



Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

Wednesday, February 18, 2015 Minutes

Attendance:

Name	Present	Name	Present	Name	Present
Sandra Lipsey	√	Phil Bixby	-	Janice DeLima	√
William Lunt III	√	Anne Theriault	√	Dimitri Balatsos	√
Pam DiPietro-Hale	√	Chris Wasileski	-	Luc Walker	-

Council Liaison:

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Staff present:

Nathan Poore, Theo Holtwijk

Others present:

Jim Damicis, Cathy Renault, Tyler Torrey

Bill called the meeting to order at 3:36 PM.

1. Project Status Update

Cathy reviewed where the project was and what the next steps were.

2. Present Elements of Proposed Draft Plan

a. Table of Contents

Cathy reviewed the Table of Contents. Jim and Cathy clarified what the "Summary of Findings" covered. Theo suggested adding an Executive Summary that reported on the overall findings. Jim suggested also adding in the attachments a summary of the findings of the business interviews.

b. Action Plan Matrix

Cathy reviewed the sample action plan matrix. She mentioned that this will also be provided as a spreadsheet so that, over time, the Town could keep track of progress made.

Sandra noted that the column of "lead entity/partner" may be problematic for the Town Council as that was the issue with the Comprehensive Plan. With that plan, the Council wanted to determine who specific tasks who should assigned to and was not interested in the recommendations of LPAC. Sandra said that, in that case, it held the adoption of the plan with six months. Bill thought that this column should be kept as that was what the consultant was asked to do. Cathy and Jim felt strongly that this column should be kept as it contained important information. Sandra did not disagree with that but just wanted the group to know that that was what happened with the Comprehensive Plan.

3. Review of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

Cathy stated that the SWOT matrix was a restatement of material that the committee had seen. She thought it responded to Dimitri's request to see the positive attributes of the town articulated.

Theo asked what was meant with the last bullet in the "threats" box. It reads "Possibly rising tax rates for residents due to limited tax base diversity." Jim and Cathy explained that this came from the Comprehensive Plan and that it spoke to the split between taxes derived from residential taxpayers versus commercial taxpayers. No assessment was done if the commercial tax base by itself was diverse enough or not.

Sandra wondered if readers will know what "Class A" office space means. This will be clarified.

Bill asked why a new Turnpike exit in Cumberland would be considered an "opportunity." Jim and Cathy felt that such an exit could be gateway to the North Falmouth commercial district.

4. Vision Discussion

Cathy reviewed Camoin's draft 3 vision statement. She noted that businesses have segregated themselves by type into three commercial areas. She described how she saw each of these areas: Route 100 (call center based), Route 1 South (retail/service), and Route 1 North (science/technology).

Dimitri felt that the word "development" was convoluted. He also wondered what was meant with "steady" and "planned." Jim said that steady meant "consistent" and that planned meant that it was not reacting to something.

Bill felt that the vision should not read as though the plan was implemented, but should be put as something to strive for and what the Town looks forward to seeing. He also felt that there should be no distinction between Route 1 North and South and that it should be one area. Theo noted that this was an important issue for the committee to clarify as the comprehensive plan map shows two commercial/mixed use areas, but the zoning district for Route 1 North is different from Route 1 South. There had been talk of allowing some retail/restaurant uses in Route 1 North, perhaps with footprint limits, so as not to dilute the walkability of the more densely developed Route 1 South area.

Anne felt heard many people speak of East versus West Falmouth and felt this should be clarified. She would like to see the word "sustainable" included. She meant by that stability or avoidance of peaks and valleys in the business cycle. Jim said that he liked sustainable and that to some it meant a "green," environmentally-conscious approach. Dimitri said that to him it meant that it has its own resources.

Pam wondered that if the desired densities in Route 1 South were not being achieved, if the Town should not expand its retail to Route 1 North. Bill felt that the only place for a significantly sized business to locate in Falmouth was in the Route 1 North area. He did not see Route 1 South as the primary commercial area for Falmouth.

Sandra noted that if the vision was to be as being implemented the vacancies that existed won't be there any more, so she suggested taking that out. She suggested adding a reference to

smaller, more affordable office space. She agreed with Bill to craft a present tense vision statement that looks into the future. Pam liked the present tense approach as well.

Anne suggested adding a reference to the community's nature trails, open space, and coastline.

Jim and Cathy thought this was good feedback and will revise the vision statement.

5. Priority Project List

Cathy suggested first reviewing each of the goals and then focusing on the strategies. With goal 2 she recommended combining retention and attraction strategies as they are interrelated. The group then discussed goal 1.

Sandra suggested removing the words “economic development” and speaking about “Falmouth’s business climate.” Bill wondered what that meant. Sandra said that the strategies help to explain that. Bill suggested keeping the word “development.” Dimitri suggested “economic and business climate.” He felt that affordable and attractive housing needed to be part of the plan and were an economic issue. Anne suggested replacing “improve” with “enhance” and to speak about “business environment” instead of “climate.”

Sandra said that structural changes were needed to attract and sustain businesses and make that effort more vigorous. There needed to be, she said, a business engagement effort that makes businesses feel they are heard and welcomed. Jim said that goal 1 speaks to the process and how businesses are treated and what the culture needed to be to support that, a “friendly” environment. He and Cathy felt that “improve” was the word to use.

Anne stated that residents may not be in favor of that as they may desire no change from the status quo. Bill said that the committee should not worry about that. Dimitri said that he preferred the word “enhance.”

As time ran out, the committee agreed to meet again on March 4, but start at 2:30 and end at 4:30 PM to continue the review of the Priority Project List. Jim will join the committee.

A review of the Doodle poll responses with inclusion of some missing responses showed that March 18 was the best date to review the draft plan. Jim, Cathy, and Rachel will be there, but Bill will be away.

6. Review of Draft Minutes of February 11, 2015 meeting

The draft minutes of the February 11, 2015 meeting were approved as written.

7. Other Business

Theo shared the e-mail message from Senator Breen about organizing a business resource forum in the fall. The committee liked the idea and Pam volunteered to be the point person for the committee on that. Theo will report this back to Councilor Breen.

Nathan introduced Tyler Torrey, a senior at Brunswick High School, who is thinking of pursuing public administration as it currently job shadowing the Town Manager.

Nathan also mentioned that the Town Council is considering a new TIF district that proposes to capture new values around OceanView and the natural gas pipeline. He explained the particulars of this proposal and the public meetings that are coming up. Theo will share the dates with the FEIC so it can come and speak at the Public Hearing, if members wanted to.

8. Next Meeting

The next meetings are:

- March 4, 2:30 to 4:30 PM (note special time), and
- March 18, 3:30 to 5:00 PM.

The committee adjourned at 5:09 PM.

Draft minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, February 20, 2015