

Great Barrington Master Plan Committee (MPC)

Minutes of September 22, 2011

Fire Station
37 State Road, Great Barrington

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 PM by Co-Chairperson Michele Gilligan. She designated Deborah Phillips as the recording secretary (Paul Ivory will serve at the next meeting).

Members present: Barbara Bailly, Richard Dohoney, Michele Gilligan, Jonathan Hankin, Paul Ivory, Vivian Orłowski (Alternate, voting), Deborah Phillips, David Rutstein (Alternate, not voting), Michael Wise.

Members absent: Andrew Blechman, Ryan Caruso, Shep Evans, Mary Beth Merritt, Bill Meier, Jack Musgrove, David Shanahan, Suzanne Fowle-Schroeder (Alternate), Karen Smith, Christine Ward (Alternate)

Also present: Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Minutes of August 25, 2011

After a motion by Phillips, seconded by Bailly, the minutes were approved as amended.

Outreach and Engagement Activities

A. Neighborhood Forums

Gilligan directed members' attention to the materials handed out. She asked people to send their changes to Rembold, who would customize them for each neighborhood team and reproduce them in his office.

Ivory suggested that door to door outreach would be too time-consuming, and that advertising in newspapers should be done instead. Gilligan responded saying the personal touch is critical to the grassroots effort at this stage. It should be a combination of advertising and personal outreach.

Rembold asked that teams set their dates within the next two weeks, and get him the information. Then he can develop a large scale advertising listing the dates and locations for each of the forums.

Orłowski asked if the robo-phone system could be used, with team members making the calls. Rembold said yes, we can target your neighborhoods with the calls, and team members can record the "personalized" message.

Gilligan stated that neighborhood forums should be held in October if possible. At these forums, try to get the surveys filled out so that we have some tangible data to take away.

Forum should be advertised as being about one hour in length. People can mingle afterwards as long as they feel comfortable.

Ivory asked if Town space could be used. Rembold said that meetings should not be in Town buildings, that a more personal atmosphere is warranted. There are likely meeting halls, churches, schools, or businesses in various neighborhoods that could host these events, if you feel your house would not work.

B. Interviews and Topical Workshops

Rembold briefly discussed the list of interviewees, interest groups, and focus groups. He pointed members to the handout listing the Committee member assignments and schedules.

Interviews and workshops for the first five categories should happen by the end of this calendar year. Rembold will take the lead in scheduling these at times convenient to the Committee members. He will be in touch with each member.

Some interviews or groups may be combined; some may need multiple meetings. It is up to the Committee members to determine whether they need follow up sessions. Rembold suggested members use the information in the Task Force / Subcommittee reports as starting points for these interviews.

Board's and Committee's Reports

Gilligan called for reports from the member boards and commissions.

Phillips said the Board of Selectmen is dealing with Housatonic, Main Street, and budgeting at the moment. The budget development for next fiscal year is starting in earnest soon. The Board of Selectmen will hold its Strategic Planning meeting in two weeks.

Hankin said the Planning Board has been busy. Last year the major accomplishment was the passage of the new zoning district for the mills. Just recently the Planning Board is hearing its first potential application of the Open Space Residential Development subdivision, regulations meant to cluster homes and preserve open space.

Gilligan said the Council on Aging is very busy, overwhelming staff. A retreat is being held soon to try to focus the Council's mission. They are looking at building a gazebo on the river and providing a more park-like pleasant walk along the river. Gilligan said the Senior Center also has to plan for increasing number of seniors and their service needs.

Ivory said the Historical Commission was formed in 1973 to advise the Selectmen on historical preservation issues, heighten sensitivity and appreciation. Projects include making National Register nominations, salvaging artifacts, and providing comments to projects like St. James Church and Main Street. Rutstein said another major project is organizing all of the archive treasures now at Ramsdell and working with the Historical Society on the Wheeler Farm restoration and museum.

Orlowski report that the Agricultural Commission is well underway with the Keep Farming process. It has grown from town-specific to a more regional process. Teams including aesthetics, agricultural economics, mapping, and natural resources are about 50 percent of the way through their data gathering. A farmer's forum will be held in November. A draft report is due early next summer with a final report due in late 2012.

A report is still needed from the Conservation Commission.

Other Issues and Concerns

Ethics: Rembold advised all members to fill out their Open Meetings acknowledgement and complete the online Ethics test. Forms are due to the Town Clerk by the end of this year.

Speaker: Orlowski asked if the Committee would be interested in hearing from Keith Zaltzberg, Keith teaches at the Conway School of Landscape Design and at Smith College. He gave a talk recently about his work. His work, "Broadscale Planning and Design: Designing for Resilience," seems quite relevant to our Master Plan Committee work. The Committee agreed it would be good to hear from him. It was suggested the talk be a 15-20 minute presentation, followed by question and answer time Orlowski will schedule him for the upcoming October 27 meeting.

November-December meetings: The Co-Chairs proposed that the November and December meetings be combined and held on December 8, since holidays would interfere with the regular 4th Thursday dates. All agreed.

Adjourn

After a motion by Wise, seconded by Dohoney, the Chair adjourned the meeting at 8:50 PM.

Next Meeting

Thursday, October 27, at the Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road at 7:30 PM.

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

- Memo from Rembold, re: Neighborhood Focus Groups (with map, tips, generic survey, sign in sheet, and customizable flyer)
- List of interviewees and focus groups with Committee member assignments and schedule (dated 9/19/2011)

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Christopher Rembold". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned in the lower half of the page.