

Town Council Workshop Meeting Minutes November 18, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm.

Roll Call

All Councilors were present and answering roll call.

Item 1 The Council will continue to consider and develop processes for an update to Falmouth's 2013 Comprehensive Plan.

Chair Kuhn said that the goal of the workshop was to develop a strong draft pathway for a Comprehensive Plan update. She presented three questions for the Council to discuss. 1) What committee(s) will develop the comprehensive plan update? 2) What consultant or staff support will the committee(s) need? and 4) What is a realistic timeline for this work?

She presented the following ideas to initiate the conversation:

- Who will do this work?
 - a. The comprehensive plan committee(s) should develop an update that is consistent with the commonly arrived vision and values.
 - b. The committee should incorporate three primary constituencies:
 - i. Elected officials
 - ii. Residents who are content experts
 - iii. Residents who serve as Neighborhood Voice Liaisons

Councilor De Lima asked how the resident selection process would work? Chair Kuhn said that would be up to the Council to decide.

Councilor Trickett felt that each of the primary constituencies should be a different group. The three groups would work together. Councilors could be part of all three groups. He felt that the content experts would be important for implementation. He suggested having a liaison from the School Department. He felt that it was more important for the committee to reflect the views of the town than to be content experts. He suggested reconstituting LPAC with the third group of constituents. They would be engaged at every stage of the process and would be responsible for planning community forums. The Committee could also advise the Council during the process. He also felt it would be important to include a representative from Ocean View. He thought it would be important to have an implementation committee composed of the second group of constituents. He felt that disaggregating the second and third groups would be helpful. He suggested that the implementation committee could help with the drafting. Councilor Asherman clarified Councilor Trickett's use of the term implementation. Councilor Trickett felt that the vision and values statement needed to be developed before land use planning work to implement the vision and values could be conducted.

Councilor Cahan felt that splitting up the constituencies into three different groups could create too much back and forth conversation. She felt that having it as one group but with a lot of staff and consultant help would allow everyone to feel like they were being heard and giving valuable input.

Councilor Asherman asked Chair Kuhn to review the timeline. Chair Kuhn said the vision and values process was in the resolution from last spring. A consultant would be hired to conduct the community visioning process. The idea is that there needs to be some shared vision to move forward with the comprehensive plan.

The visioning process has become part one of the comprehensive plan update. Chair Kuhn said that a question for discussion is whether the committee is formed before or after the visioning process is completed. Maybe the neighborhood voice liaisons should be selected before the visioning process is conducted to help ensure that a diversity of voices is included in the visioning process. Councilor Johnson thought forming the neighborhood liaisons portion of the committee in advance of the visioning process would be helpful as it would allow time for the committee to grow. Councilor Trickett expressed concern that selecting the neighborhood voice liaisons in advance of the visioning process might result in only hearing a few perspectives. Chair Kuhn said that she heard Councilor Trickett saying that the timing for the formation of the committee would be an important question to ask the consultant in the RFQ process. Councilor Cahan thought that would be a good idea. She suggested first selecting the consultant and seeking their advice regarding the timing.

Chair Kuhn said she was hearing consensus that finding a diversity of voices was important in forming the committee. Councilor Asherman agreed with Councilor Trickett's comments that forming the committee in advance of the visioning process could provide too narrow of a perspective. Councilor De Lima said she was unclear about the neighborhood voice liaison role. She asked if the role to get engagement in the neighborhoods came early such as with surveys or later when conflicts might arise between neighborhood visions. Councilor Johnson said he thought of the liaisons as ambassadors. He expressed concern that there were microcosms within each of the larger neighborhoods so the larger neighborhoods/residential districts would be too broad. Councilor Trickett added that other variables such as age also mattered. He desired a group of people who are diverse; each representing a different constituency (not necessarily neighborhoods). He felt it would be important to make sure that the desired level of participation was received. It could be the neighborhood liaisons who could do this. He felt that both engaging the community and working on the policy side could be a lot of work for one committee. He felt it would be important to have an opportunity for residents without technical experience to participate in the process.

