

Town Government Study Committee

Minutes of September 1, 2011 Meeting

Members present: Ken Stevens, Paul Tura, Dick Dennehy, Keith Elder, Jean Landis Naumann, Bob Ward, and Mary O'Donnell

In lieu of Secretary Hoeg, who was absent, Jean Landis Naumann was designated to take the minutes.

Meeting convened at 7:03 PM.

Minutes for the meeting August 4 were deferred to the next meeting as the secretary was not present.

Ralph Calderaro was present to discuss the Master Plan. The Planning Board obtained a grant and began public forums for visioning. Several meetings were held in 1995 and priorities were identified. The main concern of participants was to maintain the character of the town while planning for the future. The new Master Plan was approved by Town Meeting in 1998. The previous Master Plan had been completed in 1970 but no recommendations had been implemented, such as a bypass around Kingston.

The Master Plan established goals and the steps needed to implement these ideas. Tom Bott was the new Town Planner and was very helpful through this whole process. He obtained outside resources for the committee to use such as the Old Colony Planning report "A Region in Transition - The New Old Colony." An outside consultant assisted as well.

One of the major issues was a desire to revitalize the town center but the property owners did not wish to cooperate in this endeavor. Another goal was to develop the O'Donnell property for mixed use (housing and business). A new concept of "transfer of development rights" was borrowed from other parts of the country.

Ralph estimates that nearly 80% of the recommendations have been implemented. He also made several recommendations:

- He would strongly urge the town to establish a Town Government Committee made up of town department heads as well as other involved individuals, including the Town Administrator, to foster better communication. This group should meet at least quarterly, if not monthly.

- Set up a separate Parks Department to oversee the entire town owned open space.
- Establish a structure so that incoming Town Administrators have a framework in place when they arrive. This would involve a protocol on who communicates with whom and when, defined responsibilities, and what is required of each position.
- It is now time to begin working on an updated Master Plan because there have been many changes in the projections used about populations and economic growth. It is time to evaluate if the plans put in place are working.

Dick recommended that there should be someone on the open space committee with knowledge of real estate so purchases are negotiated fairly.

Ralph said the town would benefit from having designated skills for members of all committees plus members at large. This would result in higher quality decisions and recommendations would be properly vetted before being presented at Town Meeting.

The 1997 discussion suggested new signage around town to divert traffic from some roads. This was not implemented, perhaps because of funding.

Mary stated she would like to see defined bike routes.

There was a discussion of the Community Preservation Committee's recommendations and it appears that they react to plans presented to them but do not initiate proposals such as for affordable housing.

Ralph discussed the past plans to develop the old fire station on Maple Avenue. A Marshfield developer was interested at one time but had too many other projects in the works. The last plan fell apart because of the change in the economy.

Bob asked if we should move toward a living document rather than a static plan. Most organization now have 5, 10 and 15 year plans that they update yearly.

Ken mentioned that when we have asked each department to rate communication/cooperation with other town components, most rated this high, yet the number one concern we have heard throughout this process is about the lack of good communication.

Ralph suggested that this is very subjective and could be based on personal interaction rather than professional communication/cooperation. All town employees should feel they are part of a team and work together to provide service to the public, including keeping offices open over the lunch hour. He believes elected officials need to

understand that it is in the best interest to cooperate and this could be communicated by the Town Administrator at the time of the orientation to office.

When asked about his thoughts on open Town Meeting versus representative Town Meeting, Ralph stated the town is big enough for a representative meeting so all sectors of the community have a voice and not just the same 120 people who attend all the time.

The committee thanked Ralph for his participation.

The Town Clerk and Town Moderator will be present for the next meeting. Keith reviewed the committees remaining to be invited. Nancy Howlett has returned our Town Administrator recommendations with some technical corrections. Keith will forward this to the members.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 PM. The next meeting is 9/15/11 (Dick's birthday) at 7:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted by acting secretary Jean Landis Naumann.