use, updating Chapter 125-35 Open Space & Conservation – Planned Residential Development, and creating a use chart. Members wondered if the Economic Development Committee (EDC) could organize an impact report of having an assisted living facility in Town. Catalina stated as for Chapter 125-35 the Board needs to research the creation of that provision to determine what the thought process was when it was created.

Members agreed to the following time line as it pertains to bylaw amendments:

September – send out request to other boards and commission for any suggested bylaw amendments
October – Review and determine which bylaw amendments will be included on the 2016 warrant; begin prehearing discussion of those amendments
December – Begin hearings on proposed bylaw amendments

ACTION: Graham will further discuss the use and impact of an assisted living facility with the EDC;
Catalina will research the development of Chapter 125-35

Transportation

Scanlan reminded the Board that Arthur Frost from MassDOT is willing to attend a meeting to discuss traffic improvements on state roads. Transportation was discussed earlier under Grants.

ACTION: Scanlan will follow-up with MRPC on scheduled improvements.

Miscellaneous Items

Commercial Design Standard Task Force - McBee stated the design standards are just about complete and she would like to review the standards with the Planning Board in early June.

ACTION: Allard will schedule time on the June 1st agenda for the review of the design guidelines;
Scanlan will distribute the proposed design guidelines once completed

Communication – The members discussed the use of social media, such as Nextdoor Harvard, for getting accurate information out to the general public. Members agreed to further discuss this matter at the April 27th meeting.

ACTION: Allard will schedule time on the April 27th agenda to further discuss communication goals

Adjournment

McGuire Minar thanked everyone for taking time to attend the meeting today. Graham made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 12:02pm. McBee seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion.

Signed: _____
Liz Allard, Clerk

Documents:

Request for Proposals -Town Planner, May 5, 2014
Community Development and Planning Department Bylaw, January 24, 2015
Revised Chapter 133 Planning Board Procedural Rules and Regulations, Adopted September __, 2014
Policies & Procedures – Planning Board – Town of Harvard, draft 10-17-14
UPWP Task No. 3.14 Task Title: Town Center Operational Study, 2014-2015 Unified Planning Work Program MPO endorsed June 25, 2014
Town of Harvard – Affordable Housing Plan, revised and updated March 2011
Use Regulation Schedule, draft April 2015
Chapter 125 Protective Bylaw – Article V, Development- §125-35. Open Space and Conservation – Planned Residential Development (OSC-PRD)