

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CPAC)  
SPECIAL MEETING**

**MINUTES OF OCTOBER 08, 2008**

**(As Approved October 29, 2008)**

**Present:**

*Members:* Kate Bedard, Connie Clancy, Bob Gelinas, Martha Johnson, Dale Johnston, Wendy Kelleher, Jeff Labrecque, Dan Luis, Jesse Lytle, Melissa O'Brien, Kurt Schenker, Martha Terry, and Nathan Therien (Excused: Lucia Foley and Linda Young)

*Staff:* Darlene Wynne & Matthew Chase, VHB, Inc. and Richard Harris, Town Planner

*Liaisons:* John Hines (Selectboard)

*Public:* None

Ms. O'Brien called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

**1. Minutes of Meetings – August 27, 2008 and September 24, 2008 Regular Meetings**

Mr. Harris stated that these minutes were not available at this time.

**2. Discussion of Comprehensive Plan's focus and overall goals**

Ms. O'Brien reviewed the purpose of this session as being to ensure that the full Committee is in "sync" as to the overall vision and focus of the plan. Several members reiterated their previously voiced concerns that the drafts of the chapters and other materials have not been provided adequately by VHB. Among the concerns that have been voiced were the lateness of the draft Issue Papers and chapters, the inadequacy of the chapters, and the inconsistent formats.

Ms. Johnson initiated the discussion by stating she had provided each person a sheet with two questions – however, everyone was to only read and focus on the first question at this time. She noted that throughout this process, the committee and community have focused on preserving the "charm" of South Hadley.

Thus, the first question posed to the CPAC and those in attendance asked:

- *What comprises the charm of small town South Hadley, as it was and is, that residents really want to preserve?*

Each person provided their comment as to what they felt was the "charm" of South Hadley.

- Neighborhoods (i.e., social fabric) / Sense of Community --- mentioned twice

- Family-friendly activities --- mentioned twice
- Village Commons- strong, vibrant center of town
- College - beauty of grounds, architecture
- Scenic vistas, rolling hills (view of the range is particularly important) --- mentioned 3 times
- Riverfront- beauty, access, vista
- Minimize negative divisions among townspeople; nurture both the Commons and the Falls and appreciate each of them for their character and beauty; preserve town unity where it exists and enhance it where it doesn't
- Improvement of schools --- mentioned twice
- Community (or town) "centers" that used to exist around each elementary school and other services that have multi-uses and functions: areas for shopping, eating, walking, taking children, etc.
- The Falls area with the vibrancy it once had and could reclaim
- Small shops vs. strip malls
- Variety of housing stock and developments that fit our small New England town character
- Historic significance throughout the town
- Mom & Pop shops/eateries vs. fast food chains

Ms. Johnson then posed a second question for those present:

- *In our work planning for the future, through the lenses of facilities, transportation, housing, historical resources, open space, etc. - how do we envision a kind of development and change which preserves and enhances this essence of South Hadley?*

Again, each person was asked to provide their responses which were similar, but had some variations:

- Have and promote activities and infrastructure and strategies to better connect with and know our neighbors: consider mapping projects w/contact information (like Dale's project in NC)
- Make our small town more walkable
- Have vibrant downtown/centers for multi-use purposes (shopping, recreation, transportation, services, etc.)
- Improve public transportation
- Create bike/hiking path from the Falls to other parts of town to the foothills of the range to enhance green modes of transportation, regionalism, quality of life, connecting the Falls to other parts of town
- Reuse/renovate existing buildings and vacant lots/buildings
- Improve Schools
- Develop working definitions of key terms with more specificity i.e., what do we mean by "neighborhoods", "rolling hills", etc.
- Identify, create, approve, vote for mechanisms to preserve farms, open space, etc. --- What are these and how do we implement them?

- Encourage housing developments that preserve open space and avoid construction of single family homes on large parcels of land: use of zoning could be one of the tools to address this issue
- Align with apparent widely shared interest in saving open space and the diminished fear of creating higher density housing developments assuming they are appropriately and strategically placed throughout town.

Mr. Harris provided a summary of what he heard from each of the members present:

*"A community with vast community-accessible open spaces and rolling hills and concentrated centers of mixed-use development achieved through a combination of a variety of measures including public infrastructure (such as pedestrian and bicycle corridors) and regulatory measures (such as Planned Unit Development)."*

Members present expressed general agreement with the summary statement.

Ms. O'Brien then wrapped up the meeting and noted there would likely be more of this type of discussion at some future meetings.

### **3. Adjourn full CPAC Meeting**

**Motion** – Ms. Johnson moved and Mr. Gelinas seconded the motion to adjourn. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

(Afterwards, the Transportation and Housing subcommittees met with the VHB representatives, Ms. O'Brien, and Mr. Harris to review and discuss their respective draft elements.)

Respectfully submitted,

*As Approved*

Richard Harris, Recorder