

Great Barrington Master Plan Committee (MPC)

Minutes of March 22, 2012
Fire Station
37 State Road, Great Barrington

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 PM by Co-Chairperson Michele Gilligan.

Members present: Barbara Bailly, Andrew Blechman, Ryan Caruso, Ethan Culleton, Richard Dohoney, Shep Evans, Michele Gilligan, Jonathan Hankin, Bill Meier, Mary Beth Merritt, Vivian Orlovski, David Rutstein (Alternate, voting), Karen W. Smith, Michael Wise

Members absent: Suzanne Fowle-Schroeder, Paul Ivory, Jack Musgrove, Deborah Phillips, David Shanahan

Also present: Chris Rembold, Town Planner

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After a motion by Smith, seconded by Evans, the minutes were approved as amended.

Topical Workshops

The committee and audience members broke out into three different tables to discuss economic development, services and facilities, and transportation. Rembold noted that these topics happen to be the areas where a large portion of the Town money is spent and asked each table to keep in mind that we have heard in our public outreach that tax burdens are already heavy.

The full committee reconvened and recorded the results of each table. The results are below.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Promote high quality and ubiquitous fiber optic
- Reestablish passenger train service
- Establish a permanent formal economic development commission for businesses to connect with government boards, so that businesses to have a formal voice in government
- Hire an economic development consultant to implement these strategies
- Establish a Business Improvement District downtown
- Promote local investment as a way to increase “self sufficiency”
- Locate businesses in the village centers by making the process simpler, e.g., development either “by right” or an otherwise streamlined the development process
- Attend to parking issues, including costing out alternatives and providing information as to costs of oft-cited strategies like a parking deck
- Address perception that decisions are not rational/deliberative or are favoritism; this is necessary for recruiting new businesses and helping homeowners rehab their properties
- It was agreed that it is not necessary for the Master Plan to specify the exact future uses for each key sites, except to attract businesses that “fit” and pay special attending to gateway properties.

TRANSPORTATION

- Reestablish passenger train service, including securing (or developing) station areas and drop off area, signage and wayfinding from stations to sites and amenities, such as parking and venues
- Continue, do not defer, bridge maintenance. Before fixing bridges, do a basic analysis of bridges, uses, functions, and traffic counts, to set a priority list. If necessary, limit weight or close bridges rather than spend large sums to fix them.
- Use of the internet will reduce individual car trips
- Improve Public Bus, including a town service similar to SBETC (no consensus here)
- Mandate every schoolchild ride the bus to reduce traffic
- Employers above X employees to provide ride sharing
- Attend to parking issues, consider meters, improved signage, and satellite parking for merchants or employees or tourist seasons. Also review the task force report
- Sidewalks: Provide sidewalks (connected) in all areas of X density
- Undertake walkability studies focusing on crosswalk locations, sidewalks, sidewalk types, connectivity, and develop an improvement plan
- Establish a call center or internet board for ride sharing

SERVICES AND FACILITIES

- A key discussion point was improving communication and access to information of all the events, resources, and local talent that exist already.
 - Senior center: use existing facilities first, and enhance programs, publicity, etc awareness, before considering any facility expansions or new sites
 - Have an annual or some regular meeting of service and program directors in order to coordinate programs, avoid duplications. The South County resource list is a great example (for which there will be twice yearly updates)
 - Establish a volunteer calendar for volunteers, and/or a list or database of services wanted for volunteers to respond to. The Town website could be a home for these lists and bulletin boards.
- In terms of education
 - Increase vocational and technical offerings to increase enrollment
 - Establish an internship or gap year program
 - Promote Sister city or other idea and student exchange
- For water conservation, encourage greywater and composting systems
- Ensure new development manages stormwater runoff
- Increase police foot patrols in village centers
- Increase and improve sidewalks and trails networks
- Close Railroad Street for one-time events, perhaps once per month in tourist season like Pittsfield
- Housatonic School
 - Encourage the Selectboard to resolve the issue

Adjournment

On a unanimous vote, Gilligan adjourned the meeting at 9:10 PM.

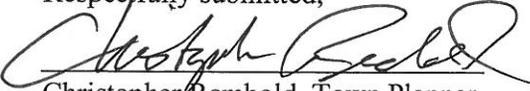
Next Meeting

Thursday, April 26, 2012, at the Great Barrington Fire Station, 37 State Road at 7:30 PM

Materials distributed or presented for this meeting:

- Draft Minutes of February 23, 2012
- Town Manager's February 10, 2012 Fiscal 2013 Budget Message to Selectboard and Finance Comm.
- Draft goals and strategies and subcommittee report for economic development
- Draft goals and strategies and subcommittee report for services and facilities
- Draft goals and strategies and subcommittee report for transportation

Respectfully submitted,


Christopher Rembold, Town Planner