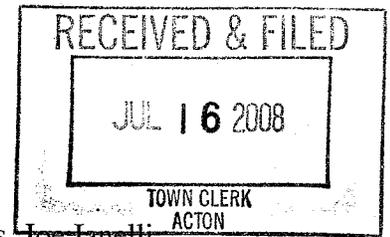


MINUTES—OUTREACH STEERING COMMITTEE
Thursday 5/22/08



Present: Ann Sussman, Terra Friedrichs, Jim Snyder-Grant, Larry Powers, Joe Iacelli, Dick Callandrella, Mary Ann Ashton, Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann, Linda Chance, Susan Benson, Nancy Tavernier, Deborah Elkhoury, Lauren Rosenzweig

Staff: Roland Bartl, Kristin Alexander

Planners Collaborative: Daphne Politis, Jim Purdy

I. Should we schedule additional outreach meetings?

A request came in from Peter Ashton and others that both visioning sessions have been on Saturdays, and there should be at least one alternative meeting on a weekday evening. Discussion ensued that weekends were chosen because experience of the consultants showed that Saturdays had the best turnouts, even though there are other conflicting activities. Weeknights typically had much lower turnouts. Several alternatives were suggested, but by a show of hands it was agreed to take one of the community leader outreach evenings and advertise more widely as a general visioning session.

II. Orton Grant

Acton was not chosen as an Orton Grant recipient, but we were encouraged to be involved in the future. The good news is that through our contact with Tufts University to help us participate in the grant, Tufts is interested in having one or two of their graduate students do an internship in Acton as part of their thesis. This would enable us to have access to the university's visioning technology, which would be tremendously useful in the development of the new Master Plan. The committee delegated staff to look into this possibility, and staff was very amenable to doing so. We have had good experiences working with universities in the past for different studies, etc.

A question came up as to the use of CPA monies for Master Plans. There are certain circumstances for which some planning would fit in to the CPA charter, but it is quite limited, ie. for a housing project, recreation project, historic project, or open space project.

III. Results of First Visioning Workshop

Daphne presented a summary report on the first visioning workshop (see attached). The report lists the topics most people called out as important for the town to address. High on the list was creating Town Centers and places where people could "drop in" and hang out—like community centers. Places you could go in town and run into people you know, walk around, and mingle. Also scoring high was maintaining town character/remaining rural character, sense of history, open space. Transportation

alternatives/reducing traffic was also high on the list, as was walkability/bike trails and exploring “sustainable” development. Quality of schools and ongoing education opportunities was a priority as well. Harder to define, but that came up in many meetings was Acton’s friendly, welcoming “culture”.

Questions were raised regarding how we might deal with conflicting goals—ie. to address traffic might require widening streets, but that will deteriorate the rural character. Daphne answered that this is what we address during the actual planning phase. Visioning and outreach is about the “ideal” wishes.

Discussion then ensued about visioning sessions vs. survey results. Visioning and surveys are a “temperature taking.” The survey is done by an individual alone. The visioning sessions allow for people to hear other’s ideas and contribute their own—it is more dynamic. Survey is like a snapshot, visioning is more like a movie.

IV: Summary of Targeted Group Outreach meetings

Latin Family Network—similar results as with wider community. They also felt a particular need for an orientation to the town for newcomers. Participants reported the schools as being the number one reason for them moving to Acton, however, they said affordable housing was an important issue and some Latino families were attracted to Acton because they could get more house for their money than in some of the surrounding communities.

Brazilian Community—need to tap more into the network—folks not sure how to get people out to meetings and get them involved. The committee agreed to pursue contact with community leaders and get input from just a few of them rather than have a large group meeting.

Upcoming meetings include Chamber of Commerce and others.

V: Phone Survey

Post cards telling of survey will go out to give people a “heads up”. Goal is to dig deeper than written survey and visioning, as well as get statistically significant random sample data. Need was expressed to ask more detailed questions but not “lead” the answers. Also discussed whether or not to bring in the “money” question—what would you be willing to pay for this or that priority? After much discussion a motion was made by Mary Ann Ashton “Move that we add a question at the end of the phone survey that asks if you would spend tax money on each of the following items, and then list the items ie. Senior Center, Open Space Conservation, etc.”

Motion passed unanimously.

VI: May 31st Visioning Session

Daphne outlined what will happen at Visioning Session II. She also outlined all the publicity that has been done so far—flyers in backpacks, Flyers in Beacon (thanks to Dick Calandrella), article in Beacon, ad on cable channels, sandwich boards, etc. 3 days prior we will put on electronic signs. Mary Ann Ashton had it put on school marquee. Leigh Davis Honn has gotten many very good donations for door prizes.

Still need more facilitators.

VII: Membership—need to reduce number of members. Some who can't participate on a regular basis will be asked to change their status to "associates": non-voting members who won't be required for a quorum. Roland will draft an e-mail for Ann Sussman to send.

Next meeting June 11th. Meeting adjourned 9:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by: Lauren S. Rosenzweig