

Natick 360
Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Strategic Planning Oversight Committee
Minutes * January 31, 2007

Present:

Rosemary Driscoll, designated by School Committee
Matthew Gardner, designated by the Conservation Commission
John Heerwagen, at-large member
David Parish Co-Chair, designated by the Board of Selectmen
George Richards, designated by the Planning Board
Craig Ross, Co-Chair, designated by the Finance Committee
Fred Witte, at-large member

Absent:

Terri Evans, at-large member
Harlee Strauss, at-large member

Consultants Present

Phillip Blackerby, Blackerby Associates (by telephone)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. EST by the Co-Chair, Mr. Ross, in the Ed Dlott Meeting Room, 2nd Floor, Town Hall, Natick, MA 01760. A quorum was present.

Item 1. Minutes

Mr. Parish moved to accept the minutes of January 3, Mr. Heerwagen seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 6-0-1 to approve the minutes of January 3.

Mr. Richards moved to accept the minutes of January 10, Mr. Witte seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 5-0-2 to approve the minutes of January 10. Mr. Richards move to reconsider the motion, Ms. Driscoll seconded the motion to reconsider, and the Committee voted 7-0-0 to reconsider. Mr. Ross moved to approve the minutes of January 10, Ms. Driscoll seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 4-0-3 to approve the minutes of January 10.

Mr. Ross noted corrections to the minutes of January 17, to substitute Mr. Ross for Mr. Gardner on page 2 and to change Mr. Richards from present to absent. Mr. Heerwagen moved to approve the minutes of January 17 as modified, Ms. Driscoll seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 4-0-3 to approve the minutes of January 17 as modified.

Item 2. Coordination with Sponsoring Boards

The School Committee approved the Phase 2 report, and is still working in subcommittee on the Phase 1 report. The School Committee will likely participate in a cross-functional meeting during the week of February 12; the question will be put to the whole School Committee.

The Conservation Commission approved both Phase 1 and Phase 2 reports on January 18.

The Planning Board accepted the Phase 2 report on January 24; the Planning Board acknowledged and appreciated work to incorporate their input into the report. It had already accepted the Phase 1 report.

The Board of Selectmen accepted the Phase 1 and Phase 2 reports unanimously.

The Phase 2 report was presented to the Finance Committee and discussed, but its practice is not to act on a report the same day it is presented; it will vote tomorrow.

Item 3. Budget Review

Thanks to Mr. Witte for putting together the *pro-forma* budget. The bottom line is that cash in hand is \$18,200; additional pledges of \$7,500, for total revenue of \$25,700. YTD expenses are \$3,225.84. Estimated expenses include \$20,000 for the survey; and \$1,500 for June weekend event, for total projected expenses of \$24,726, and a projected net balance of \$974. The Committee also has an expenses invoice for December that will reduce the \$974 to about \$700. The June meeting needs is a guess, but lots of expenses are prepaid, such as supplies, banners, Survey Monkey and Constant Contact. Need \$200 for Key Informant meeting for printing, plus \$500 for refreshments. Have not stopped fundraising.

Item 4. Invoices

A. Blackerby Associates invoice 07-003, \$8,550 for January: Mr. Richards moved to approve the invoice, Mr. Gardner seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the invoice.

B. Blackerby Associates invoice 07-004, \$279.08 for December expenses: Mr. Parish moved to approve the invoice, Ms. Driscoll seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 7-0-0 to approve the invoice.

February, March and September will also have meetings that will require expenses. The Committee will have to raise some more money. The Committee recalled that Town Meeting appropriated \$150,000 for the Phase 1 report and project management; the project manager receives a fixed retainer fee; then publicity, printing and survey this summer is to be paid by contributions from businesses. The Natick 360 process has been generously supported by businesses, and the Committee will seek additional contributions.

Item 5. Fundraising update

The Committee has become aware of an opportunity to submit a grant application, with a deadline in early March. Materials used for grant application have been developed, and can be updated to beef up a grant application. The Committee will probably request \$4,000-5,000, but there are no guarantees. The Committee anticipates voting on the application when it is drafted.

Fundraising efforts continue. The fundraising subcommittee, Mr. Richards, Mr. Heerwagen, Mr. Ross and Mr. Parish will get back together to approach more organizations. *Action Item (a):* fundraising subcommittee to meet (assigned to Mr. Ross).

Item 6. Phase I and Vision and Value Report Update

Members of the School Committee and the Finance Committee have questioned the accuracy of the governance section in the Phase 1 report, when compared to the Town Meeting Handbook. This questioned content is neither in any summary document, nor posted on any web site yet. Although a public document, it has not yet been accepted by all the boards and committees. The SPOC will investigate any specific concerns from the committees that have not yet accepted the Phase I report.

Four of five sponsoring boards and committee have approved the Phase 2 report by unanimous votes; the Finance Committee will vote tomorrow, February 1. Some questions were raised by the committee, but no major concerns.

Mr. Ross will send an email after Finance Committee vote tomorrow night; the Vision and Value report can be distributed as soon as Finance Committee approves, and Committee members are urged to begin distributing the report right away, if approved by the Finance Committee.

