

HOPKINTON PLANNING BOARD

Wednesday, May 24, 2006 7:00 PM
Hopkinton Town Hall

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Mark Abate, Chairman, Planning Board
R.J. Dourney, Vice Chairman, Planning Board
Sandy K. Altamura, Planning Board
John H. Coolidge, Planning Board and Land Use Study Committee
Jaime Goncalves, Planning Board
Joe Markey, Planning Board
Claire Wright, Planning Board
Finley Perry, Chairman, Land Use Study Committee
Mavis O’Leary, Land Use Study Committee
Andrew Brantz, Land Use Study Committee
Stewart Cowart, Land Use Study Committee

Brian Morrison
Elaine C. Lazarus, Planning Director
Roger Mezitt
Merylyn Mezitt

1. East Hopkinton Master Plan – Consultant Team Interviews

- A. Sasaki Associates, Inc.** – Frederick Merrill, James Miner, Andrew McClurg, Stephen Kun (Sasaki Associates, Inc.), Thomas Lavash (Economics Research Associates), and Glenn Garber

Mr. Perry introduced the members of the Planning Board and Land Use Study Committee (LUSC) and briefly described the mission of the LUSC and the reason for the East Hopkinton Master Plan project.

Mr. Merrill introduced the team members, stating that Mr. Miner had worked on the Pine Hills project, Mr. Kun has worked on the Devens and Makepeace projects, and Mr. McClurg had worked on Devens and Hanscom. He stated that Mr. Lavash works in economic development and real estate analysis and Mr. Garber is a planner who prepares zoning analyses, drafts zoning bylaws, and works with public participation. He noted that Edith Netter, land use attorney, was not present this evening but also concentrates on dispute mediation and resolution. He detailed some of their individual experience, noting that he served on the Lexington Planning Board and understands how local government works.

Mr. Merrill stated that the individuals present this evening will be doing the work on the project. He stated they would assist the Town in developing a vision, a land use plan and strategy, and zoning bylaws to implement it, which will all be in conjunction with the larger planning process and town visions. He stated the process would involve the vision, then the plan, then the zoning analysis. He stated the process would be inclusionary and transparent. He stated they will measure the impacts of possible development, and how it can be shaped and molded into where the Town wants to go. The team demonstrated the Smart Plan software they would use, which tests land use scenarios and measures the impacts in real time.

Mr. Perry asked if they see their firm as essentially working most for the private sector or public sector. Mr. Merrill stated that Sasaki's clients are about 1/3 private developer, 1/3 government, and 1/3 institutional. Mr. Lavash stated that Economic Research Associates does about 55% public and 45% private work. Mr. Garber stated he has worked in both the public and private sector. It was stated that the team understands both public policy objectives and the concerns of the private sector.

Mr. Perry stated that beliefs and values are often more powerful than science in shaping community planning, and asked how they approach the challenge of helping the people of Hopkinton to question their beliefs. Mr. Merrill stated they can bring examples from their experiences in other places and provide education along the way. He stated their knowledge of the latest planning techniques will help with this. He stated that growth is inevitable and how to best balance the economic issues with open space protection and enhancement of the tax base, for example, will be a process. He stated they will test the scenarios.

Ms. Wright left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Abate noted that the team is comprised of three independent firms with Sasaki responsible for the project management. He asked how this project will fit in with the other priorities of the firm and whether the Town will have to manage the subcontractors. Mr. Merrill stated that Sasaki is responsible for the project and the others are subcontractors to them. He stated they only pursue projects of interest to them personally and professionally.

Mr. Perry noted that the South Weymouth, Pine Hills and Makepeace projects are enormous, and asked how that experience bears on this project. Mr. Merrill noted that all were high profile controversial projects.

Ms. Wright returned at this time.

Mr. Merrill stated that the large projects were lightning rods around which people could galvanize and come together.

Ms. Altamura asked how many public meetings they anticipate. Mr. Merrill stated there would be at least three visioning/charette/workshops. Ms. Altamura stated she sees the result being more creative than traditional land uses, such as educational or health care facilities instead of residential. She asked if the Town will have the tools at the end of the process to

attract something revenue positive to the area. The response was that they would try to identify the goals for the area, try to understand the market feasibility for it, and then help to achieve it. It was stated they would use a model to test land use impacts and there are lots of possible solutions. It was noted that they would look at the marketability of Hopkinton overall.

Mr. Perry asked if there would be an implementation process at the end, and what process would occur beyond the deliverable. It was stated that the master plan would have evolved through a community process and would meet the town's goals. The zoning bylaw would be amended if necessary. It was stated that they would focus on new techniques and develop draft bylaws working with the Town. It was stated they would bring ideas and tools, but the ultimate vision comes from the Town. It was noted that there would be additional meetings with the Planning Board and Land Use Study Committee in addition to the workshops, plus stakeholder interviews.

