



City of Westbrook

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

2 York St. Westbrook, Maine 04092 (207) 854-9105 Fax: (866) 559-0642

**WESTBROOK PLANNING BOARD
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2010, 7:00 P.M.
WESTBROOK HIGH SCHOOL, ROOM 114
MINUTES**

Present: Ed Reidman, (Chair) (Ward 5), Rene Daniel (Vice-Chair) (Ward 1), Scott Herrick (Ward 3), Robert Morrill (Alternate), Dennis Isherwood (Ward 2), Cory Fleming (At Large), Michael Taylor (Alternate), Rebecca Dillon (Alternate)

Absent: Greg Blake (At Large)

Staff: Molly Just, Richard Gouzie

Chairman Reidman called the Westbrook Planning Board meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in Room 114 of the Westbrook High School.

MINUTES MAY NOT BE TRANSCRIBED VERBATIM. SECTIONS MAY BE PARAPHRASED FOR CLARITY. A COMPLETE RECORDING MAY BE OBTAINED BY CONTACTING ENGINEERING, PLANNING AND CODE ENFORCEMENT at 207-854-9105 ext. 220 and lgain@westbrook.me.us.

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of Minutes

Rene Daniel moved to accept the minutes of August 17, 2010 as written

2nd by Dennis Isherwood

The vote was unanimous in favor 7-0 (Rebecca Dillon voting)

Rene Daniel moved to recess to workshop.

2nd by Michael Taylor

The vote was unanimous in favor 7-0 (Robert Morrill voting)

3. Recess to Workshop

Workshop: Note – Public comment will be accepted during workshop.

4. Comprehensive Plan Update – The City of Westbrook is just starting the process to update its Comprehensive Plan. The current Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City Council in 2000. The Comprehensive Plan has been found consistent with the State’s Growth Management Act. The State requires that municipalities adopt Comprehensive Plans that are found consistent. This enables municipalities to enforce their Zoning Ordinance, to adopt

development impact fees and to be eligible for State administered grants, such as the Community Development Block Grant fund. The purpose of this workshop is to educate the Planning Board about the update process and to obtain any early comments regarding the same.

Molly Just the reason I placed this in a workshop was to indicate to all of you that this should be a casual discussion. I would like to hear your requests and comments on this topic. As the Chair mentioned, we are in the process of updating our Comprehensive Plan. On Thursday we will be having our first Task Force meeting. All I am doing tonight is briefing you on the process. I think most of you understand the importance of the Comprehensive Plan but I do want to go through some things with you and then hear from the Board members.

The current Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2000. The State Planning Office softly requires that you update your Comprehensive Plan every ten years. They have a thirty page ten point font check list of things that must be included in it. You have to try not to have a boiler plate plan and that is what we are going to do here.

For a bit of background of where we were in 2000 and where we are in 2010, Ann Peoples served on that committee to really re-write the Comprehensive Plan and she will also be serving on this committee in 2010. Rene Daniel was on the Planning Board at that time and is serving on the Stakeholder Committee as well as Dennis Isherwood on the Task Force. The Planning Board will have good representation given your responsibility for Land Use issues here in Westbrook. We do not intend to reinvent the wheel, obviously we do a lot of long range planning, we spend money and more then that we spend volunteer time with public participation. The public thinks we have certain visions such as downtown as we have several plans for the downtown that were adopted by the City Council.

The Recreation Open Space Plan that we discussed a couple of years ago was not ever adopted by the City Council, it was unofficially tabled. What we will do with this Committee is ask, what do you think of this Plan? So instead of reinventing the wheel about Recreation and Open Space which is a big component for the City we will verify that Plan.

The Task Force make-up, with any good planning process you obviously need a group of stake holders representative of really every geographical area and interest area of the City. We have members from each ward, business representatives, downtown business representatives, and a representative for the Recreation Conservation Commission, two Planning Board Members, a Zoning Board of Appeals Member, one City Council Member and the Mayor. That might cover it, really a wide age range, interests and experiences. We have representative who have been around in planning for Westbrook for awhile so we will have that historical perspective as well as some newer people to Westbrook who have experience in this kind of thing and in other areas.

We are hiring a consultant, Craig Freshly. You maybe familiar with him, he has done a good amount of work with the School Department. Craig Freshly heads up Good Group Decisions. We wanted a meeting facilitator, not a Planner; we need someone who will get us through this, respectful of people's time and making sure that we hear form everyone. We have seventeen people on this task force, so you need someone who can get you through a meeting.

