



Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

Wednesday, March 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: Charlie McBrady
Staff present: Nathan Poore
Others present: Jim Damicis, Cathy Renault

Janice DeLima (acting Chair) called the meeting to order at 4:10 PM.

Dimitri noted the Cape Courier publication produced by community volunteers. He was wondering if something similar could be done in Falmouth, and perhaps inserted in The Forecaster.

1. Review Draft Economic Development Plan

Cathy suggested that in review of the draft plan, committee members should focus on the content as word editing can happen later, after public comment had been received.

Jim wanted to address the issue of commercial growth areas. He saw the access to regional labor as a big plus for Route 100 and suggested distinguishing between the three commercial areas. He wondered if the plan should reflect that or not.

Janice asked if the Turnpike Spur makes the access to the Route 1 area equally easy. Jim and Cathy felt that a different labor demographic is tapped into on Route 1. Luc wondered if the three areas should be differentiated in the plan and if that positioned Falmouth better or not. Dimitri argued against differentiating as there were too many variables that affect location decisions. He felt that the market position of Route 100 could be enhanced by first adding amenities to that area. The committee settled on adding the idea that the commercial areas tap into two distinct labor pools as an asset for Falmouth to the SWOT chart.

Janice pointed out that certain changes the committee had made at the last meeting were not reflected in the current draft. It was observed that there were also internal inconsistencies to the draft.

Dimitri felt that the plan did not address the execution or implementation of the plan. Janice felt that that would be tackled as the next step, after public input had been obtained on the recommendations.

There was a concern expressed that there was little time reserved after public comment to finalize the plan. Nathan replied that, if needed, the committee can take more time, especially to figure who will implement the various tasks envisioned by the plan.

The committee reviewed the Action Plan Matrix.

Nathan noted that at the last meeting the committee felt that no new organization was to be recommended, yet some of the language is still hinting at that. The committee discussed various ways to better address that. It sees the FEIC overseeing the implementation effort. Dimitri suggested establishing a process for that. Jim will clarify the language.

It was agreed to eliminate redundant language and combine tasks where that made sense.

Nathan suggested that the current Comprehensive Plan is already tackling changes to some standards in the ordinance and that the Ad Hoc Zoning committee is addressing improving the process to obtain permits. Cathy said that some standards remain unaddressed, such as lighting and commercial wayfinding signage.

Nathan mentioned that he did not understand the action item that spoke to a cost-benefit analysis of the zoning ordinance. The committee agreed to delete that item.

It was clarified in 1C that “goals” meant the Town’s economic development goals. Dimitri suggested changing “too prohibitive” with “cost effective.”

Jim emphasized how important he felt having an ongoing community dialogue. Janice was wondering if this was the task where disputes on something like the Rivalries restaurant proposal could be addressed. Jim felt that that could be the case. He felt that ongoing civic engagement was better than addressing issues until a problem surfaces. Charlie asked who should organize such an effort. Jim said that it should not be Town government. Theo asked who was doing that in the region. Jim replied that no community in Greater Portland is really doing that currently.

Strategy 1E was clarified to mean that the area should operate as a region and that language should be revised to say “Falmouth and Greater Portland.” Nathan recounted the training that Southworth has been getting through SMCC as an outgrowth of business visitation that was conducted. Theo noted that the power of that visitation seemed to be that it was conducted jointly by the Town and the private sector.

Anne asked for a clarification between the City of Portland and Greater Portland. Greater Portland indicates the six communities of Portland, South Portland, Scarborough, Westbrook, Cape Elizabeth, and Falmouth.

Dimitri stated that he preferred the bulleted format of the Priority List over how the Matrix was set up. He felt it was easier to read. Anne suggested making the text less verbose.

The committee agreed to broaden strategy 2C to address areas that have major vacancies.

Theo noted that in some cases a new “task force” was suggested. He recommended leaving that out to provide more flexibility how a specific task would be handled. The committee agreed with that.

Nathan suggested adding “in designated growth areas” in 2D.

Theo pointed out the various zoning task overlaps. Jim suggested adding a note that linked them as they would most likely be addressed at the same time.

The committee discussed item 2G and to what extent it tackled environmental issues versus energy issues. Janice noted the importance of lowering energy costs. Nathan brought up the issue (and cost of) stormwater quality management for businesses. This will be included under the Infrastructure item 2B.

Theo felt that the farmer’s market task under 3A was ambitious and that a marketing effort aimed at getting more customers was most needed.

Anne suggested adding “cultural” to item 3D. Jim will do that and will also add “supporting and marketing” existing assets.

Dimitri felt that in 3C the Town should not focus on increasing the number of restaurants. Cathy felt that the local food movement was a big trend that could benefit Falmouth. Janice agreed with Dimitri and felt that this was demand driven. The suggestion was made to revise the text and focus on a “culinary” approach. Jim felt that that may be too narrow an approach.

On 3E, Jim said he envisioned a hotel with small conference facilities. Nathan that such a facility is being created at OceanView.

There was discussion on the use of the word “brand” in 4B.

It was emphasized that 4A should not be government-driven task, but that more support of grassroots efforts.

The committee did not like the word “intellectual” in 4B, could not find a good alternative, and decided to delete it.

As the next step, the consultant will review the text edits that Dimitri had submitted and make revisions to the draft so it can be posted on the Town’s website and made available before and at the Public Forum.

2. Public Forum

The committee discussed the format of the Forum to be held on April 14. Janice felt that going through the entire matrix with the public would be a “fire hose” experience.

The committee discussed how the Forum could be best run. Theo will craft some draft committee member instructions for review at the next meeting.

Anne made various suggestions for the ad in The Forecaster in response to the draft that Theo had prepared.

Nathan corrected the date for possible Council review of the plan to May 27.

3. Review of Draft Minutes of February 18 and March 4, 2015

The draft minutes of February 18 and March 4 were unanimously approved as written.

4. Other Business

Janice mentioned that the Falmouth Historical Society was exploring the idea of developing an amphitheater at its site on Woods Road as another attraction for Falmouth.

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting is April 1 at 3:30 PM

The committee adjourned at 6:10 PM.

Draft minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, March 20, 2015