

Town of Shutesbury Massachusetts
Master Plan Working Group

October 17, 2016

Minutes taken by RL Groves

Meeting Begins at 7:00 PM

Members present:

Meryl Mandell, Bob Groves, Al Hanson, Mike Vinskey, MaryAnne Antonellis, Nan Dill, Michele Cunningham, Jeanne Brown, Dale Houle, Jeff Lacy

Guests: Steve Cecil and Howard Schneider from Harriman.

Discussion about protocol for meeting minutes.

Meryl would like secretary to send minutes to her for her editing before distribution to Committee, as she often has many changes and she does not want to use limited MPWG meeting time to review every proposed change.

Bob disagrees. He says he should distribute Draft of Minutes to Committee without Meryl's edits and that Committee should discuss changes, if any, at meeting.

Minutes of October 12, 2016 approved with one abstention.

Due to pressing business, further discussion of minutes suspended until future time.

Introduction of Working Group to Steve and Howard.

Steve and Howard to conduct mock work session.

Session begins with Ground Rules:

Share your opinion

Listen to others

When people speak they may be speaking for others not present.

Frequently asked questions:

Why plan?

Do you approve of planning?

Do your neighbors?

Nan asks whether he is giving us a facilitating exercise.

Steve replies he is “facilitating us”. Nan clarified our intention to evaluate his large group facilitation skills and desire to see him in that mode. Steve conducts mock visioning exercise.

“What best do I like about Shutesbury”

“What I would do to improve Shutesbury”

Group responds to these questions.

Steve talks about interpreting these responses:

Would a random sample produce similar answers? Would additional issues emerge?

Nan: Taxes!

Steve remarks that people who care about high taxes do not participate in these kinds of events.

Jeff asked about using the SWOT process.

Jeanne is concerned that people with agendas would use meetings to advance them.

Steve provides rule of thumb: Agendas must be allowed to come out or people will not listen. He mentioned several methods (such as limiting questions to one per person) he would employ to reduce potential for individual workshop domination.

Committee members quiz Steve and Howard about their qualifications to lead workshops and write final report.

Jeff: We hired Alison, a planner. You both are architects.

Steve responds that he has been trained as a planner and has many hours experience with planning issues and has written visioning statements. He indicated that he taught public facilitation +-25 years ago and still trains all his staff in these time tested facilitation methods.

Howard was Town Planner. Howard relies extensively on expertise in office, deals with clients and contractors in major projects and is qualified to manage facilitation sessions here.

Al: What kind of analysis would you provide?

Steve responds that data analysis is more important in the Master Plan phase and that visioning should “get ahead of the data”.

Steve and Howard leave.

Group discusses suitability of team.

Al and Jeff point out that this team lacks the experience and dynamism to perform this task.

Nan asks group if the results (data collected) would be different with different facilitators. She shares her uncertainty about the right decision but thinks that, with Committees help, they could get the job done.

Dale asked whether postponing the workshops and re-advertising the job would negatively impact the current momentum in town for the Visioning effort.

Meryl and MaryAnne speak in favor of team.

Motion: Should the Committee recommend that Selectmen go ahead with Harriman contract?

Result: 7 aye, 2 Nay, 1 abstains.

Motion carries.

Steve and Howard return.

Jeff: Who will write final report?

Steve: Howard and I.

Meryl: What are your ideas for addressing very different Town visions? We have divisions in Town.

Steve: Visioning will not erase divisions.

Nan would like to know the timeline for the survey (start/end dates for input) so committee can plan publicity for it. She requested a more detailed critical path document which includes the survey activities.

Meryl noted that two surveys need to happen – one following each workshop = that allows residents to respond to the questions asked during that particular workshop.

Group requested detailed survey for review in timely manner.

Survey should be parallel to work sessions and occur directly after meetings.

Steve uses “Survey Monkey”. Steve agreed that Harriman could produce the survey within 1-2 days after each workshop.

Jeff: Data can be confounding. Survey must be designed to produce useful data.

Nan raised the need to clarify who would be responsible if there is disruption at the events. Steve indicated this is a facilitator responsibility.

Meryl asks team if they could attend another meeting before first event.

Steve: Yes.

Scheduling meeting will take some time. Meeting will occur week before event.

Steve: What do you need?

Meryl: Would like to see hand-outs.

Nan: Wants “Responsibility Sheet” – before, during and after events

Steve: Committee should think about what “Look and Feel” the Committee would like for final doc. He encouraged us to think about how the document will be used and next steps after it has been produced.

Steve and Howard leave.

Brief discussion about Committee Minutes.
Bob: Will send Draft Minutes to Committee.

Meryl: Working Group will send tracked changes of draft minutes prior to next meeting, and revisions/amendments will be finalized at next meeting. There will be no group discussion of the proposed revisions/changes prior to the meeting as Open Meeting rules.

Meeting ends 9:18 PM.