

**Town of Cape Elizabeth
Town Center Plan Committee Minutes**

October 2, 2013

4:00 p.m., Town Hall

Present: Stephanie Carver (Chairperson), Peter Curry (Planning Board), Diane Hessler, Skip Murray (Town Center business owner), Stephen Parkhurst, Lee Ruty (Acting minutes secretary), Mary Townsend (School Board), Jamie Wagner (Town Council)

Absent: David Sherman (Town Council)

Guest(s): None

Staff: Maureen O'Meara

The meeting was called to order by the Chairperson at 4:05PM.

Minutes: Upon motion made and seconded, the minutes from the August 19, 2013 meeting were approved as written and a reading of the minutes was waived. Minutes of the September 23, 2013 meeting were tabled as members wanted more time to review.

Public Comment: The public comment period was opened and closed as there were no attendees at the meeting beyond the committee members and staff.

Committee Communication Protocol Review: Chairperson opened a review of the Committee's protocol on internal communications between members. Discussion of practical implications of this followed.

Prepare for Public Forum

Copies were distributed of a draft of discussion topics and a questionnaire, prepared by Ms. Townsend and Mr. Wagner. Ms. Townsend gave the committee an overview of it.

Mr. Murray and Mr. Parkhurst expressed concern about the turnout and representativeness of the audience on the night of the public forum.

Ms. O'Meara worried that the 'questionnaire' format, when answers are compiled, will appear as if a survey was taken. This is not a survey and has no statistical significance. Perhaps a pure 'talk' format will be more open.

Mr. Wagner suggested adding name and address to the questionnaire.

Mr. Parkhurst suggested putting it on the Town web site as a survey, but only if we could control for multiple entries by the same individuals. Ms. Hessler suggested adding a disclaimer to it.

Ms. Carver asked whether we should distribute the questionnaire for return or just use the questions as input for discussion.

Mr. Parkhurst expressed the opinion that it is better to have the people just talk rather than structure it in smaller groups. Mr. Ruty disagreed, pointing out that many people are uncomfortable taking the mike and talking in front of large groups, but would contribute to smaller group discussions.

Ms. Townsend added that the library information night succeeded, for a variety of reasons.

Mr. Ruty suggested that the top 3 topics on Ms. Townsend & Mr. Wagner's sheet can be the topics for discussion and the questionnaire can be separate. Mr. Curry echoed this.

Ms. Townsend pointed out that we will do the best we can but in the end this is a democracy: if you show up you get a voice.

Ms. Carver replied that in that case, we need to include any results we get in our future considerations. This can be problematic if the groups who show up are outside the mainstream of opinion, but are present and vocal.

Ms. Townsend pointed out that this is true but only to a point. Nothing we could get on the night can be considered representative; it should be a guide and should definitely be important, but should not override our own conclusions.

Mr. Murray then asked that we withhold the questionnaire until after people have had a chance to talk, to avoid any chance of leading the witnesses by the content of the questions.

Mr. Parkhurst objected to the questions about surveys. The people will not, now, want to spend any money on surveys or assessments. He gave the example of Ft. Williams: the Town was unwilling to spend the money to stabilize Goddard Mansion, and as a result it is fenced off from public access. The public will not see any opportunity to expand the Town Center so why bother studying it?

Mr. Wagner/Ms. Townsend/Mr. Ruty replied: leave the questions in and see what people say. If Mr. Parkhurst is correct, then we will know. It is valuable information.

Mr. Murray expanded on his previous comment, and asked that the questionnaire not be distributed on the night. It could be put on the Town web site instead.

Mr. Ruty objected that it would be a waste of an opportunity but agreed that it would be distracting and would prevent a completely open mind on the night. So why not have the three questions form the substance of the session, and distribute the questionnaire near the end of the evening?

Mr. Murray agreed and said that that approach would address his concerns.

Ms. O'Meara will revise her draft agenda to contain Mr. Wagner's and Ms. Townsend's 3 questions. This will be available on the Town web site in advance of the evening.

Mr. Ruty asked who on the committee would speak in the slot in the draft agenda. Mr. Parkhurst said we should take that out; this is for the town to speak, not us. Ms. O'Meara will remove it from the agenda.

The Committee went through Mr. Wagner's and Ms. Townsend's questionnaire and discussed each question. Several changes were made to it.

Ms. Carver suggested poster boards or Post-It flipcharts be available around the room for people to write on. While the Committee agreed that it was worthwhile, the comments section of the questionnaire should suffice if we can't arrange it.

Ms. O'Meara suggested doing a slideshow in the beginning of the evening showing several Town Centers similar to Cape Elizabeth, to get people thinking about the possibilities. The Committee discussed this and agreed (vote 5-2) that it was a worthwhile warm-up exercise if Ms. O'Meara is able to find suitable images.

Ms. Hessler will not be able to attend the forum. The rest of the Committee should be able to.

Format of the Public Forum evening: Ms. O'Meara and Ms. Carver will open the meeting as laid out in the draft agenda. This includes a description of the Town Center with a visual, opening remarks and reading of our charge and the image slideshow mentioned above. Then we will have an open mike and let any attendees speak. The questionnaire will be available later in the evening. Ms. O'Meara will arrange for notes/minutes of the opinions expressed. Ms. O'Meara will update her agenda and post it to the Town web site.

Mr. Ruty noted that he was tasked at the last meeting to report on the Library Planning Committee's survey, how they decided whom to send to and response rate. He has the info but since this meeting was already 30 minutes over time he will send it to Ms. O'Meara for distribution to the Committee.

Upon motion made and seconded, it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 5:32 p.m.

