

Vision 21 Implementation Committee
Minutes – February 17, 2005
Approved 3/6/05

Members Present: Matt Hausmann, Meg O'Brien, Sara Oaklander, Jennifer Page,
Diane Stafford, Barry Winston
Members Absent: Victoria Haase, Tim Higgins, Paul Solomon
Others Present: Jenny Fallon, Nancy Forbes, Delores Keefe, Jan Kruse, Sarah
Richardson, Heather Tuttle,

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by the Chair, Jennifer Page.
2. The minutes of January 20, 2005 were approved.
3. **Sustainable Belmont.** Jan Kruse and Heather Tuttle were introduced as co-chairs of the new group, which met for the first time on February 9. This meeting was described, and other information about the group was presented.
 - The group will be named Sustainable Belmont. This name was selected due to its broad nature and broad appeal. Also, it parallels the names of some other towns' groups (e.g., Sustainable Arlington); it may be easier to collaborate with these groups since it will more clearly suggest a synergy.
 - There are 45 people on their email list; 12 people showed up to their first meeting.
 - At their meeting, after introductions, they brainstormed ideas of what projects they might work on; using the "dots" activity, the group's preferences were indicated. The data suggest that three goals were of highest priority. The first is a short-term goal: to provide support to the Conservation Commission's proposed Wetlands By-Law, which will come before Town Meeting in April. The second and third goals are much broader: to join MCAN (Massachusetts Climate Action Network) and to develop and promote a by-law regarding sustainable buildings in Belmont. These are both "big picture" goals and will take longer. These goals, not yet adopted by the group, will need further exploration and development; Jan and Heather will seek a way to get input from interested folks who could not attend.
 - **General Discussion:**
 - The group was very pleased with the launching of this group.
 - Members agreed that it was good to have a short-term goal to launch the group (in this case, support of the Wet-Lands By-Law).
 - It was suggested that they establish short-term milestones within the broader second and third goals so that the group will stay focused and motivated.
 - Jan K. asked the Vision Implementation members to look through the goals and make suggestions on how to refine and improve them. She also asked the members to think about how Sustainable Belmont can work with other Town departments, boards, and committees.
 - Sara Oaklander suggested that the group think about publicity (e.g., columns in the Belmont Citizen Herald).

- Someone suggested exploring whether there is a way to get the “recycling tip of the week” connected to Sustainable Belmont.
- Sarah Richardson asked if there would be an environmental fair again this year. She shared a new regulation that requires dentists to install mercury amalgamators to separate out old fillings from wastewater. Jennifer, Jenny, Jan and Heather indicated that there would not be a fair in 2005, but one might be organized by Sustainable Belmont (and others) in 2006.
- Goal #1 Discussion (Wetlands By-Law).
- Jennifer stated that the Conservation Commission has drafted the bylaw. She suggested that Sustainable Belmont reach out to Michael Flamang to better understand his plan for getting the bylaw passed and how Sustainable Belmont can support this effort. Jennifer agreed to speak to Michael as well.
- Jennifer proposed one kind of support for the by-law: that members of Sustainable Belmont write letters to the Belmont Citizen Herald stating that “I’m part of Sustainable Belmont and I support this bylaw”.
- Jenny Fallon suggested that the group reach out to Town Meeting Members to introduce the group.
- Goal #2 and 3: Discussion (MCAN, Green buildings)
- It was suggested that they might want to do on-going public education forums. The group agreed that this could be a good way to support Sustainable Belmont’s goals and sustain momentum.
- Jenny noted that some of the ideas that are listed are actually process/tactics. It was noted, however, that offering educational forums might be an appropriate goal in its own right, regardless of the “fit” of a forum to a particular goal.
- The group discussed the importance of attaching the goals to people’s lives, understanding what steps individuals can take. They might think about telling people the types of things that are cost effective and not just making it a “moral” issue.
- Delores suggested that the group consider conducting a session soon for landscapers on green landscaping. She suggested doing this soon as we are heading into the spring season. She also suggested that the group touch base with Donna Moultrup. Jenny suggested that they touch base with Peter Castanino as well.

4. Planning in Belmont

- Sara Oaklander, Jenny Fallon, and Meg O’Brien had attended the Selectmen’s meeting of January 31; they briefly described it. They commented on the fact that the Selectmen (with the exception of Paul Solomon) did not seem to have “bought in” to the process that the Waverley Fire Station Re-Use Committee had followed and therefore questioned the outcome. That is, the Re-Use Committee had felt it was piloting a model for gathering public input, which, coupled with expert input, leads to good decision-making.
- We (Vision Committee members) are very committed to public input and believe that it is not well implemented by Town committees and boards. A challenge: how do we achieve “ownership” by town leaders of a public input process? We noted that promoting “citizen involvement” is a part of the Vision Statement.

- We need to think about how VIC can help educate other committees for better public input and participation.
- Suggestion: we may wish to develop some kind of guide for committees and boards. First, however, we should ask the Waverley Fire Station Re-Use group to reflect on the process they used and to specify what they learned, what they would do differently another time. Should VIC ask Roger Colton to organize this, or should we ask the Board of Selectmen to ask him? Given that Sara Oaklander and Jennifer were both members of the Re-Use Committee, it seems feasible for them to raise this with Roger.
- What other examples of good public input by Town boards and committees are there, beside the work of Waverley Fire Station group? We listed others: Andy McClurg's outreach on Trapelo Road traffic issues, BEDPG surveys, PIC forums, original Vision work.
- One essential element in a good process is the importance of making clear at the beginning (and to reiterate regularly) how decisions will be made and what the steps are in the process. Ambiguity about the process leads to lack of confidence in the decisions.
- It was noted that, unlike the VIC, the Selectmen and many other boards and committees do not have the "luxury of time" that we enjoy; their decisions must often be made within tight time frames. To meet those time constraints, they often ride the slippery slope downward and minimize (efficiently!) the public input process.

5. Adjournment at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Matt Hausmann (and Jennifer Page, covering the last 20 minutes of the meeting)