Again, why are we doing this? I mentioned the State Planning Office. It is typical in order to enforce your Ordinance you have to have a Comprehensive Plan which is a guide for the City. In this case the State of Maine needs to find that our Zoning Ordinance is consistent with our Comprehensive Plan, in order to enforce your Zoning Ordinance. As we all know the Zoning Ordinance acts as a set of rules that people can look at and say everyone around me has to do that same thing too. A Comprehensive Plan is a vision for the City. This allows us to apply for State and Federal grants, such as the Community Development Block Grant, which you may have heard of. Really it helps to ensure that the Community is

Westbrook Planning Board Minutes
September 7, 2010

aware of the Governments vision of the town. Doing this task every ten years, a number of people in town will have participated in that effort.

Public participation is an important part in this. The first six months are going to establish a vision statement. A vision statement will help guide the rest of the process. This kind of planning process is usually very long. You really need to front load the process with getting the community involved with writing a vision and they will have an idea of what will come out of this. They do not necessarily have to get involved with the writing of the document portion.

All Task Force meetings will be open to the Public. The Task Force meetings will be held at the library in the new Middle School. This is a gorgeous facility and is not the Middle School that most of us went to.

In October and November we are going to get out into the community. We are going to have a meeting in each ward, we will meet with the Chamber, the Westbrook Environmental Improvement Corporation, the Recreation Conservation Commission and we will have another joint Zoning Board of Appeals and Planning Board meeting. I think that will be particularly important to have those groups meet together because that is where the Zoning Ordinance and the Comprehensive Plan really meet to make sure that the development, the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Ordinance is upheld. In terms of a date for the joint meeting of the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals we are looking at November 16th. We are going to avoid Christmas and Thanksgiving and we have looked at the Calendar to try and avoid holiday weeks.

December 11th will be a day long visioning day. December 11th is a Saturday. That is going to be community wide not just a sector meeting like we are having in October and November. We will work out the logistics but I am thinking of having tables split out by geography and by topic area. You may recall we have a number of topics to cover like an analysis of land use, proposed future land use, 5transportation, population, and demographics, economy, housing, recreation, water resource, really every level of natural resources, historical resources, public facilities and services, fiscal capacity and capital improvement plan. If we can hear peoples concerns and comments by area and then what they would like to hear on those topics as everyone has a opinion about where they live and then about topic areas. I think that will be a really effective day and what we are going to do in the next couple of task force meetings after that is pull out from all the Public participation, ward and chamber and then the big community day we will pull out a draft Vision Statement and have the Task Force work with it. It will be something they can send to you and what we ultimately need is to have something that the City Council adopts as the Vision Statement so it will give a nod to everyone who has participated so far; we hear you, we like what you have to say, this is the Vision Statement that will then guide the Task Force on their way for the rest of the process that will be writing the Chapters on the topic areas.

I see the first six months being hugely important in terms of Public participation and this will be when the Task Force is most excited about the process. You can have the interest lag as the process moves forward as the months and years go by.

Your formal role here again we are going to have the joint Planning and Zoning meeting, so we will need to hear from you the dialog between the Planning Board and the Zoning Board, then the Planning Board will have to make a recommendation for Vision Statement to Council early in the new year. Then later on we will come to you with a draft Comprehensive Plan for your recommendation to the Council.

After we adopt the Comprehensive Plan, we will need to work on implementation and a big part of that is zoning amendments. We have to make sure that the current Zoning Ordinance is consistent with what we have just adopted as the Comprehensive Plan. There will be many, many changes in fact after the current Comprehensive Plan was written it took until 2004 to adopt a brand new Zoning Ordinance, we have been working on the same Ordinance 70's. So the current Zoning Ordinance is quite modern and I

Westbrook Planning Board Minutes
September 7, 2010

hope we will not have to do a complete re-write but there will be some updates and of course those go through you with a recommendation to the City Council.

Ed Reidman as Molly just said, one of the keys coming out of the Comprehensive Plan is a direction for the City to go towards. When you start to stack one of your Ordinances with where the Comprehensive Plan is going that requires a change and that is how the process works.

Rene, you served on the previous committee and Ann Peoples is serving on this committee again. Ann Peoples was on the Planning Board the last time around. Ultimately that was a good process.

Any comments, jump in we are in workshop.

Robert Morrill I remember when I was on the Planning Board before and we worked on the Comprehensive Plan it got very confusing as you are going through this process, going from one section of town to another section of town and then back. When you tried to pull it together it was quite a task. It was a difficult process and then became a political process as well as it was right in the November Election period, did we want to adopt this? I am in hopes that the political process will not play as much of a role this time so it will make it a much better format for maneuvering through those types of things.

Molly Just this is the beginning of the process and I usually get very excited about long range planning for any beginning of a planning process that I go to. Could you explain what you said about the prior process being a little confusing? You said going from one end of the town to the other, did you mean the organization of the document or how the information was presented?

Robert Morrill from my perspective it was how the information was presented, who was going to write it and how it impacted different sections like the Land Use Section, Ordinances and things like that.

