

# VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

**Minutes, June 15, 2006**

**Approved July 6, 2006**

**Members Present:** Austin Bliss, Donna Brescia, Vinnie DeNovellis, Victoria Haase, Sara Oaklander, Meg O'Brien, Paul Solomon.

**Members Absent:** Jennifer Page, Ann Rittenburg, Paul Santos, Jay Szklut

## **A. Administrivia**

1. Meg O'Brien called the meeting to order. Sara offered to be the recorder.
2. Minutes of May 18 – These minutes were unanimously approved with minor corrections that had been noted previously, once Meg explained that Donna did not have any issue with the content.
3. Minutes of June 1 – Meg commented on the length of these notes, which she had taken. She purposefully recorded a lot of detail so as to capture the discussion for the benefit of those who were not there. The minutes were unanimously approved with corrections,
4. Written or oral reports – Meg explained that since no consensus has yet been reached on this, we will continue giving oral reports.
5. Meeting frequency and date – Meg reported that Jennifer gathered information and found that, other than Vinny, members will not be away for prolonged periods of time and so we will meet as scheduled in July. She also reported that we have not yet gathered data on an alternative meeting day of the week. Paul Solomon pointed out that there would be conflicts on Mondays with the Board of Selectmen's meeting, Tuesdays with the School Committee, and Wednesdays with other Town committee meetings that he, and possibly others, are often obligated to attend.

## **B. Updates**

1. Harvard Lawn Fire Station – Meg reported that a successful community meeting was held. People from the neighborhood attended, and there seems to be a consistency of opinion that the building should be converted to a residential use and that as much of it should be preserved as possible, as they like the look of it. An RFP should be completed by July 12<sup>th</sup>. Vinny asked a question about lot size as it relates to possible residential configurations, and a short discussion ensued in response.
2. Belmont Center Fire Station – Sara reported that the Planning Group met to hear presentations by the three bidders. One changed the financial arrangement of his proposal, prompting the need to consult with Town Counsel. As it turns out, only his original proposal can be considered. The Group also determined that some additional information is needed from all of the bidders to ensure a full and complete understanding of the proposals. Requests for that information will be going out soon with a firm deadline yet to be determined but probably end of June.

3. Sustainable Belmont – A meeting was held last night on green building design. The keynote speaker was Donald Fudge, high performance schools program manager for the Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnership in Lexington, MA. One of the key points of the evening was that it is not only important to build buildings to conserve energy and improve the internal environment, but that attention needs also to be paid to the operations of the building such that those improvements are maximized over time. Paul Solomon explained that there are new regulations being proposed by the school building authority that will provide standards that, if met, could net a town an extra 2% reimbursement from the state.

Meg reported on another meeting held last night by the Belmont Municipal Light Department regarding proposed new decision elements that will be used as the BMLD negotiates with suppliers.

### **C. Planning our Work**

#### 1. Welcoming

a) Block Parties – Meg reminded the group that we had done some work on the subject of block parties and asked if we thought there was more that needed to be done on this initiative. A lengthy discussion ensued, including the following key points:

- One idea proposed earlier was for the VIC to host a block party as a model. Paul reported that there are quite a few block parties being held, and so it seems the form is already widely used, and so we probably don't need to do anything more. There was general agreement with this conclusion.
- We could run a newspaper article on the subject as a way of reminding and encouraging people. Meg pointed out that an article previously run could be run again.
- This initiative might really belong more to the Neighbors' Network, and so they should decide what to do, if anything. However, since they recently lost one of their two leaders, perhaps the focus should be on recruitment instead.
- Jennifer has done some of that already, and we should check with her first, as well as with Kathryn Bonfiglio, before deciding how to proceed.

b) Booklet – Meg thanked Victoria for her efforts on the booklet. Unfortunately, we have not yet taken it the next step but thanks to Victoria, it is ready to go, and we now need only to raise the money to pay for the printing. Victoria reiterated that the booklet has been updated and that we now need to decide if anything more is needed (e.g., reformat, redesign) before it is printed again. The one missing piece is a statement from Tom Younger as the new Town administrator. Jennifer has the electronic file. Printing will be done at Minuteman when we are ready to proceed.

2. Education – This topic continues to be deferred.

#### 3. Revisiting the Vision

Meg began by reminding the group that at our last meeting we discussed what we want to do going forward with regard to how to revisit the vision. She reminded us that we had a breakthrough moment when we talked about “taking it to the people.” The ensuing discussion

reviewed some of the ground previously covered in our earlier discussions. The following comments were offered:

- We can put up big display boards and ask people for input but does that get us where we want to go?
- We should first determine what we want to accomplish with such a display.
- This initiative first began when we decided we should do something upon the fifth anniversary of the Vision but that we were not interested in reopening discussion on the Vision. Instead, we decided we want to inform people about the Vision and gather ideas on how to achieve the vision in each category.
- Perhaps we should involve BHS students – get them to work on this as a civics project
- The core question is around how to engage people in the challenge of implementation
- Deeper dialogue is needed on the more complex ideas. This requires a greater commitment than a display board.
- We should focus on what we want to accomplish and then two or three of us could develop some proposals for how to proceed.

Eventually, the discussion turned to consideration of what we want to accomplish in this phase of our work. The group agreed on three goals:

- Inform and educate people about the Vision
- Determine priorities – what aspects of the Vision matter most to people?
- Engage people/encourage participation in working towards the Vision

Further discussion was about whether these three goals had to be pursued in order, or if they could all be addressed simultaneously. One question raised was: do we need to decide which of the goals is more important so we know where to start?

A suggestion was made that since Sustainable Belmont is so successful, perhaps that is the model we would be pursuing for each major component of the Vision.

The discussion then turned to the process we might use to move us forward on generating and considering ideas for how to pursue these three goals. Sara offered to facilitate a brainstorming session at the next meeting. After some discussion regarding how best to do that, particularly around the question of starting with a blank slate or starting with ideas we've already generated, it was agreed that we would start the next meeting with the list of ideas we've already generated and then work from there by brainstorming additional ideas. We will then need to decide on a process for narrowing and prioritizing the ideas.

#### **D. Other business**

Tonight was Victoria Haase's last meeting. Meg thanked her for all of her good work on the Committee and others joined in to share the same sentiments. Victoria will continue to serve the Town in her new capacity as chair of the Town's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary committee.

Paul Solomon announced that Kirk Hazlett has been appointed to Victoria's seat on the Committee. Kirk is a public relations specialist.

#### **E. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sara Oaklander, Secretary Pro Tem*