

Master Plan Committee Minutes - August 8, 2006

TOWN OF LINCOLN

MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE MINUTES

August 8, 2006

ATTENDANCE:

Ken Hurd	Planning Board
Mark Whitehead	Town Planner
Angela Seaborg	Conservation Planner
Ben Horne	Conservation Commission
Anita Scheipers	Assistant Town Administrator
Mary Sheldon	Council on Aging
Astrid Glynn	'At large' member
Sharon Antia	School Committee
Buck Creel	Water Commission
David Reece	'At large' member
Pamela Green	Board of Appeals
Tim Higgins	Town Administrator
Sarah Cannon Holden	Board of Selectmen
Paul Giese	Finance Committee
Craig Donaldson	Community Preservation Committee
Catherine Perry	Planning Admin.

DISCUSSION: LESSONS LEARNED FROM SUDBURY PRESENTATION

A discussion of the Sudbury planners' presentation identified the following key points:

Outreach: A major exercise.

Mechanism/ history of achieving consensus: Sudbury's limited use of Town Meeting was interesting. Lincoln may have fewer worries about this.

State of the Town Meeting: Should be a useful forum to get discussion underway before Town Meeting.

Community involvement: Sudbury's level of outreach and involvement was very impressive. Concord has also been through a lengthy master planning exercise and started with a large number of people but it dwindled faster. Lincoln would like to involve the next generation of residents.

Commitment of Town Planner: Jody Kablack clearly put a huge amount of time into the master plan work. This had

been achieved in part by having a consultant do all the town's site plan review work. Also using a facilitator for the initial series of meetings had been helpful.

Steering Committee: The potential size and operation of a steering committee in Lincoln was discussed. Tim Higgins thought there would be a practical need to use smaller groups to manage the process and to hammer out wording. It was generally agreed that accountability should be to the wider committee.

Vision Statement: This was the main thing that Sudbury took to Town Meeting. It looked like a good idea for generating town-wide awareness. Timing was discussed. There needs to be an initial introduction to what a master plan is.

Major projects: Sudbury had some of these at the end of the process, which may have helped to maintain interest. It is not obvious at this point whether any will be produced in Lincoln.

Input: Sudbury received a few surprises in terms of public reaction to some ideas. It will be important to look for input as well as outreach, and not to assume that committee members represent all the views of wider constituencies.

Rules: Sudbury's approach to seeking consensus was interesting, but may have meant that some controversial issues were avoided and others were not carried through beyond broad statements of intent. This may have been necessary, given the scale of issues Sudbury was facing; Lincoln may be in a better position to resolve things more fully.

Concord had analyzed the interactions between decisions. Tim Higgins and Sarah Cannon Holden suggest aiming to at least achieve the analysis of a problem and a look at costs.

RESPONSES TO "WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?" EXERCISE

Mark Whitehead reported that he had distributed copies of the compiled responses by email (except for three received late), and had now condensed them by sorting them under appropriate headings. He gave a Power Point presentation to show the pattern of responses:

Objectives: process; issue-specific; core values

Goals: diversity; conservation; finance; recreation; housing

Issues: services; process; housing; special character

Mr. Whitehead said that the next step would be to develop a Vision Statement. This could include: operating principles; what we are doing and why; what the parameters are; and how to measure accomplishments.

Buck Creel commented that the Open Space Plan is often used as a yardstick by which to measure the impact or importance of site-specific conservation issues, and the Master Plan could have a similar role on wider issues. The history of the Open Space Plan, and the way land preservation had begun, evolved and become part of the local culture, was discussed. The precedent for reaping benefits from far-sightedness was considered useful.

Craig Donaldson commented that the committee needs to recognize some of the challenges being posed by land preservation and regional change, in terms of the cost of housing, provision of services etc. Ken Hurd encouraged

members to think hard about what the plan should be aiming to achieve. Peter Von Mertens suggested that goals and objectives should include education, public transport, and wide involvement.

There was some discussion on the use of qualitative and quantitative measures for monitoring change and assessing success. The method of presenting the plan to Town Meeting and how to handle a negative response was discussed; it was agreed to aim for approval at a broad level, and a process that allows for reconsideration of specific items that meet with rejection. An ongoing cycle of review and modification of the plan could be considered.