Mr. Goncalves asked if the Smart Plan software would include impacts/items outside the study area. The reply was yes, that the model goes beyond the town itself with such items as transportation, fiscal analysis, recreation, and open space. It was noted that for transportation, the CTPS model would also be used.

Mr. Abate asked about the most significant barriers to successful development of property and how to get people to make decisions. It was stated that large landowners need to be part of the process and the larger community needs to buy into it. It was stated that the team needs to education the community enough to make decisions about economic development and protecting town at the same time. It was noted that it may result in change with respect to growth or taxes.

Mr. Dourney referred to selection criteria #9 contained in the RFP, the best offering of services in relation to the funding available and the other criteria, and in relation to the tasks, products, and time frames required for project completion. He asked if the team meets this criteria. The response was that there could be a shorter process and the funding available is reasonable. He stated they can do it within the budget in 10 to 12 months, noting that the technology shortens up some things allows for more time for others.

Robert Falcione, 12 Claflin Pl., asked if they would study the existing industrial areas of town too. Mr. Merrill noted that existing conditions will be a factor in the model. Mr. Falcione asked if Pulte Home Corp. buys Weston Nurseries in the meantime, how they would deal with that. Mr. Merrill stated that a land use framework would emerge from the planning process and would be good enough for a buyer to fit into.

Mr. Cowart arrived at this time.

- B. ICON architecture, inc.** – Steve Heikin, Michelle Apigian (ICON architecture), David Glenn, Elizabeth Debski (Fay, Spofford & Thorndike, LLC), Frank Mahady (FXM Associates), and Deborah Michener (Geller DeVellis)

Mr. Perry introduced the members of the Planning Board and Land Use Study Committee (LUSC) present, and briefly described the mission of the LUSC and the reason for the East Hopkinton Master Plan project.

Mr. Heikin introduced the team members present and described some of the projects that members of the team have worked on. He stated the Town will need to deal with the economic and fiscal impacts of development on Weston Nurseries. He stated that housing is negative, senior housing is an option but there will be issues with that, and other options might include golf course, conference center, etc. He stated there are no easy solutions, but the Town does have the advantages of the Ch. 61A program and the Community Preservation Act. He cited their experience with Olmstead Green, a reuse project of a state hospital in Boston, and a project for Rt. 1 in Gilford, CT as examples of similar projects.

Mr. Perry asked if they see their firm as essentially working most for the private sector or public sector. Mr. Heikin stated they work in the public interest, and work in both areas, which are tied together. He stated that architecture is a service. He noted that they do a lot of housing work.

Mr. Abate left the meeting at this time.

Mr. Perry asked if they have been involved in some of the larger projects in Massachusetts over the last few years, such as Pine Hills, South Weymouth, Makepeace, etc. Mr. Heikin stated they prepared a trail plan for Devens and a bikeway for Plymouth. He noted that Fay, Spofford & Thorndike (FST) also works for the Plymouth Planning Board and undertakes the Pine Hills traffic reviews. Mr. Mahady stated he was involved in the South Weymouth project, Devens, Danvers and Medford State Hospitals, Town of Carver water supply study, and Cordage Park in Plymouth.

Mr. Perry stated that beliefs and values are often more powerful than science in shaping community planning, and asked how they approach the challenge of helping the people of Hopkinton to question their beliefs and manage change. Mr. Heikin stated that it is often smart growth versus sprawl. He stated they bridge the public and private sectors but also work within the fields of planning and architecture. He stated there are physical and building implications of what it's all about. He stated they have written zoning in the areas they have studied, and zoning is a community driven process. He stated they had the experience of working in Hingham on affordable housing and accessory apartments, and they bring knowledge and experience. He stated there are always impacts and tradeoffs for communities. He stated they will look at specifics and they have an understanding of the market.

Ms. Altamura stated the Town has worked with FST for years and she is comfortable with them. She stated that Hopkinton is on top of its zoning compared to other communities. She stated she is interested in the Gilford project because of the experience with commercial strip development, and she wants development here to be revenue positive. She asked if their firm is big enough to do this project along with the others they have right now, and asked about modeling software they would use. Mr. Heikin stated the firm is large enough to handle the

project. He stated they would use software products including 3D modeling, and showed the results of some of the modeling.