We had different agendas from everyone that wanted to make input. It is a complex document; it is not a simple document, because every action has an opposite reaction. It was not a simple process just going in a talking about land use then talking about zoning, then talking about this section of town then the other section of town and what do you want to do there, how is that going to compare on the section over on Route 302, what is the plan for sewer and water in the future, well we can not do it there because it has ledge and so on and so on.

I think we are a much more informed Community today. We did not have the communication devices that we have today as well to be able to pass the information on to people, and then bring it back in a form that can be understood. I am in hopes that the facilitator you have will be able to keep that on track and everyone will be respectful of everyone's role. The fact that you have the zoning piece done is a big help.

Molly Just I can not agree more, that was an amazing task that people took with the complete re-write the had not been done in more then thirty years.

Robert Morrill Ed and Rene would have a better understanding of that process. I was here during the beginning of the process and it was never approved during my term on the Board.

Ed Reidman my vague memories when I worked for the City was that one of these processes went nowhere when it got to the political process.

Robert Morrill it literally went nowhere.

Westbrook Planning Board Minutes
September 7, 2010

Molly Just that is what happens during the process when you start planning with people's property, zoning for peoples property. I think we are going to do the best we can and I agree with you Bob with the additional methods of the communication we have now. I think you are able to include more people. In the past when it was by telephone and letter, it was not as easy to get all the contact information. Today I spent half my day creating an e-mail list and I have two hundred e-mail addresses and I will probably get another hundred in the next week or two. I think our out reach is completely different now and you are able to get different people involved, so a more diverse crowd and I think we have a very diverse Task Force. I think that will help balance out the tone.

Ed Reidman the only pitfall in opening it up to invite everyone to come in is the Committee syndrome where you have ten members at the first meeting then you have twelve or thirteen and the second, then you have to review everything you went over at the first meeting with those three that just came in. Hopefully you will not run into that and you can hold a few in your committee from doing all the work.

Molly Just that is another good thing about our communication as everyone is on e-mail. Everyone on the Task Force is on e-mail and we will have a summary taken of each meeting that will be sent out before the next meeting so the people that were not there will catch up.

Cory Fleming a good discussion at the outset; an orientation if you will, about the nature of strategic versus tactical and this is a strategic document, not a tactical document. Do not get too bogged down with how we are going to do it, focus on what it is we want to do. Your facilitator can help bring people back to that because that is something you have to do time and time again.

Molly Just it is always good to be reminded of that.

Ed Reidman any other comments or questions at this point?

Molly Just are there any topic areas that you feel that are under represented in the Comprehensive Plan?

Cory Fleming I would personally like to see a little more attention given to the nature of education and life long learning in the City, especially with the new Community Center. I think that is something that needs to be included as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Ed Reidman if there are any more comments I am sure you can go directly to Molly with your comment or e-mail the comments to her. I would say because of legal ramifications that you do not send it to everyone. You direct them to Molly so the comments are gathered and held in a file...

Molly Just if I could expand on what you were saying, this Stakeholder Task Force was appointed by the City Council, so they are subject to the same write to know laws as you are and we are going to presenting the Task Force with some draft ground rules for them to agree on and there is a paragraph about the right to know law and that you can not have an e-mail discussion with a few fellow Task Force members. All meetings and discussions have to be open to the public. I am copying staff on all the e-mails and they are being saved in a binder. E-mails should be about logistics and not substantive topics.

Robert Morrill is there a tentative completion date at this time?

Westbrook Planning Board Minutes
September 7, 2010

Molly Just I am one to work out a process and to include dates because if you do not then it will never get done. They tell me: you are so aggressive with your dates...well you have to be. I really perceive this first visioning part taking about six months.

I have spoken with other area communities that are in the process of updating their Comprehensive Plans and after there first push to establish the big picture, they tend to take about a month on each of these chapters. Some will not apply to us as we do not have salt water here, not everything applies and we are going to try to consolidate some other sections.

The chapter writing is going to take a lot more time. I would say if this group was highly efficient and politics did not shut it down for periods of time we could get through this in twenty months.

Robert Morrill as you are looking at those dates, one of my recommendations would be not to have your final approval date as a recommendation from the Planning Board to the City Council to be anywhere close to an election process. That is where it tends to get bogged down. Then in the opinion making of the twenty months that has transpired for that...it does not do the process any good, it is disruptive to the process. As you look into these things, try and do that so we are not into an approval around election dates.

Robert Morrill moved to resume to regular session

2nd by Michael Taylor

The vote was unanimous in favor 7-0 (Robert Morrill voting)

5. Resume Regular Session

6. Adjourn

Respectfully submitted by Linda Gain PECE Administrative Assistant