

MAR 16 9 43 AM '12

Vision Implementation Committee
February 9, 2012 Meeting Minutes

Meeting commenced at 7:05 pm.

In Attendance: Tim Bowman, Jane Feinberg, Doug John, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon
Not in Attendance: Sara Masucci, Wendy Rundle, Michael Sattler

January 26th minutes approved and seconded.

One change to minutes made: Point 4.5—Change to: “planning and communications with regard to last event met with mixed reviews by Board of Selectmen.”

VIC Member Recruitment

Wendy and Michael were going to talk to some potential members. Doug talked with Bill Green, who has just taken a new position at MIT and is not even pursuing Town Meeting member position at this point. But it may be worth touching base with him again once he has settled into his new position.

VIC Leadership

Tim is looking to step down from chairmanship from VIC in the spring; there is hope that someone on the Committee will step up to that leadership role.

Jennifer suggests that we assign some specific, more administrative roles to non-chair members, such as collecting and posting minutes, creating the meeting schedule, etc.

Paul thinks that there's value in having a single leader at the helm.

Tim says the everyday administrative aspects are not terribly time-consuming, but that when there are special events to prepare for, the time demands are greater.

Fall Event Planning

Prior to next year's event, Tim said it will be important for someone on the committee to make the time to meet with key leaders, and not notify them via email.

Jane thinks it might be worthwhile to meet with town leaders to solicit their help in shaping the agenda for the fall meeting.

Paul suggests that we present some alternatives to town leaders about the agenda.

Jennifer likes the idea of continuing to have a fall event, but perhaps on another topic altogether. For example, the VIC took a serious look at the status of the business community some years ago. Is there a way to reprise that conversation? Perhaps we could organize a forum with speakers sharing different models for how

towns increase their revenues. We could attend one of the Economic Development Committee meetings, or have a shared meeting.

Paul thinks we need to generate our own plan first and then invite people into our midst.

Tim thinks we could invite people to come meet with us just to take the pulse of the town, and on its way to finding the next opportunity in which the VIC could have an impact.

Paul talked about the issue of civic engagement. There are a number of openings in town seats that are not being occupied. Paul has attempted to recruit a number of people in town to leadership positions, most of whom said, "It's just not the right time for me now." How do we deal with that? How do we get more people involved? Might that be a reasonable topic for discussion?

Jane commented that society has changed such that people have fewer hours to volunteer, and wonders if trying to increase civic engagement in a direct way would be effective.

Jennifer thinks that perhaps social media is how people are choosing to participate now.

Community Communications

Tim revisited the idea discussed two meetings ago, about creating an online community forum. People would sign up for different groups, and the fall event would be an opportunity for people to meet in person according to the groups in which they have participated. Perhaps the VIC could then carry one or two of the most substantive ideas that emerged forward.

Jane thinks we could meet with different people in town, asking, "What conversations need to be had?" in Belmont to move the town forward. These could become the background for generating the conversations for the online forum.

The group brainstormed some potential topics: economic development, diversity, town restructuring, how can town meeting membership become more meaningful, etc.

Jennifer mentioned our conversation with members of the Town Meeting ad hoc communications committee—how Meetings are run in other towns via a formal meeting for Town Meeting members.

Jennifer thinks it's appropriate to accept the challenges of various "oddball" projects that other groups in Town are not in a position to undertake.

Tim articulated some potential action steps: We can invite a group of people representing different committees and perspectives to the March 12 meeting (e.g., Economic Development Committee, School Committee, Michael Widmer, Kelley Hebert, Energy Committee, etc.) and talk about the idea of an online platform, toward better communications and deeper community/civic engagement. Question to them: What are the conversations that we should be having in town? They will help us generate topics. Then on March 26, we can have a working meeting to put the wheels in motion to launch in mid-May.

We will meet one more time to solidify our goals and outcomes, and flesh out the concept—and finalize that during the meeting on March 12.

Between March 12th and March 26th, we will meet with and/or invite people to our meetings. Before March 12th, Jane will talk with Kelly Hebert, Jennifer will talk with Ralph Jones and Roger Colton, Tim will talk with Mark Paolillo, and Paul will talk with Laurie Graham. 12th.

At the April 12th meeting we can get down to brass tacks and move toward production and launch of the online forum.

Jennifer: what is the VIC's official role in moderating an online forum?

Tim: We might play a referee role. Perhaps each of us participates in one of the groups, or checks on what's happening.

All agreed that we need Michael's help in thinking through this issue.

Our next meeting is on Monday, March 12th, at 7 pm in the Flett Room at the Belmont Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Jane Feinberg