

**TOWN OF LINCOLN
COMPREHENSIVE LONG RANGE PLAN
ALL BOARDS MEETING
Held on February 10th, 2009
At Bemis Hall, Lincoln**

PANEL:

Bob Domnitz	Planning Board
John Kimball	Zoning Board of Appeals
Julie Dobrow	School Committee
Jim Meadors	Conservation Commission
Renel Frederiksen	Housing Commission
Sara Mattes	Board of Selectmen
Fred Mansfield	Board of Health
Robert Steinbrook	Finance Committee
Andy Cole	Board of Water Commissioners

PRESENTERS:

Ken Hurd	CLRP Committee Chairman
Judi Barrett	Community Opportunities Group (moderator)
Peter Sugar	CLRP Committee
Noah Eckhouse	CLRP Committee

INTRODUCTION

Ken Hurd introduced the meeting, explaining that a great deal of work has been done on the Comprehensive Long Range Plan over several years, and at this stage there is a need for the topic-based work of the subcommittees to be drawn together with discussion of over-arching issues. The CLRP Committee has identified five key issues on which it would be useful to have feedback from the various town boards. These issues have emerged from discussion amongst the subcommittees. The panel of board representatives introduced themselves.

The meeting will also be used as an opportunity to receive an update from the Selectmen on issues relating to Hanscom Air Base.

PANEL DISCUSSION: LINCOLN STATION AREA

Ken Hurd introduced this topic, recalling that in 2004 the Planning Board brought a proposal for an overlay district for one quadrant of South Lincoln (the area around Lincoln Station) to Town Meeting, and Town Meeting expanded it to cover three quadrants. Progress has been made, using the overlay district provision, on the expansion of Donelan's and construction of a new Post Office. In their work for the CLRP, several subcommittees have raised the idea of pursuing further high density development in this area. There are known to be infrastructure challenges, and issues relating to a possible relocation of the DPW facility. Any competing interests need to be identified.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Need to ensure that any development furthers the broad interests of Lincoln (perhaps referring to the proposed land use criteria)

- History of popular support for opportunities for random social interaction; retailing important to community vitality
- More housing may help to strengthen/ retain Donelan's
- Some types of retailing (such as pharmacies) need a bigger than local catchment to be viable, therefore would depend on the area becoming more of a destination
- For housing, it might make sense to widen the area to include some of the adjacent R-1 district
- Housing would make good use of proximity to Donelan's and the train station
- Affordable housing units could be included; Housing Commission will still be looking for units beyond 2010.
- Moving DPW would trigger regulations that would make it expensive.
- Revenue generation from commercial development would be limited by infrastructure costs and non-prime location.
- Subcommittees' aim was not to exclude commercial development elsewhere but there seems to be little support for it.
- Shared use of septic system could help to support existing Lincoln Woods housing.
- Water issues are complicated; state has a role in regulating water consumption, and Water Commission is working with DCR to try to influence projections used as a basis for permitting by DEP. At this point the projections build in a low level of population growth plus Deaconess development and minimal commercial development, but no major growth. If town does not succeed with water conservation measures, state controls will cut into any new development permitting. Legal question pending over proposed mechanisms. As yet, towns do not have a solid basis for requiring mitigation from developers. Funding for water conservation might compete with other good causes in a development package. Process for getting state's consumption limit changed is not known.

PANEL DISCUSSION: LAND USE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Ken Bassett introduced the recommendation for a set of assessment criteria to be used to evaluate major land use change proposals. He explained that the CLRP subcommittee covering land use did not see its role as being to put forward specific ideas for rezoning of parcels. Therefore it worked on a set of assessment criteria that the town could use as a tool. The existing overlay district and project review processes were seen as useful. The At Risk Properties Committee was established for fact finding but sometimes there seemed to be a need for a clearer way of handling the broad land use issues. The Conservation Commission's criteria were seen as a useful model.

Mr. Bassett added that he has tested the criteria against the past Lincoln North/ Battle Road Farm development as an example; some seemed relevant and others not, and he concluded that weighting or prioritizing the criteria would not help.

Discussion covered the following questions:

- Are the criteria needed/ would they be an obstacle? Sara Mattes commented that the town has shown the ability to be flexible in the past using the

existing tools, and wondered if the criteria might become an impediment by drawing attention to conflicts. The LUED subcommittee had felt that putting the town's thoughts in writing would help to achieve a thorough debate on land uses before details are addressed. The criteria cover a range of potentially conflicting aims, including open space versus built uses, but some or all of them may be relevant to particular sites. It was noted that a built development could potentially provide a subsidy benefit to open space.

