

Great Barrington Master Plan Committee (MPC)

Meeting Minutes of March 28, 2013
Great Barrington Fire Station

Members present: Ryan Caruso, Ethan Culleton, Shep Evans, Suzanne Fowle (alternate, voting), Jonathan Hankin, Bill Meier, Vivian Orłowski, Deborah Phillips, David Rutstein (alternate, voting), David Shanahan and Michael Wise. Also present was Chris Rembold, Town Planner.

Members absent: Barbara Bailly, Andrew Blechman, Charles Bouteiller, Richard Dohoney, Michele Gilligan, Paul Ivory.

Co-Chairperson Michael Wise began the meeting at 7:35 PM.

Minutes of February 28, 2013

The minutes were approved as written.

Discussion with School Superintendent

Berkshire Hills Regional School District Superintendent Peter Dillon and former long-time School Committee member and Building Committee member Richard Coons were in attendance. The Committee asked Dillon to address the following questions:

Are there more regionalization plans in the future, including perhaps Lee or Southern Berkshire schools? Will BHRSD be well positioned to take advantage of any consolidation or regionalization plans? Dillon said there was a report about regionalization completed several years ago but unfortunately it did not account for transportation issues. Parents quite understandably do not want their children having to take a bus long distances every day. That is the biggest challenge to more regionalization. Dillon said that BHRSD continues to consider regionalization, particularly with Richmond and Farmington River. Currently Lee seems to be looking at opportunities with Lenox. There is collaboration between districts to place students with special needs in appropriate programs.

Please discuss a little bit about the vo-tech programs and training students for the workforce. Dillon said they have state-approved automotive and horticulture programs. And there are other concentrations like childcare (joint with BCC), culinary arts (with Railroad Street youth), health care (with Fairview) and woodworking and property management are offered and are examples of successful educational and job training partnerships.

Are there programs for child care and adult-day care or other possible links between students and seniors? Dillon said the BHRSD campus desires to be a hub for the entire district community. People use the buildings and the grounds for meetings, classes, and recreation. There is a twice-annual holiday farmers market, and Mud Day is a fun event. The schools offer concerts; musical performances are offered for seniors.

Please discuss enrollment trends. Dillon said enrollment is steady. About 1/3 of total enrollment is from other districts (and about 1/3 of those are tuitioned in from Richmond or Farmington River and 2/3 are choiced in). The fact is that BHRSD enrollment depends on other districts. Dillon said they continue to try to negotiate an increase in tuition agreements and those talks are favorable. The payments for choice-in and choice-out are set by the state and the formulas need to be increased. Otherwise BHRSD, and by extension Great Barrington taxpayers, bear the funding burden.

What is the projected longevity of the school buildings? How else might the community utilize the buildings for maximum return on the investment? Dillon said they estimate a 40-year useful life. He we try to be a center for the community. He liked the Dowmel lecture series, which is now ended. The Committee thought lectures like "TED talks" could be offered there. Evans pointed out that now the town has many other resources like the Community Center and Simon's Rock arts center and athletic center where programs can be offered too.

Are there plans for long-term ecological use of the campus (for example we heard about the tree planting program). Dillon talked about Project Sprout. Its harvest occurs in late summer before school starts, but there is an barter agreement with the Co-Op Market who takes produce at harvest and provides produce to the school when the school is in session. The Committee thought this sounded like a very creative solution.

Wise said the Committee has talked about neighborhood scale development and the importance of walkable, efficient locations. He said that the centralized campus approach is the opposite of what the Committee has discussed. Dillon said there is a desire by some for smaller and less centralized schools, but there are important curriculum and administrative to regionalization. The overall education and programs offered are better than could be achieved at smaller schools. Dillon said however that he shares the desire that the campus be linked by walking and biking trails to the towns if possible.

Draft Services and Facilities chapter

Phillips suggested the draft include a recommendation to study the quality and quantity of drinking water, and in particular the supply for Housatonic. Issues to be studied include long term supply, quality, cost, age of pipes, and alternatives to the current two-system approach. The Committee agreed such a recommendation should be included.

There were no other comments about the chapter.

Draft Implementation chapter

Rembold presented the Implementation chapter. He pointed out that the chart needs more details, and suggested that at the next meeting the Committee revise the chart as a group.

Rembold noted the chart includes columns to address the four key issues of the Plan. He also said that the overlap of goals and strategies reflects which items are important to the community. Those items that address several issues can be considered high priority. Evans said this is similar to "critical path" theory. Rembold agreed and said there are some items that must be focused on; these items must be accomplished because they are prerequisites to future important initiatives.

The Committee agreed to review the chart and be prepared to edit it at the next meeting. The next meeting will be April 11, 2013. Members should come prepared with suggestions and edits to the chart.

Other Issues and Concerns

Meier and Orłowski provided a brief overview of the panel discussion about local agriculture and climate change, held at Simon's Rock last week.

The Committee will also meet on April 25 as usual.

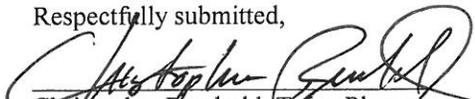
Adjournment

Hearing no further business, Wise adjourned the meeting at 9:00 PM.

Materials distributed or presented at this meeting:

- Draft Minutes of February 28, 2013
- Notes from March 7, 2013 meeting
- Draft Services and Facilities chapter
- Draft Implementation chapter

Respectfully submitted,


Christopher Rembold, Town Planner