Councilor Hemphill liked what had been discussed. He felt it would be important to complete the visioning process before creating the committee. He suggested having each group of constituents act as sub-committees of the large committee. Councilor Asherman said that he could see the second and third groups acting as separate committees working together; bouncing things back and forth. The committees could work in conjunction with one another not separately. Chair Kuhn asked where the Council would fit? Councilor Asherman said Councilors could liaise between the two sub-committees.

Councilor Cahan felt that sub-committees could be valuable but cautioned having too many different things happening to the point where committee members did not feel included in decisions.

Nathan Poore said that each of the committee meetings would be public. Having sub-committees could result in a lot of meetings which could be difficult to administer. He said that the neighborhood liaisons reminded him of the 2016 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan stakeholder group. The neighborhood voice liaisons could meet a few times a year and could include public comment. The second group could consider the comments from the neighborhood voice liaisons meeting and could then work on drafting the policy.

Theo Holtwijk expressed concern that the Council was making things too complicated. He felt that the committee should work as a whole. Having separate committees would result in too many meetings. He said the important thing is how does that group engage public outreach. The committee could be subdivided to work on the drafting. It would be important to keep everyone together, so they hear the same story. Councilor Asherman asked if the LPAC 2013 comprehensive plan sub-committee meetings were public? Mr. Holtwijk said they had public meetings, but they only met for a short period of time to accomplish specific research/drafting goals. He urged the Council to keep flexibility and to keep it as simple as possible.

Councilor Asherman said he viewed the second group as being the creators and the third group as being the reactors. Councilor Cahan asked why that would not be left flexible. Councilor Asherman worried that leaving the group as one big group would result in a huge committee that could be unproductive. Chair Kuhn said that the vision and values process may make the formation of the committee clearer if it is done in an inclusive way. Councilor De Lima said this is where the neighborhood liaisons could be helpful; to create excitement about the vision and values process.

Councilor Trickett said that a lot of the discussion felt premature. He felt that there could be a role for neighborhood liaisons in the process but felt that the decision should be put in the hands of the consultant. He felt it would be important to receive input from the consultant before forming the committee. Other Councilors expressed agreement. He felt that the Council needed to be committed to staying involved in the process. He felt that the neighborhood voices liaisons group needed to be big. He felt that things felt to abstract right now to decide something to present to residents. He felt that the visioning process would inform the discussion.

Councilor Cahan agreed. She felt that a consultant would be helpful in making a decision. Chair Kuhn agreed but added the caveat that the comprehensive plan relates to zoning decisions. She felt the Council was leaving a lot of zoning decisions in limbo if decisions were postponed. Councilor Trickett did not intend to drag out the process by waiting to meet with the consultant. He agreed that there was some pressure to present a plan to the public but that it would be a while before a presented plan would be executed. Councilor Cahan said that staff are monitoring the situations in RB and RD so there was some time. Councilor Asherman felt that it would be difficult to move forward on the more detailed items until the visioning and values process was completed. The first issue with the consultant could be how do they envision the process occurring. Councilor Trickett felt that the pressure was on the vision and values and that the Council should commit to identifying a consultant. He did not feel pressure to implement the Route 1 North proposal. Chair Kuhn said that there are two pending requests for zoning changes in that area. Councilor Cahan felt that one of the requests seemed fairly minor and the other could be significant.

Councilor Asherman asked about the status of the RFQ. Mr. Poore said that it will be discussed on the December 9 agenda with a resolution. The Councilors desired public input so they did not want to put it on the November 25 agenda as it is Thanksgiving week. Chair Kuhn asked if any Councilors were interested in participating in the interviews. All the Councilors desired to participate.

Chair Kuhn said there was consensus that it was premature to set up a committee right now. The Council desired to focus on getting the RFQ out for the visioning process and to speak with the selected consultant about the process for forming the committee.

Councilor Johnson said that the size of the committee could be limitless. He felt it would be important to start engaging residents around wanting to hear from diverse voices. Chair Kuhn asked if staff could assist with some of the logistics around public engagement. Mr. Poore suggested that the Council build what they desired, and staff would implement it. He said it would be important to consider public meeting law when thinking about how neighborhood engagement would work.

Chair Kuhn said she heard consensus that the Council wanted the public engagement process to be bottom up. Councilor De Lima suggested engaging existing committees to help.

