

DRAFT Acton 2020 Committee Minutes

Date: February 3, 2011, 7:00 pm

Location: Library

Attending: Roland Bartl, Sue Benson, Celia Kent (minutes-taker), Sahana Purohit, Jim Snyder-Grant, Margaret Woolley Busse (via skype)

Citizens: Palo Pierce (sp?) (joined meeting at IV)

I. Approved minutes for 1-26-11

II. Goals and Objectives discussion:

Goal 2.1 End after the word "systems". So reads: To protect the quality and quantity of the water that cycles through our ground water, surface water, drinking water, waste water, and storm water systems.

Goal 2.2 Agreed on this version: To reduce waste and the accumulation of toxins in our environment.

Goal 7 Agreed on this version: We believe it is critical for us to sustain and strengthen our Town's financial well-being. This includes commercial and economic development that reflect that long term goals of both businesses and residents of our community.

Tasks: Jim will prepare a brief explanation of how and why the goals/objectives have been modified since the Phase One version. This will be posted along with the goals in approx one week. Margaret will then send out an email announcement about the new goals along with announcement of new blog post.

III. Inventory chapters

Margaret said she'd talked with Daphne Politis and Jim Purdy along with Roland and Kristen to express her disappointment over the inconsistent quality of the inventory drafts the committee was given to review earlier. She indicated it was not an efficient use of committee members' time to review and comment on them at that stage. Daphne and Jim P. understand and have prepared a draft layout that is much better. Margaret shared her email with further comments on the new layout. There was general support for the new layout and Margaret's requests for how it should be fine-tuned.

IV. Discuss Blog. Jim project blog entries to aid discussion.

a. Review blog entries to date.

Jim summed up that, in general, there was no information from the blog comments that would change our goals/objectives document. Mr. Pierce commented that sidewalks are especially important for access to schools and that some towns impose a distance limit on whether a bus is available for transport to school (often one mile). Roland commented that Chris Schaffner's response about cul-de-sac road patterns and how that leads to more traffic is a useful observation about current conditions. In his experience, developers and neighborhood groups usually want to live on cul-de-sacs and resist the construction of through roads; they might not

understand how this kind of road pattern leads to increased traffic on the main arteries. PC is still working on the traffic inventory chapter. The blog about where people eat got the most replies and there was an interesting pattern with some people emphasizing unique restaurants and others advocating for favorite chain restaurants. The West Acton brew pub requests emphasize the sewer issue, i.e. lack of sewers prevents certain kinds of desired development like restaurants.

b. Upcoming blog posts

Tasks: 1) Celia will revise Village blog so that questions come at the beginning and there is less text. She can add information about the history of village development, links to village planning reports, etc. as additional information once the blog has been posted. Jim will investigate posting reference maps of each village area. **2)** Sahana will work with Margaret to edit the community center blog.

Committee discussed the importance, for now, of presenting information neutrally, highlighting the range of opinion about an issue rather than seeming to advocate for one thing or another. Margaret commented that we will all need to be advocates of the master plan once it's developed, but for now committee members are facilitators. Jim suggested it would still be helpful to have guidelines and we should discuss this further at a meeting in advance of the March workshops.

c. Burning Issues – committee decided on the following workshop headlines:

1. Does Acton Have Enough Homes? We can have subset questions dealing with affordable housing, the option to purchase land to prevent development (and to preserve it for other open land uses), zoning, whether or not we have the right kind of housing. Town character issues will also come up.
2. What Kind of Economic Development Do We Want? Subtopics include: lack of sewers and what we might do about that, what kind of development has an impact on taxes, and the influence on the local economy of where we work and where we eat and shop. Roland said it would be helpful to disperse the myth that commercial development can have a significant impact on residential taxes. He suggested that the size of the commercial development necessary to make a difference in taxes may be much larger than most citizens would want. Town character issues also likely to get raised here.
3. How Can We Love Cars and Hate Traffic; Getting around Acton? Topics should include transportation infrastructure, development patterns, car ownership and use, bike paths and sidewalks (and, sometimes, bike paths vs sidewalks?) and the safety of biking or walking. Should also highlight information about whether Acton has the density to make shuttles/buses work. Threaded throughout this discussion are sustainability issues.

We decided not to have a topic on Town Character directly, but believe we should be ready to discuss it and collect information from the meetings about it as relevant issues are raised. Roland emphasized that town character is about more than the historic elements of town; it is about newer buildings and community character, too. Celia commented that the notion of design guidelines raises fears for some people about losing control and that we (eventually)

need to discuss how design guidelines work and what they are based on (that it's not just arbitrary opinion about what looks good).

We also decided that water is a very important topic but that it is very technical and complex and didn't lend itself to useful public discussion in the kind of forum we're imagining for our March meetings.

Structure of meetings: Roland will talk with PC about their assistance in developing material and recommendations for how to run these meetings. He will clarify what role they can play. The committee discussed the possibility of inviting a panel of experts to be part of the meeting. Roland suggested that we have a staged panel, with members being assigned a pro or con role, to help highlight the range of opinion around different topics. Several members of the Committee thought this was a useful idea to pursue.

Tasks: 1) Roland will get initial thoughts from Daphne about how to structure the meeting. **2)** Jim will talk with Roland and PC about publicity and he will write an article for the Beacon to be submitted by Monday. **3)** Margaret will prepare an email announcement about the upcoming workshops and the most recent blog postings. The following week she will prepare an email announcement about the revised goals/objectives and the next blog postings (giving Jim a week to write the introductory summary of how the goals have been revised). **4)** Next blogs will be about Town Character (Celia will draft) and something about Housing (Sue will draft). Helpful if drafts can be ready for discussion at next Wed committee meeting.

V. Committee membership

M talked with Lauren about the idea of expanding our committee membership by one (so that we would seek two new members). Lauren initially expressed lack of support for the idea but Roland suggested there may have been a misunderstanding and that if Lauren understands that we are looking for more help in doing the work of the committee she may change her mind.

VI. 1998 Master Plan.

Is there a value in a member of the committee becoming our local expert on the content of the 1998 Master plan? Sahana indicated she would review the plan but expressed some hesitation in taking on the role of "expert". We agreed we should all be familiar with what the 1998 plan covers. Perhaps a new member of the committee would be interested in becoming the expert.