Town Council Meeting
Minutes
March 1, 2019

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 AM.

Roll Call

Councilors Hemphill, King, Svedlow, Kuhn, Asherman, Cahan, and Ferrante were present and answering roll call.

Item 1   Workshop discussion on the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and processes used to evaluate proposed private developments.

The Council discussed its perception of current community issues, concerns, and conflicts. The Council discussed goals and possible ideas for successfully addressing these issues. The Council reviewed a presentation by Theo Holtwijk concerning conducting an issue assessment. Theo Holtwijk facilitated the Council's discussion and Nathan Poore took notes on large paper sheets.

The initial discussion included topics about: community character, growth, implementation of policies, public awareness of town business, procedures for developing policy, disconnect between Council and public, town identity and values, quality of schools, open space, development proposals and how to process them, overall communication systems, process for development proposals that request zoning amendments, growth caps, Council dialogue with the public and the format of dialogue, overall changes to the community, staff roles, policy evaluation process (reflection and audit), efficiency and inefficiencies of our processes, customer service to all (public, developers, etc), and the pressures of being near Portland.

The Council then laid out some expectations for improvement and how we could be a better place. Those expectations included: better engaged citizens, improved processes with understanding of the process in unity, relax and talk more, improved confidence in each other (government/staff/public), elevated trust, more frequent check ins on bigger policies such as the comp plan (consider more routing data collection), better systems for engagement, good government = good process, differentiate more between policy development and implementation, and be sure to improve systems before taking on more specific technical work.

The Council talked about ideas for moving forward:

Large Project Proposals (requiring ordinance amendments or other Council Action)

- Large project process – Define projects that require a better process, improve public engagements and be very clear about expectations from the town on developments such as specifics with studies.
- Larger project proposal that request zoning – send them to Planning Board early for Planning Board input.
- Larger project proposals – public input via charrettes is preferred.
- Larger project proposal – developer to seek out public input prior to submitting proposals to the town.

Communication with Residents

- Communication tools – look into adding new tools, conducting more surveys, learn more about what residents want and don't want.
- Newsletter – start using something like Constant Contact, soon.
- Council agendas items should include historical narrative
- Learn more about resident values and visions
- There should be less government speak in town communications
- There should be more direct contact with residents
- Humanize the communication process

Comp Plan – are parts of it stale? Does it need to be updated? Should the town allow for the Comp Plan to be more nimble so it stays current?

Liaisons and committee roles – Consider more cross connections to ensure multiple perspectives, depending on the committee charge.

The Council requested that the meeting notes on the larger flip charts be transcribed, but not edited. These minutes are a summary of those notes. The notes are available as an attachment to these meeting minutes. It agreed to continue the workshop discussion on March 8 at 2:00 PM.

Item 2   Workshop discussion on the implementation of the 2018-19 Council Work Plan.

The Council discussed updates to the projects listed in the 2018-19 Work Plan. It decided to hold off work for the time being on items 39, 24, 26, 27, 3, 29, 29A.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 PM.

Minutes prepared by: Nathan Poore, Town Manager

Appendix: Verbatim Transcription of Flip charts from meeting:

ISSUES

o Character
- Define and maintain
- Understand community desire

o Growth
- Define type and rate
- Density – commercial and residential

o Implementation
- More than what policy makers wanted in Comp Plan

o Process
- How do we find the common ground?
- How do we get broader representation?

o Public awareness and participation
- People don't pay attention
- What are we doing wrong?
- What more can we do?

o Disconnect – Public and Council

o Falmouth's Identity and Falmouth's Values
- What are they? – We don't know

o Public Engagement
- We are not doing well
- Format of room
- How we take public feedback

o Schools
- Is it great?
- Future capacity

o Open Space
- Is it valued?
- Do we really want it?

o Development Proposals
- When and how they are introduced

o Communication System
- We need different tools
- Surveys?

o Zoning Change – New Development
- Standards are needed
- Perception Council doesn't care
- People question value to Falmouth
- Information is not provided earlier
- What/how did it go when developer met with public?

o Growth Caps
- Is this a good measurement of growth?

o Public Engagement doesn't happen early enough by developer

o Council Discussion
- How can it be more laid back?
- Format is not good

- o Change
  - ▪ Everything is a concern for residents
- o Staff Role
  - ▪ Elected Official turnover
  - ▪ Resident turnover
- o Transfer of Policy Transition Council to Council
  - ▪ Understand history
- o Staff
  - ▪ Council underutilizes talented staff
- o Reflection/Audit – Lessons learned
- o Policy Evaluation
- o Inefficient Use of Time
  - ▪ Council
  - ▪ Staff
  - ▪ Residents
  - ▪ Money
- o Lack of Customer Care or Value in Them - Developers
  - ▪ Disrespect
  - ▪ Systemic
  - ▪ Not good business
- o Portland Pressure

EXPECTATIONS: DESCRIBE THE BETTER PLACE

- Better engaged citizens
- Process unity – get there by letting go of roles. Relax and talk
- Confidence in government/staff
- Confidence in public
- Elevate trust
- More frequent Comp Plan, evaluations, check-ins, data collection, public
- Better systems for engagement
- Good government works well when there is a good process
- Organic Comp Plan and evaluate more frequently, and able to be quickly amended
  - o Check in more frequently
  - o Evaluation
  - o New data
  - o Public engagement
- Is it policy or implementation?
- System work before technical work

IDEAS FOR MOVING FORWARD

- Large project process
  - o Defined
  - o Audience
  - o Studies expectations
  - o Public engagement

- Comp Plan
    - Stale
    - Passion for work versus fixed Comp Plan
    - Ways to engage staff more on previous items
- Liaisons
    - Crossed/teaming with committees
    - Discussion is alive
- Planning Board involvement with large projects sooner
- Communication tools
    - Learn more about daily lives of residents
    - More surveys?
    - "But what about in your back yard"
    - New communication technology
- Newsletter – Constant contact
- Community charrette in beginning for large development
- Developer needs to demonstrate public outreach
- Staff transmittals on Council agendas
    - Include historical aspects of matter
- Find out what resident values and vision looks like
- Less government speak
- More direct contact with residents
- Humanize the process