Mr. Poore added that it would also be important to consider public records law. Councilor Johnson suggested that the neighborhood liaisons could serve as conduits for soliciting public feedback; a way of disseminating the information that the Town wishes to receive. Councilor Trickett suggested that the neighborhood voice liaisons might not constitute a committee; they would share feedback but not vote. Councilor Johnson

agreed. Councilor Cahan did not want to dive too deep into different roles and responsibilities at the present time.

Chair Kuhn said there was consensus that the Councilors were committed to the vision and values process. A consultant would be hired who could solicit diverse opinions. Mr. Poore said he hoped whoever was hired had strong facilitation skills. Councilor Cahan and Chair Kuhn agreed.

Councilor Johnson said that Councilor Asherman and Chair Kuhn's suggestions were just a way of thinking about the committee formation. He felt that the idea behind the third group to have a diverse set of voices was most important to him. He felt that the sooner these individuals were engaged the better. Councilor Cahan suggested beginning the advertising for interested individuals right away. It could be announced on December 9. It would not be a committee but a stakeholder list. Councilor De Lima cautioned setting expectations before meeting with the consultant. Councilor Cahan said it could just be a list of people who wanted more information, like a vision and values interest group. Mr. Poore asked about next steps on the interest group. Chair Kuhn said it would be something that the Council could further consider and discuss on December 9.

Chair Kuhn felt it was premature to discuss who would support the work.

Chair Kuhn proposed the following timeline for the work:

- Vision and Values: Q1-Q3 2020
- Committee work: Q4 2020-Q3 2021
- Return for community feedback: Q4 2021
- Complete: Q1 2022

Councilor Trickett suggested not waiting until Q4 2021 for community feedback but building feedback opportunities into the entire process. Mr. Poore suggested that Q4 2021 would serve as a wrap up to community feedback. Chair Kuhn said that liked the idea of including feedback in the entire process or soliciting feedback by section since it is an update. Other Councilors agreed. Councilor Trickett said there could be a way to do term sheets for each section; a one pager at the beginning of each section. Chair Kuhn said it could be that the vision and values consultant could do both parts of the process or it might be that one consultant does the vision and values and another does the comprehensive plan update. Mr. Poore said the 2013 comprehensive plan was anticipated to take two years, but it took three- and one-half years. Mr. Poore said the visioning and values process would determine how much of the plan needed to be updated.

Councilor Trickett asked how the Town was budgeting for the project? Mr. Poore said there is not currently enough money in the reserve fund so supplemental appropriations would be needed. A placeholder could be added to the FY2021 budget. Councilor De Lima asked what the 2013 plan cost? Mr. Poore and Mr. Holtwijk said a lot of the plan was done in house. The statistically significant survey and the GIS consulting were likely the most expensive components. Mr. Poore said that with the size of the work plan it would be necessary to rely on consultants. Staff could provide administrative and communications support. Attending the meetings and drafting the plan would be consultant focused. Councilor Trickett said it would be important to preserve money in the budget for bringing in experts. Chair Kuhn felt that building consensus around the vision and values would be difficult; it would be difficult to find consensus statements where everyone felt that they saw themselves represented somewhere. Councilor De Lima added that communicating the tradeoffs to residents would be important.

Chair Kuhn asked if some of the consensus items from the workshop could be incorporated into the December 9 resolution? She said that she saw consensus around the visioning process being consultant and community driven. The Council desired to heavily weigh in on the consultant selection process.

Mr. Poore said it would be important for the Councilors to consider what questions they would have for the consultant. Mr. Holtwijk suggested three sets of questions 1) questions that would be asked to everyone who would be interviewed, 2) specific questions regarding the consultants' responses, and 3) questions arising based on the direction of the conversation in the interviews. He said that in the past, the first set questions have been given to the consultants in advance of the interview. Chair Kuhn said it would be interesting to know what an ideal amount of community engagement would be. Mr. Holtwijk said the goal should be a statistically valid survey. Councilor Johnson said the consultants should be asked what percentage of participation can be expected. Councilor Trickett said the amount of money put towards the project will dictate the participation to some degree. The Councilors discussed setting up booths at community events.

Adjourn

The workshop adjourned by consensus at 5:54 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Marguerite Fleming
Recording Secretary