



Falmouth Economic Improvement Committee

Wednesday, January 7, 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:

Theo Holtwijk

Others present:

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Bill called the meeting to order at 3:33 PM.

1. Review of Draft Minutes of December 17, 2014 meeting

The draft minutes of the December 17, 2014 meeting were approved as written.

2. Follow-Up on December 17 meeting

Janice felt that it seemed the consultant was giving more attention to Route 1 than to Route 100. Bill asked if the consultant had met with the Route 100 committee yet. Theo replied that the Route 100 committee is still in early stages of its work and that more may be known in about two months. The consultant is aware that a separate Route 100 effort is under way, he said. Theo will keep the consultant and committee posted on any Route 100 ideas that may come up, such as sewer expansion or land use. He expected that the final Camoin report will address the Route 100 commercial area as much as the Route 1 area.

Luc asked when the consultant's work would be complete. Theo replied that it would be complete when there is a final report to present to the Town Council. This is expected to occur in May 2015.

The committee discussed the data analysis and felt comparisons with similar towns needed to be made as those would be more relevant than comparing to the State of Maine. These towns could be in Maine or elsewhere. Theo replied that he may not have relayed that feedback comment to the consultant, but that he will do so.

Janice was disappointed that the December meeting did not reveal a new way of looking at Falmouth. Phil felt that the inflow of workers was a surprise to him and, to a lesser extent, the age breakdown for Falmouth. Janice said that the patent information was also interesting. She had hoped that an issue like home business opportunities would have been

uncovered or that hurdles unknown before could be identified and addressed. Phil felt that the Town's negative stances on various issues was something to be addressed.

Dimitri felt that a balance sheet was needed that discussed the Town's assets and liabilities. If Town attitude was a concern, he felt that more needed to be learned what gave rise to that attitude. Phil felt that the upcoming forum may shed light on that and agreed that the final plan needed to give such an overview. Dimitri felt that, so far, there was no draft that pulled all the data together. He felt that a story on Falmouth was needed. Janice agreed that the upcoming forum was important.

3. Review January 13 Public Forum Program

Dimitri wondered who is expected to attend the forum. Theo stated it would be a mix of people and gave an overview of how the forum announcement had been distributed. He said that the FEIC could help a lot by encouraging anyone they knew to attend.

A discussion ensued how to convey to people that it was important for them to attend. Anne said that people needed to be told how it would impact them and felt that an opportunity to do was missed in the newspaper advertisement. Theo replied that there was no chance for the committee to review any ad designs as it did not meet until now. Janice noted that despite extensive outreach on the Route 1 project, where the question of impact was very clear, very few businesses showed up. She agreed that the committee members could individually do some good outreach between now and the forum date.

Dimitri thought it was important to convey that the committee welcomed the public's thoughts on the topic. He said he was underwhelmed by the two draft vision statements as they contained platitudes. In response, Phil wondered if the program should include a reaction to any vision statement or not.

The committee discussed the consequence if the Town did not have an economic development strategy, and what the Town would lose. Dimitri suggested that the effort needed a heading, such as "Falmouth 2025," to help focus people's minds. Phil felt that doing a plan allowed the Town to take the reins, be in the driver's seat and not lose out on opportunities that may come along. Dimitri suggested that a vision could speak to "promoting economic development that leverages the competitive advantages or attributes of Falmouth, such as its location, educational system, quality of life, etc."

Bill felt that the plan was meant to boost the commercial tax base to help reduce taxes for residential homeowners. It should not be for the Town to spend more money, he said. He felt that the money sheltered in TIFs should not be used as "play money" but should, instead, be put into the general fund. Broadening the tax base might help the community to reduce its tax rate. The committee debated if this should be the goal of the plan.

Anne felt that she needed to hear from the consultants what the future of commercial and tax-creating entities was with internet shopping on the rise and other changes, before she could suggest what direction the plan should take. Dimitri recognized that any business may have infrastructure needs and that some of these would fall on the responsibility of the Town and would involve expenditures. He was wondering how the plan could help the Town deliver on its positive attributes.

Janice felt it was key that the consultant hear this discussion by the FEIC and gets tuned in on the issues, questions, and concerns. She felt there was a big gap with what the committee was talking about and what has been produced by the consultant so far. Bill suggested that the FEIC meetings should be recorded and then sent to the consultant. He felt that Falmouth was different from other communities and needed a different plan.

The committee circled back to the question why a plan was necessary. Theo noted that the reason to prepare a plan was much discussed by the committee and presented to the Town Council. It included setting priorities on expenditures and policies/ordinances that affect business development and figuring out how the Town could best organize itself to do economic development in the most effective way. It was recognized by the committee that a plan was helpful to effectively deal with a changing world.

The committee agreed not to test a draft vision statement at the forum. Instead, it wanted to hear what ideas might emerge and have a follow-up discussion on the vision at its next meeting.

The committee agreed to ask Nathan to do the project overview at the meeting as it would signal to the audience the high priority this plan has for the Town.

Committee members agreed to join with the consultant team and act in pairs as facilitators and scribes for each of the small group discussions.

Committee members agreed to encourage as many people as possible to come to the forum event.

Theo will update the forum agenda and will prepare the forum materials/meeting spaces.

4. Other Business

There was no other business.

5. Next Meeting

The Public Forum is January 13, 2015 at 6:00 PM.

The committee will meet again on January 21 at 3:30 PM.

The committee adjourned at 5:02 PM.

Draft minutes prepared by Theo Holtwijk, January 8, 2015