

Natick 360
Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Strategic Planning Oversight Committee
Minutes * June 21, 2007

Present

Rosemary Driscoll, designated by the School Committee
Terri Evans, at-large member
Matthew Gardner, designated by the Conservation Commission
Bill Mayhew, at-large alternate member
David Parish Co-Chair, designated by the Board of Selectmen
George Richards, designated by the Planning Board
Andres Rochwerger, at-large member
Harlee Strauss, at-large member

Absent

John Heerwagen, at-large member
Craig Ross, Co-Chair, designated by the Finance Committee

Consultants Present

Chris Tatham, ETC Institute
Phillip Blackerby, Blackerby Associates (by telephone)

The meeting was called to order at 6:36 p.m. by Mr. Parish, Co-Chair, in the School Committee Training Room, 3rd Floor, Town Hall. A quorum was present.

Item 1. Minutes

The Committee considered minutes from May 22, 2007. Mr. Richards moved approval of the minutes as amended by language suggested by Ms. Strauss that was distributed by email; Ms. Strauss seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 6-0-2 to approve the minutes as amended.

Item 2. Survey

Mr. Blackerby described the *Strategic Choices Workshop Report* document, suggesting that the Committee may want to set a criterion for how items get from the Strategic Options report to the survey instrument. One option would be to set a criterion that a score 33% on any of three scoring methodologies would qualify an item for the survey. This approach would yield 17 survey items..

Mr. Tatham described the length of the survey, that 15 is a good size, and that more than 20 would be too many. He said that 17 is a reasonable number of items.

Mr. Tatham reviewed the survey process calendar. The goal is to get 800 households responding through either the mail or the phone. ETC will select 2,400 households at random, expecting a 33% response rate to yield 800 responses. Then an automated call will be made to the sample to alert them that the survey is coming, and to watch for it. (perhaps recorded by the Town Administrator).

The call will appeal to people's civic conscience. ETC would expect to receive 400 by mail and would secure the rest of the 800 responses by phone. In parallel, a separate on-line survey will be available for activists, influencers and others who want to respond as well. Next Tuesday ETC will give a draft survey instrument to SPOC, with a draft cover letter from Town Administrator, and autodial instructions to record the 30 second call. By next Friday, ETC will get feedback on the instrument from a Survey Subcommittee (to be chaired by Mr. Ross). ETC will provide a revised survey by Monday, July 2, then receive feedback by July 3 or 5. The survey will then be ready to go by July 6. ETC will start on July 9 with the automated phone calls and mailing survey over the following few days; the survey will be in the field for three weeks. If a stakeholder is also in the random sample, they may respond twice, but make sure they respond to the random sample survey. Tatham is on vacation first week of August, so a draft report will be submitted by August 12.

The Committee discussed the appropriateness of different officials recording the automated phone calls and signing the transmittal letter.

The Committee reviewed a sample survey design by ETC. First page asks people why they live here, to identify the values of the Town, then some special questions that may need to be addressed. On pages 2 and 3 would be the items subject to test. First it asks how important the issue is to the respondents, or how it contributes to their vision of the Town. On the next page, it asks how willing respondents are to pay for the items. This approach allows a quadrant analysis plotting importance—or vision—against willingness to pay. The fourth page addresses other more standardized questions to establish a benchmark to measure in future surveys. The Committee suggested a question related to the tradeoff between taxes and services.

The Committee discussed who would be invited to participate in the on-line survey. Mr. Tatham noted that the responses would be geo-coded by address to ensure only one response per household.

The Committee discussed how to address some of the items that had multiple cost levels, such as the High School and the downtown garage. Mr. Tatham explained that some of those options could be addressed in the last section, or some of the items could be presented with sub-items related to different levels of cost.

Mr. Parish asked for volunteers to serve on the Survey Subcommittee. Ms. Driscoll and Mr. Mayhew volunteered to join Mr. Ross on the Survey Subcommittee.

The Committee addressed how many items should be on the list, and recommended adding three more items, for a cut-off of 25% on any measure, yielding 20 items. Mr. Tatham said the instrument will be pilot-tested, and the pilot test will tell whether it is too long.

The Committee addressed the language of the questionnaire. Mr. Tatham said he will draft the questions in ways he will be able to understand; he is not familiar with the issues, so he will look at the issues with little background.

Item 3. Phase 1 document.

A compiled document is now available, with all the Board & Committee signing statements; the complete document is ready to be resubmitted to the Boards & Committees for final acceptance.

Item 4. Final Strategic Plan Format

The Committee discussed what the format of the final strategic plan might look like, and how it will be presented to the Boards and Committees.

Item 5. Other business

The Committee decided to resume meeting the first and third Wednesdays, except to skip the July 4 meeting.

The Committee discussed the Strategic Choices weekend, concluding that the weekend went well in terms of the tenor of discussion and the logistics. More participants would have been better, but the participants who came were engaged and thoughtful.

Action Item: (1) Thank-you cards to the volunteers and donors (Parish and Ross).

Ms. Driscoll moved to adjourn, Mr. Mayhew seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 8-0-0 to adjourn. The Committee adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

Summary of Action Items

(1) Thank-you cards to the volunteers and donors (Parish and Ross).