

**Master Plan Advisory Committee—Survey Subcommittee**  
**Friday, October 29, 2010, 3:00 P.M.**  
**Durham Town Hall—Council Chambers**

**— MINUTES —**

**Members present:** Jim Campbell, Amy Cunningham, Joe Moore, Charles Forcey, Molly Donovan, Robin Mower, Neal Ferris

**Members absent:** Lorne Parnell

**Alternate members absent:** Jim Lawson, Ute Luxem

**Others present:** Charlie French, UNH Cooperative Extension

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**I. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order and members introduced themselves:

- Charlie French, UNH Cooperative Extension [Note: Charlie stated that he has expertise in the area of economic development; teaches in Natural Resources and Environmental Planning; has worked with about 40 communities on their Master Plans; guides communities in the process of engaging public input, whether through community forums, focus groups or surveys.]
- Joe Moore, Citizen
- Amy Cunningham, Parks and Recreation
- Molly Donovan, Citizen
- Charles Forcey, Energy Committee
- Neal Ferris, Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee
- Jim Campbell, Director of Planning and Community Development
- Robin Mower, Town Council representative to the Conservation Commission

**II. Purpose of the Subcommittee**

To create a survey to support the master plan revision, bringing forward questions from previous surveys for comparative purposes and adding new ones as needed.

**III. Purpose of the Survey**

Charlie French outlined several possible uses for community surveys and asked the committee to pick the uses that best fit Durham's needs, such as to solicit:

- opinions about a proposed plan
- attitudes about issues the community is facing
- input on how people feel about existing public services, how well the community has addressed an issue

Joe Moore added that it could be used to maximize citizen awareness and input.

The committee agreed that the primary point of the survey is the second option, i.e., to solicit attitudes about what issues the community is facing. There was some interest in the third (how are we doing) option, but for the purpose of a 10-20 year planning effort such present-moment feedback was deemed to be less important.

Neal Ferris suggested that the community might want to know: How much of the Master Plan has been implemented? What are the impediments to implementation to date? Are any parts of it out of date? Is it missing topics?

Charlie French also cautioned that "how are we doing" surveys often result in a high percentage of complaints and negative comments, and relatively little guidance about where people think the town might be able to go in the future. Questions, he advised, should be worded carefully to elicit a future-oriented response such as, "In the next 10 years, Durham should have..." Such wording might allow people to think about how many parks, playgrounds, gas stations, etc., they would like to see in the future.

The committee rejected the first use—opinions on specific planning options—because the survey is coming before and during the public forum and no issues have been sufficiently framed for the public to allow them to provide meaningful feedback about options. Without enough background, such surveys tend to provide poor policy guidance and a fair number of spurious suggestions that do not reflect the legal, financial, or technical complexity of the issues.

Charlie French provided members with handouts of the Newport, NH Community Survey, 2010 to provide a sense of direction.

#### **IV. Brief Discussions, questions and answers (Q&A)**

Q. Are previous town-wide surveys useful?

A. Charlie French suggested that surveys going back 20 years would establish a baseline and then document changes up to the time of this new survey. Molly Donovan suggested that a blank survey/questionnaire in this Master Plan update, and Charlie confirmed that it could be used as an appendix, with data added below for transparency.

Q. Where is the raw data going?

A. A consultant will be writing the chapters. Data will go to the consultant, to the committees, and to the Planning Board. It will also be published in summary form as an appendix to the Master Plan for all to access.

Q. How can we frame the questions in such a way that the immediate moment in time (e.g., we are in a bad economy) does not limit people's hopes for Durham's future?

A. Questions should be written with 10+ years as length of time so people will tend to think beyond the current financial crisis.

Q. How will the survey be distributed and participation guaranteed?

A. The survey will be primarily a web-based survey, although paper copies will be available as well. A postcard that announces the forum will also refer people to the town website for the survey link and will go out in November to every property owner; a response rate of 2% would be good. The Friday Updates newsletter and town website will advertise the link throughout November. Paper copies, drop boxes, and fliers with the online link will be provided in public places such as the town office, the library, and businesses willing to host a small display.

The option of soliciting input via a link to the Town website was discussed.

The committee discussed the option of using Facebook. To ensure fairness (no one group getting more input than another) we agreed to not use links from Facebook for those committees that already have Facebook pages (Parks & Rec, for example). If Facebook could be used in a way that would increase participation evenly across the community, then the committee would be open to using social networking to get the word out.

Q. How should questions from the boards and committees on the survey be framed?

A. Charlie French suggested that Survey Subcommittee members ask their boards for topics, rather than questions.

**V. Action items and person responsible:**

1. Find surveys used for the previous Master Plan and 1995 Community Development Plan—Jim Campbell
2. Secure library space and awareness of program—Jim Campbell through department heads meeting
3. Draft questions—all members of the Subcommittee
4. Explore option of creating a Town website page for the Master Plan update process—Jim Campbell.

**VI. Goal**

To have a draft of the survey ready for the Planning Board meeting on November 10th or November 17th.

The next meeting will be November 4, from 5:00pm to 6:30pm

Meeting adjourned approximately 5:50pm

Minutes takers: Charles Forcey and Robin Mower