Ms. Altamura stated the Town needs to think outside the box with respect to what uses it wants here, and asked if they can help the Town do that. She asked what tools the Town will have to attract new innovative uses at the end of the project. It was stated that the Town will be given a realistic set of numbers and conceptual pro forma. It was stated that the team would look at the market and reach out to institutional uses if the Town wants that. It was noted that the Metro West market has changed.

Ms. Wright asked if they would help the Town go through the public visioning process and meld conflicting public views. The reply was that they would do that primarily with one meeting. Mr. Heikin stated that all planning includes this process.

C. Community Opportunities Group, Inc. – Judi Barrett (Community Opportunities Group), David McIntyre (BSC Group), Terry Szold (Community Planning Solutions), and Harry Dodson (Dodson Associates).

Mr. Perry introduced the members of the Planning Board and Land Use Study Committee (LUSC) present, and briefly described the mission of the LUSC and the reason for the East Hopkinton Master Plan project.

Ms. Barrett introduced the team members present. She described the history of Community Opportunities Group, noting that half of the work is in community development and the other in public policy and housing. She stated the firm specializes in local government. She stated that the plan is really about the Town asking public policy questions. She noted that they recognize the need for a multi-disciplinary team for this project, and they have built an excellent team to do that. She stated that the team understands the market and can define development envelopes. She stated that the public part of the planning process is tailored to each project, and described some of the experience on similar projects.

Mr. McIntyre stated that BSC Group is an engineering, planning, transportation and environmental science firm. He stated they have worked with the same team members on other projects. He noted that the role of open space will be a focus of this process and they anticipate taking a smart growth approach. He stated that development is management of risk, and the process proposed folds in development interests to structure the risks.

Mr. Dodson stated he understands the role of land use, open space, and development patterns. He stated his small firm is a landscape architecture and planning firm. He noted that patterns of development in New England should be in synch with new development. He reviewed project examples in Norwell, Western Mass. and a Newburyport transfer of development rights project.

Ms. Szold stated she worked recently with Ron Roux in developing a zoning bylaw for Upton, and she specializes in writing zoning. She stated she sees zoning as a place maker

device. She stated she enjoys writing zoning bylaws because she uses them to create a texture and place. She stated that the Town's overall vision can be accomplished.

Mr. Perry asked if they see their firm as essentially working most for the private sector or public sector, noting that sometimes those in the public sector may not incorporate landowner's issues. Ms. Barrett stated that the team and Town needs to talk to developers or the project will fail. She stated they need to get people together and reach common ground. She stated they need to build the capacity of local government to understand the development process. She stated the planning process will be structured so that land owners are invited, risks defined, and they would be welcomed into the process. Mr. Dodson stated he has worked for a lot of developers and they want clarity and certainty, which will be a product of this process.

Mr. Perry stated that beliefs and values are often more powerful than science in shaping community planning, and asked how they approach the challenge of helping the people of Hopkinton to question their beliefs. The response was that the public process and workshops will explore the constraints, opportunities, and alternatives of a site, which will force people to work like a developer. It was noted that alternative scenarios would be shown, and there will be opportunities for people to confront their own values.

Ms. Altamura stated she is hoping for more than just residential uses in this area, and that it be revenue positive. She noted the team has a lot of experience in housing and asked if they can help the Town attract other uses. The reply was that the implementation plan needs to be set up to do the job, which will be a product of the study. It was noted that the land is zoned for housing, but it is not necessarily the future focus here.

Mr. Perry asked if the members of the team have the time to take on the project given other commitments. Ms. Szold stated she has the time and is selective about the projects she works on. She stated the Town won't be let down. It was noted that the team is interested and able to work on the project, and it is a rare opportunity to participate in a model.

Mr. Goncalves noted that the other teams indicated they would use computer models and software to evaluate buildout scenarios, and asked if they will do the same. The team stated they would evaluate scenarios using models, and showed examples. A question was asked if the model evaluating development impacts would take into account outside impacts and stresses, and the reply was yes. A question was asked if future development analysis had been done by the team, and the answer was yes. It was stated that the files created would be put on the town's website for people to view.

2. Discussion

Those in attendance discussed the information received at the meeting and the process needed to reach a decision. It was decided that Ms. Lazarus would call references and ask the following questions:

1. Were the team members assigned to the project at the outset fully involved in the project throughout?
2. When the project was done, did they deliver what you wanted?

3. Was the process the product that people trusted/did people trust that the process would produce the product?
4. Rank your satisfaction with them on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the most satisfied and 5 the least satisfied.
5. Would you hire them again?

It was decided to set time aside on the June 5, 2006 Planning Board agenda to review the references and make a decision.

Adjourned: 10:25 PM

Elaine C. Lazarus, Planning Director

Approved: June 19, 2006