

Master Plan Advisory Committee—Survey Committee
December 9, 2010, 5:00 P.M.
Durham Town Hall—Council Chambers

— MINUTES —

Members present: Amy Cunningham [Parks & Recreation], Neal Ferris [Integrated Waste Management Advisory], Charles Forcey [Energy], Jim Lawson [citizen], Ute Luxem [Economic Development, alternate], Joe Moore [citizen], Robin Mower [Conservation; Energy, alternate], Lorne Parnell [Planning Board]

Members absent: Jim Campbell, Molly Donovan [citizen]

Others present: Charlie French, UNH Cooperative Extension

Meeting convened at 5:15pm

Parnell updated the Committee on the brief discussion about survey questions held at the Planning Board on December 8.

French recapped the goals of the survey outlined at the November 23 meeting. He asked whether the template that he had provided by email was helpful and was told, “Yes.”

He then expressed his concern with the timeline: there will not be a lot of turnaround time from the receipt of input from the committees for the drafting of the survey itself. He also discussed the process of creating and finalizing the survey. The refining of the instrument is iterative and takes a lot of time; it will need to be tweaked. The survey subcommittee will be responsible for finding a natural grouping of questions from individual committees. That grouping will include keeping question type and structure consistent, not necessarily a natural fit with the questions.

French reiterated that it would be helpful for the committees to provide direction on the topics.

Forcey pointed out that the technical details of question constructions and the big picture were pieces of the puzzle missing for the Energy Committee. That committee’s focus will be on bicycling in Durham but may come up with additional topics.

Cunningham noted that her committee, Parks & Recreation, is interested in both the precise wording and the types of questions to be included. One thing that she found helpful in talking with Parks & Rec was to avoid the strategy and implementation questions and instead return to the broader and awareness questions. Difficult challenge. (She noted also that Parks & Rec will do a survey for its own purposes.)

French reminded the committee of the conclusion from its last meeting to keep the survey pretty general; the visioning forum will build this into strategy and implementation.

Forcey emphasized that it is important to tell people to take the survey with an approach as if it were their dreams for a Durham 10 or 20 years into the future.

Moore stated that he thought it important for the committee to finalize a precise, directional introduction for the survey to help maintain focus as we build the survey. He referenced the

Southampton, MA document discussed at earlier meetings but noted that the uniqueness to Durham would come from the specific questions the committee includes on the survey.

French suggested that the introduction include a brief statement of the goal and the history of the Master Plan and then lead quickly into the survey.

Forcey expressed a desire to short-circuit the response of, “Didn’t we just do that 10 years ago?” The introduction should note that this is what NH towns do every 10 years and perhaps be two sentences long.

Cunningham: The same things that we encourage the Committees to keep in mind, we want to advise the survey respondents to do the same.

The committee agreed on a draft introduction—which will be reviewed by the forum subcommittee as well—to begin:

Dear Durham residents:

The Town is in the process of revising its Master Plan, which will guide the Planning Board and Town boards and committees in their future decisions. The Master Plan addresses the following areas: land use, open space, housing, economic development, natural resources, recreation, energy and sustainability, education, public services and facilities, and transportation.

This survey is an important opportunity for you to:

- *identify qualities and attributes of our town that you value and wish to preserve;*
- *identify qualities and attributes that you perceive to be at risk; and*
- *share your priorities for Durham’s future over the next 10 to 20 years.*

French stated that he and Michelle Craig would complete the “requirements” part of the introduction. This would include statements that the survey:

- would be available town-wide to all residents; and
- that more than one member of a household could participate; and
- that it would take X minutes to complete.

Their additional text would also provide details such as:

- options for taking the survey online or in printed form; and
- options for submitting the survey; and
- that anonymity of the respondent would be preserved.

A brief discussion followed about who in a household could be a respondent, including whether to approach the ORCSD to invite participation from school students. (Since the ORCSD includes residents of other towns, i.e., Lee and Madbury, the committee concluded that is not an option.)

Lawson asked whether the Planning Board and the Town might weigh the responses according to the demographics of respondents.

French replied that any survey for which input from every resident is not obtained, or at least a representative sample, would have bias in terms of how the results can be used. He emphasized that care must be taken in framing the findings of the survey. He said that he would run a cross-tabulation to account for various demographic groups.

Moore reminded the committee that the Planning Board must sign off on the Master Plan.

A discussion on the timeframe followed:

- The actual fine-tuning takes 2 to 3 weeks; it will take subcommittees to work on themed sections, including some difficult “hashing out”
- Drop-dead deadline for submission of committees’ 3 to 4 suggestions: January 21, 2011
- Send questions directly to Charlie French; he will do the initial sorting into themes. Then subcommittees can tweak.
- Draft survey must be ready at the beginning of February

Moore pointed out that Appendix B of the Keene 2010 Master Plan survey has some good categories.

Discussion followed about how Town committees that are not represented on the survey committee will get their questions onto the survey. For example, there is an HDC representative on the forum committee but not on the survey committee.

Luxem asked whether the forum committee also needs to know what the survey committee is doing.

Moore urged that we be able to refer to a list of what entities should be submitting questions, with a contact person for each one. He also suggested meeting a half hour earlier on the 14th to finalize the draft of the introduction.

Discussion returned to the timeframe. Input must be collected, processed, and formatted. The turnaround includes taking questions and sorting into themes. Returned to the survey subcommittee, which then must form subcommittees to work on each theme. French would help each to frame the questions, probably taking a couple of weeks to hammer them out. He would then take a few days to sort them and put into a draft. French forecasts a minimum of 6 weeks to get something in shape for the Planning Board.

Cunningham noted that at the first Master Plan Advisory Committee Steering Committee meeting, we were told that there is a very aggressive schedule of 5 weeks. People generally accepted that.

Lawson noted that the Planning Board also needs time to provide feedback and that he is struggling with all the timelines. He also stated that he thinks that a “final” version is the only one that should be submitted for Planning Board consideration, rather than a draft.

Parnell commented that he thought the Planning Board would review and vote on the survey at a single meeting.

Tasks:

- Mower:
 - send the draft introduction to the committee and Michelle Craig
 - post minutes from the November 23 meeting
 - excerpt the themes from the Keene downtown survey
 - ask Jennie Berry to reserve January 25 and February 2 for the MPAC-SS, 5pm to 6:30pm
 - send note to everyone to mark calendar
- Cunningham, Luxem and Lawson will attend the December 14 meeting of the MPAC at 7pm; Jim Campbell will be unable to attend
- French
 - refine the draft introduction, email a version to the committee

- bring that text to the MPAC Steering Committee meeting on December 14 so that Michelle Craig and the forum committee can work on it as well

Forcey and Ferris left earlier, but the meeting formally adjourned approximately 7:00pm

Minutes taker: Robin Mower