

MAY 16 2008

TOWN CLERK
ACTON

Minutes

Community Visioning Outreach Steering Committee

April 3rd, 2008, 7:30 PM, Room 204 (Faulkner Room), Acton Town Hall

Prepared by: Terra Friedrichs

Attendees: Lauren Rosenzweig, Terra Friedrichs, Kristin Alexander (staff), Daphne Politis (Planners Collaborative), Linda Chance, Lisa Franklin, Mary Ann Ashton, Ryan Bettez, Robert Whittlesey, Larry Powers, Xuan Kong, Dick Calandrella, Joe Ianelli, Debra Elkhoury, Ann Sussman, Paul Turner

Debrief: March 29th Visioning Session

1. What we liked about it
 - turn out was great
 - publicity was great
 - wide range of attendees, length of time in Acton, long term residents, people that have just moved here
 - consensus despite differences
 - school backpacks worked

2. Overview of the session
 - 175-200 participants
 - powerpoint presentation introducing the goals of the project
 - broke up into 10 facilitated groups
 - each group answered a series of questions
 - open facilitated sharing
 - groups gathered and presented results "by group"
 - kids @ babysitting got to be their own "group", little kids want ice cream parlor, candy store, lollipop forest...mention was made of Wellesley's downtown ice cream shop being a main gathering spot for the town
 - people were "pumped"...very excited about participating and about the process
 - the dots became a method for voting, some people voted for other ideas besides their own. The process resulted in a lot of people voting for ideas that weren't their own, and often NOT voting for their own at all, after seeing all the rest of the ideas.

3. What we could have done better
 - dots were too small and cumbersome, became a logistical problem for the groups
 - flyer colors for separating into groups didn't work well, colors were too close in hue, too many of one color handed out
 - need more volunteers to set up chairs, tables, etc
 - only 103 signed in, need to get everyone to sign in next time
 - flasher sign could be slower so drivers can read it easier
 - need more transportation
 - make CHILD CARE more prominent in the marketing literature
 - maybe use "child's view" in the marketing literature
 - get the press to be more of a stakeholder in the process
 - start publicity earlier, but it can't be "too" soon, so people might forget
 - use lawn signs
 - put stack of flyers at Danny's Place
 - possibly Do a Facebook presentation and Set up a blog
 - difficult to consolidate ideas in group sessions – afraid some ideas could become lost
 - flyer distribution at the Transfer Station only needs to be conducted once

Next Visioning Meeting: May 31st

1. The first meeting was facilitated. This one will be to gather more specific info. This will lead to the "vision", according to Daphne.
2. We'll use larger dots.

3. We should “collapse” the choices so that there isn’t so much overlap in the choices for answers to the questions.
4. Make sure the notes match what is written.
5. The meeting will be ½ reporting back on outreach to date and ½ listening to the attendees

Review of Old Master Plan

Before the next meeting, we should all review the Old Master Plan, or at least the summary from the update, and be prepared to talk about what we have done well, what we didn’t do well, and what we’d change. Also think about why we didn’t do things it looked like the Master Plan wanted us to. Someone thought of looking into the idea of a non-profit foundation to develop villages.

Reports on Interviews

1. Group Interview: Rotary
2. Individual Interview: Anne Fanton. Anne was involved in the development of the last Master Plan. She said that we should be careful not to leave anyone out. Suggested cluster meetings, and advertise with dates.

How to get people to participate in the survey

1. Reverse 911: no, reserved for emergencies
2. Notice people so they know the phone interview is coming, not clear how to do this, postcards are too expensive
3. Can we get the phone interviewer’s caller ID for phone interviews to say “Town of Acton”. There may be technical issues with getting this to happen and it might be cost prohibitive
4. Be careful about words...to make sure the interviewees know that the interviewers are not selling.

Types of Interviews

We talked briefly about the types of interviews.

1. Phone
2. Coffee Meetings (2-3 people)
3. Mini-Visioning Sessions

What Community Groups to Interview/Involve

We went over the list provided in the last meeting.

1. Added businesses.
2. The dam that was purchased in South Acton, maybe add that person to the business list to get a “green” and/or historic perspective
3. Make sure the business community is well represented, by industry and by demographic. Retail, high end, children-oriented, etc.

What makes business work

We also talked about trying to understand why businesses fail and why they work. Nagog Mall was brought up as an example of a part of town that doesn’t seem to have much luck. And the Staples Mass was brought up as an example of what works. Why? What part do we want to replicate?

1. Maybe have a special breakout session with citizens that want to talk about what kinds of new businesses would be good for Acton.
2. In business group sessions to ask about what the town offers to particular types of businesses...things that are unique. This can help us highlight those “differentiators” in economic development efforts

After Visioning

1. What happens after the visioning sessions, do we vote on main goals? For key elements in the visioning sessions?
2. Do we create “yes/no” for what the actions are?
3. We could prioritize goals based on a variety of factors including:
 - cost
 - safety
4. Phasing of goals/implementation plans

5. How are we sure staff can implement goals? How should we involve them in setting goals for the short term? Daphne brought up the fact that she's having cluster meetings "by department". Someone said that the government wants to be responsive. Someone else said that we've got to be careful to keep people involved in each stage of the planning process so we don't set goals that are impossible to meet.
6. We can see how we might have run into problems by looking at the old Master Plan. The new effort is to bring fresh ideas and gauge the temperature of current residents and get buy in from staff.
7. Someone used the phrase "structurally differential dialogue" to describe the rich conversations

Action

1. All: Send in more names of groups that should be included
2. Daphne will make a count of surveys via email
3. April 11th is the survey deadline
4. Reminders to email lists and cable, Rotary, Chamber
5. Ad in the Beacon and Action Unlimited thanking businesses for donating to the 4/29 session
6. Cable TV: change to new visioning date, reminder to fill out survey
7. Flasher sign reminder to fill out survey
8. Get banner revised to new visioning date
9. Check on 5/31 potential conflict with sports teams in town, or will this free up parents?
10. Ask Dore if he likes the list from a Veteran's perspective, and see if he can get a few vets excited about coming.
11. Beacon, can they do an "insert"?
12. Make sure Bill Klauer is on the list of members on the website and on the email list, too.
13. See more action at "what could we have done better", above.
14. Begin working on donations for the 5/31 Session.

Notes on Survey:

1. The survey doesn't make it clear who is conducting the survey
2. Folding issues

Next Outreach Steering Committee Meeting

1. Go over results from 1st session
2. Review table for "active participation" [[not sure what this is, Daphne? Do you know?]]
3. Look at list of "break out sessions", go over results
4. Start constructing followup questions and "different" questions, like "we want more places to go...followup question might be "so what kind of places"?"
5. Date/place will be confirmed via email. 4/17, 5/8, 5/22, all 7:30

Adjourned: 9:45 PM