

August 21, 2013

Special Meeting

7:30 p.m., Upper Level Meeting Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mrs. Roberts, Ms. Gager, Mr. Frank, Mrs. Jahnke, Mr. Rimsky

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Ms. Bishop-Wrabel, Mr. Carey

STAFF PRESENT: Mrs. Hill

Mrs. Roberts called the Meeting to order at 7:31 p.m. and seated Members Roberts, Gager, Frank, Jahnke, and Rimsky. She noted that Ms. Gager, who had been in contact with both Milone and MacBroom and Mrs. Hill, would conduct the discussion.

Ms. Gager referred to the 8/14/13 letter from Milone and MacBroom, which stated the firm believed an amended contract and additional fees would be necessary in order to accomplish all that the Commission had directed it to do at the last meeting. The estimated cost was \$11,000 to \$12,000. She said the Commission had three options;

- 1) complete the Plan according to the current contract – finish it up as is – include statements that further work will be done to address the issues of Sustainability and Economic Development in the near future,
- 2) take over the work and responsibility of making the changes the Commission wants, or
- 3) ask the Board of Finance for additional funds so that the Plan can be completed per the Commission's latest directions.

A lengthy discussion followed comparing the three options and the work required by the Commission for each one. Points considered included the following:

* Ms. Gager did not support option #3 because she did not think it would be a wise use of taxpayer dollars.

* Mr. Frank pointed out that a number of the items, such as preparation for and attendance at the public hearing and printing costs, which were listed as additional expenses by Mr. Looney in his 8/19 email were covered under the original contract. Ms. Gager read a subsequent email in which Mr. Looney said the contract would be fulfilled. It was noted that Mr. Looney had not included attendance at the public hearing in his email, but Ms. Gager said the Commission would make sure he does attend.

* Regarding the topics, Economic Development and Sustainability, it was noted these current drafts did not contain the detail the Commission had requested and so warrant further study. Ms. Gager stated that if option #1 was chosen, statements would have to be added to the text to make the public is aware that since these are such important issues, the Commission is recommending further study. The Economic Development study would include, for example, investigation about whether a part time economic development staff person or a commission would be more appropriate, why this was needed, what the duties would be, how it would coordinate with the existing Town government, etc. Mrs. Hill noted that the new director of the NWCTCOG had recently sent a letter of introduction to the Commission in which she listed the type of help she could offer, and help with economic issues had been listed. Mr. Rimsky voiced his concern that if the

Commission went with option #1, the issues that had been determined to be the most crucial, would be put off for further study. Ms. Gager responded that they would not be ignored, but would be emphasized as being so important they should be studied further.

* It was noted there is \$10,000 in Planning's budget to use for further work on or implementation of the Plan.

* Mrs. Jahnke asked how information about the schools would be handled. Ms. Gager said if there was a vote this fall, the updated information would be put in the Plan and if there wasn't, the section on schools would be reworded.

* Mr. Rimsky thought it important that all requests made by the Commission prior to the August meeting be carried out by the consultants. For example, he said the Commission had asked many times throughout the process that background information be moved to the Appendix and this had not been completely done. Mr. Frank was concerned that the Commission could not provide detailed documentation regarding when it had made specific requests.

* Ms. Gager listed the work that Milone and MacBroom was still under contract to complete: move background information to the Appendix, add the Commission's introduction, correct the maps, provide the document for the public hearing, and print 25 copies of the adopted document.

* Work that would be required should option #2 be selected was discussed. It was noted there could be problems with incompatible software. Mrs. Hill offered to do some of the editing. Mr. Frank noted his concerns about group editing and the time constraints the editing subcommittee would be under. He did not think the Commission would be able to accomplish option #2.

* The nature of the Plan was discussed. While the Commission was working to make improvements and provide specifics in the text, the Town was continually changing. Ms. Gager noted the Plan would already be out of date on the day it is published. It was suggested that the Commission could do an interim report at the midway point before the next update is due and that this and the recommended additional studies on Sustainability and Economic Development could help the Plan evolve with the times.

Ms. Gager reviewed each of the three options.

MOTION:

To go with option #1.

By Mrs. Roberts, seconded by Mrs. Jahnke, and passed 5-0.

Having approved option #1, some of the commissioners worried that the final document would not be all they had envisioned it would be. Ms. Gager and Mrs. Roberts pointed out that the update was a monumental task, that two of core focus issues had been more complicated and larger issues than had been anticipated, that these had not been the consultants' fields of expertise, that there would be further studies recommended, and perhaps the Commission had an unrealistic expectation given the budget constraints.

Mrs. Hill asked if the Commission still planned to conduct the focus groups and the meetings in New Preston and Marbledale. Mr. Rimsky was very concerned that if these were not held the document would be put out for public review without having first built a consensus. Ms. Gager

stressed that the Commission should focus on what it did do. It had the Saturday morning meeting for residents, the Zoning Commission, Conservation Commission, and Washington Business Association had all been invited to meetings, "office hours" had been held for the public, all of the Commission meetings are open to the public, and people could have emailed comments at any time. Methods to improve public outreach as the Commission continues with more in depth studies were discussed. These included holding the focus groups and the New Preston and Marbledale meetings, using the improved Town website, asking the Business Association to participate further, and sending press releases to the local newspapers. It was also noted that public comments made at the upcoming hearing could be incorporated into the final Plan. Mr. Frank asked if the Action Agendas would remain in the final document. It was the consensus they would remain. Mr. Frank was concerned that the Planning Commission had not yet discussed some of the recommendations such as recommending the designation of the Depot as a Village District. Mr. Carey agreed. Ms. Gager suggested that Mr. Frank could contact Milone and MacBroom with recommendations about how to make parts of the Action Agenda more specific.

Ms. Gager said she would work over the weekend on drafting directions for Mr. Looney.

There was a second brief discussion regarding getting the public involved in the planning process.

MOTION:

To adjourn the Meeting. By Mr. Rimsky.

Mrs. Roberts adjourned the Meeting at 8:50 p.m.

FILED SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

Respectfully submitted,
Janet M. Hill
Land Use Administrator