

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

MINUTES OF DECEMBER 03, 2008

(As Approved January 14, 2009)

Present:

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

Staff: Ralph Willmer and Matt Chase, VHB, Inc. and Richard Harris, Town Planner

Liaisons: John Hines (Selectboard) and Helen Fantini (Planning Board)

Public: Joan Rosner

Ms. Young called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. It was noted that refreshments were provided as this meeting is in part to celebrate the substantial efforts that the members have undertaken over the past year to develop the comprehensive plan. Members were encouraged to enjoy the refreshments prior to beginning the agenda.

1. Minutes of Meetings – August 27, 2008 and October 29, 2008

Motion – Ms. Clancy moved and Mr. Lytle seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the August 27, 2008 and October 29, 2008 meetings as presented. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

1a. January Meetings

Before proceeding to the next scheduled agenda item, Ms. Young suggested that the CPAC should discuss when the meetings should be held in January. Options offered were:

First Meeting: Either January 7th or 14th
Second Meeting: January 28th

No objections were offered regarding the January 28th meeting. However, several members indicated they may not be able to attend a meeting on January 7th or 14th (varied among the members present).

Ms. Young noted that this first meeting is vital as it will set the stage for completion of Phase 2. VHB, Inc. is to provide an outline for the Phase 2 elements and the CPAC members need to agree to an outline prior to any significant work or scheduling can be undertaken. Juli Beth Hinds of VHB, Inc. will be the primary staff liaison with the CPAC and it is vital that she be present.

Mr. Willmer indicated he was not certain as to which meeting Ms. Hinds would be able to attend.

Mr. Harris suggested that he could ask Ms. Hinds which meeting date would fit her schedule best and then email all of the CPAC to determine if a significant number could attend on the first date that Ms. Hinds has available. The Chair and Vice-Chair could then determine when to schedule the meeting. All members present indicated that was an acceptable arrangement.

2. Discussion and Review of November 12, 2008 Community Gathering

Ms. Young asked each subcommittee chair to provide their perspective on the November 12th community gathering and the input received. Other subcommittee members were invited to offer their input as well.

The various chairs and members offered the following comments:

- While the turnout was “weak”, there were some new faces in attendance and the quality of the input was quite good
- There were suggestions of an “uptown”/”downtown” perception which was disconcerting
- Generally, the input suggested that the attendees were thinking along the same lines as the committee members in terms of issues and priorities for action
- The input reinforced some of the committee members’ thoughts and caused other recommendations/ideas to be reconsidered
- The complexity of the Municipal Facilities chapter quickly became apparent and there was a need for much more time to discuss the diversity of topics in that area
- There was inadequate amount of time, overall
- Delays in moving from one chapter/table to another upset “rhythm” of the meeting
- Need to do greater “community outreach” to get more involvement
- Too many different items upon which people were allowed to vote

3. Review Status of the First Four Elements of the Comprehensive Plan and their Interrelationships

- a. Housing**
- b. Economic Development**
- c. Transportation**
- d. Municipal Facilities**

4. Planning for Phase 2

- a. Review of Overlapping between Phase 1 and Phase 2 elements**

These two agenda items were handled collectively with 4a addressed by each subcommittee as they discussed the interrelationship of their element.

a. Housing

Ms. Clancy stated that the Housing Chapter is complete except for some minor edits. The primary concern of the Housing subcommittee is affordable housing. She offered some of the key recommendations of the subcommittee and suggested that the Community Design & Land Use subcommittee needs to keep affordable housing as a focus.

Mr. Luis added that “in-fill” development needs to be a consideration in meeting affordable housing needs, by the market place. Such an approach would enhance the economic development opportunities of the area as well.

Ms. Bedard emphasized mixed-use development as a means for achieving affordable housing and economic development objectives.

b. Economic Development

Mr. Labrecque commented that he believes the Economic Development chapter is completed. Recreation opportunities may be the force behind the Falls revitalization. However, the entrance to the Falls from Holyoke needs to be improved and enhanced. To strengthen the benefits of the recreational facilities, there needs to be a physical connection between the Beachgrounds and Lower Riverside park. Farming should be an economic focus.

Ms. Terry stated that the Economic Development element ties clearly and directly into all parts of Phase 2. The Town’s corridors need to be protected so that they do not look like Memorial Drive in Chicopee.

Mr. Johnston indicated he is a bit uncomfortable “handing off” the Economic Development element at this point.

c. Transportation

Mr. Lytle stated that the Transportation element is in good condition and he is very comfortable with the chapter. Sustainability is the focus of the transportation element. Ms. Kelleher echoed Mr. Lytle’s comments.

d. Municipal Facilities

Ms. O’Brien noted that the subcommittee has met with Juli Beth Hinds. The chapter needed considerable work in terms of format. Accordingly, it has not been finalized – but is progressing. Sustainable development is the focus of the chapter and there are considerable overlaps with the other chapters in both phases. This particular element is complex due to the diversity of topics. Ms. Foley concurred with Ms. O’Brien’s comments.

Mr. Willmer provided an overall report on the status of each of the chapters from VHB’s perspective:

- Housing – will be finished with a few days as only a few changes need to be made
- Economic Development – will also be completed shortly as they just need to incorporate Ms. Terry's changes
- Transportation – this chapter is all set
- Municipal Facilities – as Ms. O'Brien indicated, Ms. Hinds is rewriting the chapter, primarily due to format concerns

4. Planning for Phase 2

- a. Review of Overlapping between Phase 1 and Phase 2 elements**
- b. Finalization of Subcommittee Compositions**

Ms. Young noted that the first part of this item was already completed. She reviewed the proposed composition of the subcommittees for Phase 2:

Community Design & Land Use

- Melissa O'Brien, Chair
- Kate Bedard
- Bob Gelinas
- Jesse Lytle
- Martha Terry
- Nathan Therien

Natural Resources/Open Space

- Lucia Foley, Chair
- Dale Johnston
- Dan Luis
- Kurt Schenker

Cultural and Historical Resources

- Martha Johnson, Chair
- Connie Clancy
- Jeff Labrecque
- Wendy Kelleher

5. Upcoming Events

a. December 10, 2008 – Heritage Landscape Inventory Public Meeting

Mr. Harris noted that the public meeting for this effort will be held the following Wednesday at the High School cafeteria. The results from this effort could have significant benefit for the Phase 2 tasks; therefore, he urged all members to attend.

b. Massachusetts Historic Commission Survey & Planning Grant Application

Mr. Harris provided a summary of the Survey & Planning Grant program and what is being proposed to be undertaken if the grant application is approved. He suggested that it would further the Comprehensive Plan and the Falls Revitalization efforts and asked for CPAC's endorsement.

Motion – Ms. Kelleher moved and Mr. Lytle seconded the motion to endorse the proposed Survey & Planning Grant application. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

c. Planning Board meeting

Ms. Young stated that she had requested the opportunity for CPAC to meet with the Planning Board to provide the Board with an update as to the direction CPAC is going. Such a meeting, at this time, would provide an opportunity to ensure that CPAC and the Planning Board are on the same page before proceeding with Phase 2. This meeting is scheduled for the January 5th Planning Board agenda.

Ms. Rosner thanked all the CPAC members for their hard work. She noted how impressed she is with what she has seen.

6. Adjourn

Motion – Ms. Clancy moved and Ms. Bedard seconded the motion to adjourn. All members present voted in favor of the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

As Approved

Richard Harris, Recorder