

Vision 21 Implementation Committee

Minutes of Meeting, May 1, 2003

(Accepted by the Committee May 15, 2003)

Members present: Jennifer Fallon Joe Greene, Matt Hausmann, Bill Hofmann, Meg O'Brien,
Jennifer Page, Paul Soloman, Tim Higgins

Members absent: Martin Greco, Sara Oaklander, Barry Winston

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 by Chair Jennifer Page in the Flett Room of the Library.

➤ **REPORTS:**

1. Permitting Process: Tim Higgins reported on progress to streamline the permitting process. He explained that now people will get the same document listing the things that need to be done to get permits, no matter what town department they start at. This same document is also on the town web site. (Committee members noted that the town web page is not as user friendly as one would like.) Other items Tim mentioned:

- ❖ Policy changes will be recommended to streamline the time most permits take.
- ❖ The OCD is also clarifying definitions.
- ❖ By-law review: The current by-laws were rewritten in 1982 for language -- not for substantive changes.
- ❖ Members expressed concern about inconsistent enforcement. The committee talked of possible ways to deal with enforcement.
- ❖ Report for Selectmen should be ready by the fall.

2. PIC-PG: Meg O'Brien reported concerns about the membership of the Public Information and Communications Planning Group. She noted excellent representation from Cable Access, a citizen member, and the Belmont Light department, but scarce representation from other groups. Meg feels there is not enough input from across the system, and her group needs more technical and infrastructure input. Meg's concern is that it is time to begin framing the information system. Jennifer and Meg will talk with the Schools, ITAC, Cable Television Advisory Committee.

- ❖ The language in the mandate allows both VIC and PIC-PG to add more people to the group. Meg will write a "job description" to circulate for Committee members, in hopes that we can help find a couple of other "citizen" appointees who would have the requisite expertise.
- ❖ Paul Solomon mentioned the Town's new database listing people who want to become involved. It also shows what people do and their strong points. Meg will follow-up.

3. Welcoming Community: Joe Greene reported on the Welcoming Community/ Newcomers Work Group.

- ❖ Committee was pleased with first meeting and plans are in the works for a second meeting.
- ❖ The group has already decided to do a citizen input flyer to attract other folks who might like to come on board. One member has said she will be the contact for new folks who wish to join in.

➤ ***OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION***

1. Town Meeting: Presentation of the Article on All-Alcohol Licensing

- ❖ This article arose from the recommendation of the Vision Committee. Jennifer raised concerns about whether it will pass, in view of the opposition of the Alcohol Beverage Licensing Committee; she sought advice about what she should say in presenting the article.
- ❖ Discussion on the problems people have with the proposal and what questions need to be answered at Town Meeting. Concerns we know will be raised:
 1. Some citizens feel the seating numbers are wrong: support the general principle, but want it substantially lower. Of these, some will want to “preserve” the current restaurants; some will see it as an issue of “fairness.” Some don’t want big restaurants; prefer small, stylish ones.
 2. Some see it as a neighborhood issue (traffic, noise), not an economic one.
 3. We can anticipate an airing of all the “usual” fears: public drunkenness, moral depravity, urban decay.
- ❖ “Regulation” issue for the Selectmen: Is there a “right” to have a license just because a restaurant has the approved number of seats? Are there other criteria they can apply? Paul Solomon will ask Town Counsel about what Board of Selectmen can do regarding criteria for licensure. Paul or one of the other Selectmen should probably comment on this.
- ❖ Town residents seem to be reactive instead of proactive. We need to educate Town Meeting Members.
- ❖ We appreciate that it is difficult to prove if this is a good or bad thing.
- ❖ Must explain the facts: No drinks without a meal. Service bar only. No “sports bars”.
- ❖ Jennifer’s main themes should be: (1) This is a planning tool. (2) We must allow the citizens to make the final decision.

2. Next initiative: Becoming an Environmentally Responsible Community

- ❖ Need to talk with people and groups in Belmont already working on aspects of this goal, including Town boards and committees. We need to enlarge the conversation & bring people in town together.
- ❖ Paul has been in contact with a firm that evaluates existing buildings to determine what kinds of energy savings might flow from specific renovations; the firm then “shares” the benefits with the Town.
- ❖ We may wish to investigate whether new town buildings could use alternative energy sources.
- ❖ Paul Solomon, Jenny Fallon, and Jennifer Page will attend a conference on May 3 on communities becoming environmentally responsible.

➤ ***Adjournment:*** Meeting adjourned at 9:10 P.M.; our next meeting will be on Thursday, May 15 at 7:00 P.M. in the Flett Room of the Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Joe Greene,
Secretary Pro Tem