- Would the criteria provide ammunition for opponents? It was acknowledged that people could seize on particular criteria but Town Meeting has the authority to judge how to balance them in making a decision. There was support for using the label 'factors' or 'checklist' rather than criteria to avoid giving the impression that they all have to be satisfied.
- At what point does the debate take place? Bob Domnitz suggested that town boards should use the criteria in their reviews of projects and that the Planning Board should provide an assessment against each criterion for Town Meeting to consider. However it was noted that in the past the town or the Planning Board have actively shaped developments through a dialog with developers (affecting the mix of uses in the case of North Lincoln, and the inclusion of affordable housing and water funding in the case of Deaconess). This led to a discussion of whether the process is sufficiently open, and to what extent boards have an advocacy role. It was noted that committee meetings are subject to the open meeting law.
- Should the Selectmen or the Planning Board take the lead? There is support for the Planning Board to lead on land use issues, but the Planning Board did not lead the At Risk Properties Committee or the Deaconess Steering Committee because of its later jurisdictional role.
- Are costs and tax effects to the town considered sufficiently? The original At Risk Properties exercise was aimed at examining this type of information for six sites and it was brought to Town Meeting with the aim of informing future decisions. It is not clear how this committee's work fits into the proposed process with the criteria, although they are not necessarily incompatible. One question is how new sites or proposals get referred to the At Risk Properties Committee.

PANEL DISCUSSION: TOWN MEETING/ VOLUNTEERISM

Peter Sugar introduced the topic. He said there is a perception that attendance at Town Meeting has been dropping, and a concern to keep a healthy level of citizen involvement in town affairs. The survey suggested that outreach is important, with people more likely to participate if they are invited, and that people need to feel they can make a difference. The loss of the League of Women Voters is a problem. Many people are leading busier lives, but some are volunteering for other groups. Ideas include: mentoring by board members; active searches for successors; strengthening of communications; educating people on government processes; maybe operating more efficiently; and maybe more staff help.

Discussion covered the following issues:

- Scheduling and operation of Town Meeting. The subcommittee had discussed the options for the scheduling of TM and there was a variety of opinions, although there was support for clearer scheduling of particular topics and efforts to make the event more efficient and appealing. Attendees are predominantly older people; babysitting might help. Some people feel that matters at TM are a fait accompli; more open questions might help.
- Recruitment to Boards. Some boards have had vacancies and there have been many uncontested elections. Actions currently used to help with recruitment include advertising vacancies, spreading the word via friends and neighbors etc. There may still be limited public awareness. Contested elections sometimes reflect a contentious issue. A social aspect to boards' activities might encourage people; it was noted that at one time there were newcomers' meetings with representation from town boards. Discouraging factors in some cases may be long meetings, a confrontational atmosphere, or a lack of staff support. People are often reluctant to run against an incumbent, and term limits could be considered.
- Comparisons with other towns may be helpful. HATS had a discussion in November, recorded for TV [written minutes on Lincoln's website]
- Forums to fill the vacuum left by the League of Women Voters need to be considered – possibly neighborhood councils or use of existing organizations in town.
- New committees tend to compete with existing ones, and long-running activities can be onerous; more short-term, specific charges might help.
- There is potential to improve the level of communication via the website, with appropriate resources.

Due to time constraints, the remaining discussion topics on the agenda were not covered.

HANSCOM AIR BASE UPDATE

Sara Mattes reported on issues relating to the Hanscom Air Force Base. The base avoided closure under the BRAC exercise in 2005 but there are two current concerns:

- 1) Privatization of military housing. The military has traditionally operated base housing but construction work on new housing was privatized. The initial contractor failed and also the Air Force found that demand for the housing had reduced as more families wanted to live off base. The number of new units was reduced, but now it seems there is a proposal for a new contractor to build the full 800 units knowing that many will be used by private civilians. This has major implications for the surrounding towns. As the housing is in Lincoln, school provision for the non-military portion would be Lincoln's responsibility. The numbers would also be added to the denominator for the calculation of affordable housing under Chapter 40B which could cause a significant problem.
- 2) Mission bleed. Development around the airfield appears to be moving towards non-military uses. Large areas are being considered for commercial development, mainly in Lexington and a little in Lincoln. The town is advocating to protect the base function.

WRAP UP/ NEXT STEPS

Ken Hurd outlined the remaining steps towards completion of the CLRP in June. The text of the topic chapters and executive summary is being finished, and work has started on the implementation plan. There will be a report to the March Town Meeting, allowing a further opportunity for comment.

An Implementation Committee will be formed to monitor and advocate for progress in implementing the items in the plan, and Mr. Hurd invited volunteers for this work.

A follow-on session to tonight's meeting may be held to continue the discussion of major issues in the Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 PM.

Submitted by Catherine Perry