It was agreed to develop a draft Vision Statement to take to the fall State of the Town Meeting to help to initiate debate. This could be revised in the course of public consultation, and a final version be presented to Town Meeting in March.

Angela Seaborg mentioned that, from looking through the history of planning activities in Lincoln, the goals and objectives seemed to have been pretty consistent. Mr. Hurd suggested it would be helpful if she could summarize past goals and objectives and note whether they had evolved over time. Ms. Seaborg also suggested providing a map and visual display materials for the State of the Town Meeting, and several members supported this.

UPDATE ON OTHER PLAN EVALUATIONS

Mr. Whitehead reminded the constituent boards to provide information on the status of their current plans and any need for review, including any anticipated need for consultants to address issues. He has not yet received much information from boards other than Conservation. Buck Creel mentioned that the schools are working on a School Master Plan, required by the State, which will need to be reconciled with or wrapped into the Master Plan.

TIMELINE FOR STATE OF THE TOWN MEETING

Mr. Whitehead said that the State of the Town Meeting will be on November 4th. After bringing the Master Plan process to the public's attention, the Committee can then hold public meetings from January to March, to discuss the Vision Statement. During that time, subcommittees can also work on goals and objectives for the various components and the Committee can prepare for the March Town Meeting.

Sarah Cannon Holden, Buck Creel, Paul Giese and Sharon Antia volunteered to start work on a draft Vision Statement.

The need for consultants was discussed briefly. Mr. Hurd invited ideas on this. It was agreed that the working group could draft something for consideration. Paul Giese commented that we may not know specialized needs until later in the process. Tim Higgins suggested obtaining some examples of scopes of services from other towns.

It was agreed that the question of a steering committee and sub-committees could be addressed at a future date.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

Peter Von Mertens and Angela Seaborg gave a presentation on work that the Conservation Commission is

commencing to produce an updated and formalized Open Space and Recreation Plan. This work will feed into two elements of the Master Plan.

The Town's first open space plan was produced in 1977 and the process has continued. About a third of the town's area is protected open land. The plan has never been approved by the State but has served local purposes. It is now considered that a State-approved plan may be useful, and work on it could use a committee that overlaps with the Master Plan Committee. It will provide an opportunity for outreach and reaffirmation, and may be useful in future to support funding bids. The format will need to be different to meet State requirements (a larger document but fewer maps). Tim Higgins drew attention to the need for a transparent method and criteria to gain town-wide acceptance.

Ms. Seaborg reviewed the way land conservation work had evolved: early on, the emphasis was on major acquisitions, whereas now it was on developing connections, management, and providing for active and passive recreation. She displayed a plotted Geographic Information System (GIS) map of the old Open Space Plan, showing: fully deeded conservation land; privately owned land in permanent conservation restrictions; institutional land; and land of conservation interest. The last category is a work in progress, and does not necessarily imply full purchase. A 'committee of six' (Rural Land Foundation/ Conservation Commission/ Lincoln Land Conservation Trust) has continuously updated the map over the years, but wider involvement may suggest other areas of interest. Mr. Higgins commented that this map will help to inform people on the scale of the financial 'wish list' for conservation and its possible impact.

Secondly Ms. Seaborg displayed a composite aerial photograph. She explained that the GIS has databases linked to map information, so that customized maps and statistics can be generated.

A draft work program for the Open Space Committee was distributed. It is hoped to do most of the work on the Open Space Plan by March, checking in periodically with the Master Plan Committee, and then integrate it with the developing Master Plan. The Conservation Commission would like to attract Committee members from each of the land use related boards, and is also advertising for 'at large' members. In addition there will be opportunities to participate in public meetings or simply visit the department to see the GIS and offer comment.

Mr. Whitehead clarified that the two components of the Master Plan that will draw on this work are Open Space and Recreation and Natural Resources. Paul Giese cautioned that the Open Space Plan should not be allowed to pre-empt or drive the Master Plan.

NEXT MEETING

The next Master Plan Committee meeting will be on Tuesday September 12 at 7:30pm.

Submitted by Catherine Perry