

# VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Meeting of October 19, 2009

Minutes

Approved 11/12/09

Present: Paul Solomon, chair; Tim Bowman, Kevin Heine, Bruce MacDonald, Jonathan Mascia, Sara Masucci, Sara Oaklander, Jennifer Page

- **Call to order:** Paul Solomon called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. All members were present!
- **Approval of minutes:** Minutes were amended and approved by unanimous vote. Sara M. will forward the finalized copy to Paul Solomon for posting.
- **Update:** Sara M. reported that Jane Feinberg of the Frameworks Institute is not available to join us for either of our November meetings. Sara O. proposed that an “off-line” meeting might be arranged between Jane and a few VIC members. Sara M. will follow up with Jane to find a way for us to benefit from her work.
- **Public Forum(s) -- General discussion** of the proposed public forum(s). The immediate purpose is to educate the public about the fiscal realities of the Town, about the “facts” of our financial condition; this might be cast in the context of the Vision Statement and whether achieving the Vision is at risk. Discussion questions:
  - Are we visualizing a series of identical presentations to different groups, or one large public presentation? i.e. to community “interest groups”, and neighborhood groups, or to the public at large? Are there some groups we should involve in planning this?
  - For whom is this power-point presentation targeted? It was suggested that it is intended for “existing groups” --e .g. PTOs, boards, business associations, etc. If so, then how will we reach “the public”? Should we try to get this out soon? Probably need more about educating people about the financial dilemmas.
  - We lack the technical knowledge to present information or answer questions about the Town’s financial position. We affirmed the need for involvement of the Warrant Committee and perhaps of other experts. How does our lack of expertise impact our goal of educating the public?
- 3 **Public Forum(s) – Discussion of slides** in Power Point draft. Though we agreed not to “text edit”, we succumbed to the temptation. We had time for discussion of the first five slides. Some suggestions and comments are included here; Sara M. took comprehensive notes on text changes by computer.
  - 4 Slide 1: Title – proposed change: “Belmont: Can We Afford our Vision?”
  - 4 Slide 2: Text of Vision – Only part of Vision is included. What about the part omitted? Typos were noted.
  - 4 Slide 3: Discussion focused on “expectations” and “advocacy groups”.

- 8 Are the public's expectations realistic, given what people are willing to pay? Are we paying bargain-basement prices but expecting high-end products? For many people, there appears to be a significant disconnect between paying taxes and obtaining services.
- 8 Interest groups are competing for same resources; we have government by advocacy. Need for broad-based community thinking, "big picture", shared priorities. Role of interest groups should be to provide information but not in isolation from one another.
- Slide 4: Proposed new orientation for this slide: Include existing obligations of the Town –e.g. unfunded mandates, deferments, pensions, loans.
- Proposed re-ordering of slides:
  - 8 # 4: The "situation", including obligations
  - 8 #5: What we've done
  - 8 #6: Desired outcomes
  - 8 #7: What you can do
- Slide 6: "Desired outcomes" -- We hope participants will take away an understanding of the systemic issues and will be prepared to address those, rather than seeking further "efficiencies" or focusing on advocacy for special interests.

6. **"Community Dialogue"** from Superintendent Entwistle, Tuesday, Oct. 27.

Several VIC members will attend (MacDonald, Masucci, Page, Solomon; perhaps Heine); this model of public dialogue may give us ideas for our own effort at public involvement.

7. **Web Site project**

Sara O. reported that we have not recently been active regarding the Town's web site and our opportunity to influence its design. Last year we had been eager to participate in building parts of the new web site, to ensure that it is welcoming of newcomers, is not overly bureaucratic, and provides good information about how to participate in Town government (elected and appointed positions). Sara asked if we wished to re-engage in this project. It is clear that within the Committee we cannot all do everything very actively, but we felt that it is appropriate for us to commit to taking up this project again. Sara will bring to the next meeting some choices about next steps.

8. **Orientation of new members to VIC**

Paul and Jennifer will meet to work out a plan for orientation.

9. **Comprehensive Plan for Belmont**

Some of our members are actively involved in some of the working groups. We reported on our level of activity.

8 **Next meeting of VIC:** Thursday, November 12, at 7 p.m., Flett Room of Library.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Page, Secretary Pro Tem