Item 7. Phase III Process Finalization

The Phase 3-4 Process document has been updated to change the title to Phases 3 and 4, to correct to five sponsoring boards and committees, and to remove the examples. Decisions to me made include: joint or individual meetings; if joint meetings, set dates. The Finance Committee Chair did not perceive any issue with joint meeting, but was concerned about schedule during budget season, as full Committee or Subcommittee meetings are held every day including Saturday. He requested to preserve Tuesday, February 13, as one of the dates of a joint meeting. If moved to another night, few Finance Committee members would be expected to participate. The School Committee also wanted to preserve the date of Monday, February 12. The Committee concluded that the sponsoring boards and committees have significant interest in meeting jointly, and the schedule needs to try to accommodate them if possible. The original proposal was two meetings for sponsoring boards, two meetings for public, one meeting with Staff, and one meeting with key informants. The Committee discussed several alternative schedules. In the end Committee members agreed to the following schedule:

- Monday, February 12, 7:00 p.m., joint meeting of sponsoring boards and committees;
- Tuesday, February 13, 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Key Informant Meeting, Morse Institute Library;
- Tuesday, February 13, 7:00 p.m., joint meeting of sponsoring boards and committees;
- Wednesday, February 14, 7:00 p.m., time reserved for another joint meeting of sponsoring boards and committees, if needed;
- Thursday, February 15, 7:00 p.m., public meeting.

No votes will be taken, though meetings need to be posted in case a quorum shows up. The sessions are for brainstorming and input. The Committee will furnish dessert refreshments. Committee liaisons to boards and committees should communicate to their respective chairs how these meetings will work. The Committee noted that lots of events conflict with this schedule, including a League of Women Voters forum Tuesday evening, February 13, for preliminary election candidates.

The Committee plans an e-newsletter tomorrow night after the Finance Committee vote; 500+ names are in the email database.

The Committee discussed possibility of organizing a meeting for business interests. These interests are urged to attend the public meeting, and to comment on the documents by on email. The Committee expects news articles to publicize the public meetings. *Action item (b)*: follow-up February 7 to propose a number of channels for public input; including a meeting and other channels, written, electronic, etc.

Action Item (c): Modify language in the Phases 3-4 Process document as follows (assigned to Blackerby Associates):

- Bullet 1, second sentence; "...so each meeting is open to all five sponsoring boards and committees."
- Add language between April and May about transition from phase 3 to phase 4.
- March discussion: Blackerby Associates will provide SPOC with forms and guidance on how to gather input from Boards and Committees; no votes are required, just data collection; Blackerby Associates will consolidate the information, and feed it back to the boards and committees in a form to which they can react.

Item 8. Key Informant Meeting Update

The Key Informant meeting is coming together well; save the date notices went to 75-80 organizations by email and letter. Now the Committee will do the same with an actual invitation. Invitations have been printed; they will go out Friday, after the Finance Committee meeting; the package includes an agenda, the Phase 2 report and directions. Coffee, donuts and sandwiches will be served. The meeting will start with welcomes by Charles Hughes, Phil Lemnios and Mr. Parish; Mr. Ross will talk about the process and Phase I. Mr. Blackerby will talk about the Phase 2 report, then facilitate a discussion about input into the process. An email went out today, and 9 registrations came in the first couple of hours. Lots of people are interested in what Natick is doing; MAPC Executive Director, Marc Draisen indicated that peer towns are very interested in the process. Even if few people attend, 100 organizations will have seen the materials and information.

Item 9. Publicity Update

Thanks to Mr. Witte and Ms. Evans, a display will soon go up in in Town Hall; permission has been obtained; need an easel for the setup.

The web site has been updated at the home page, sponsor list and several other pages; the Committee will send out a new e-newsletter Thursday night or Friday, which will reference the web site.

Item 10. Phase IV Market Research RFP

Chris Bradley, the Town's procurement officer, has discussed options on how to solicit a survey contractor. We will not have to go through formal bid process because of dollar amount; we can use a firm the Town has used before. The issue is how to structure what we're looking for in a proposal. Blackerby Associates shared way they did it in Arizona; they set target of 800 respondents; started with a random sample of 2,400; exceeded expectations and received 1,206 responses. We will need some flexibility in budgeting. Two key expenses: design and analysis; fielding the survey. Drive sample size with budget. Suggest (a) complete proposal for design, fielding and analysis; or (b) field survey and tabulation only; leave design and analysis to the Committee. Members are asked to start thinking about this idea, and how to maximize the budget available. This idea will be a future agenda item, including next week.

The Town did a public health survey a few years ago for \$20-25,000 for several (2,000-3,000) respondents; Fountain Hills a year ago paid \$28,000 for its survey.

Item 11. Other Business

A. Data Gathering (Gardner); last Thursday, January 25th, went to high school to talk about how to gather data from students; they were thrilled we wanted to reach out. Seminars are 30 minutes, too short to introduce a topic, prime the pump and gather data. We don't want it to be a survey. Use social studies classes on topic of Town governance, to set the stage, then gather data on values and vision or whatever else. Teacher sent emails to colleagues to gauge interest. Moving ahead; set dates for classroom events. Let teachers take a lead on how to structure. Hard part is getting people excited about it and deciding on dates. We know how to get feedback from people.

Mr. Richards moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Driscoll seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 7-0-0 to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Summary of Action Items noted above:

- (a) Fundraising subcommittee to meet (assigned to Mr. Ross).
- (b) Follow-up February 7 to propose a number of channels for public input; including a meeting and other channels, written, electronic, etc.
- (c) Modify language in the Phases 3-4 Process document as noted (assigned to Blackerby Associates).