

Natick 360
Honoring Our Past. Planning Our Future.



Strategic Planning Oversight Committee
Minutes * February 21, 2007

Present

Terri Evans, at-large member
Matthew Gardner, designated by the Conservation Commission
John Heerwagen, at-large member
David Parish Co-Chair, designated by the Board of Selectmen
George Richards, designated by the Planning Board
Craig Ross, Co-Chair, designated by the Finance Committee

Absent

Rosemary Driscoll, designated by School Committee
Harlee Strauss, at-large member
Fred Witte, at-large member

Consultants Present

Phillip Blackerby, Blackerby Associates (by telephone)

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. EST by the Co-Chair, Mr. Ross, in the Ed Dlott Meeting Room, 2nd Floor Town Hall, Natick, MA 01760. A quorum was present.

Item 1. Approval of Minutes: Mr. Parish moved to modify the draft minutes of February 7, 2007, to correct typographical errors on page 2, paragraph 3 (should read "Walnut Hill School"), and to approve those minutes as modified. Mr. Richards seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 5-0-1 to approve the minutes of February 7, 2007, as modified.

Item 2. Coordination with Sponsoring Boards: Committee members had nothing to discuss at this time; related issues will arise under the Sponsoring Board Meetings, Item 4.a., below.

Item 3. Fred Witte Resignation: Mr. Witte has accepted the position as Town Controller. As Controller, he is advised by counsel to remove himself from any group spending funds on behalf of the Town. He sent an email notice of resignation. Mr. Richards moved to accept Mr. Witte's resignation, Mr. Gardener seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 6-0-0 to approve the motion. The Committee expressed its thanks to Mr. Witte for his excellent service on the Committee to date.

Mr. Gardner moved to post a notice to fill the vacancy, Mr. Heerwagen seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 6-0-0 to approve the motion. The Committee is constituted as 9 members, including 5 members designated by sponsoring boards. These five designees review candidates for the remaining four community at-large positions. The Committee will post the notice for the vacant position on both www.Natick.gov and www.natick360.org; interested citizens may apply with a letter

of interest. The Committee will interview applicants probably in middle to late March. After the interviews, the five designees will vote in public to select a candidate for at-large membership.

Item 4. Phase III Update: The Committee launched Phase 3 last week with meetings of many different groups:

- a. **Joint Sponsoring Board Meetings** were held on Monday and Tuesday, February 12 and 13. *Action item (a):* send email to sponsoring boards of invitees and attendants of key informants meeting. Harmony was abundant among participants; they took to the exercise, worked collaboratively and expressed lots of insight and articulation of issues. They said they would like earlier notice next time.
- b. **Key Informants Meeting** was held Tuesday morning, February 13, organized by David Parish; about 25 people from state agencies, quasi-government orgs, not-for-profits, other communities, etc. They learned more about what Natick hopes to accomplish. The intent was to bring people with influence over Natick to the process. A good cross-section attended. A positive is that those who were not able to attend got critical information about what Natick is doing and what its goals are. The Committee received lots of positive feedback from people who were not able to attend. The maps were a powerful tool to spark interest; The Committee will try to get them displayed more prominently. At the end of the Phase 1 report is a catalog of resources; *Action Item (b):* the Committee should integrate that catalog into this report. Most participants had a statewide perspective and lots of expertise; they spent 3 hours to help Natick address the issues. Also, two members of the press attended, reporter Andrew Manuse and editor and columnist Rick Holmes. Manuse wrote a good news story, and Holmes wrote an editorial (now posted on www.natick360.org under “news” tab). Some of the goals are like motherhood and apple pie, but our intent to make them concrete and tied to costs make this process much more valuable. Participants were very energized after the program. They want this process to succeed, so that others will embark on planning efforts.
- c. **Department heads** met Tuesday afternoon, February 13; they spend about one hour looking at barriers to achieving the vision statements.
- d. **A public Meeting** was held Thursday evening, February 15 at the Library, about 30 people attended. Got feedback how to make the process more accessible to people with physical issues that limit their participation at meetings. The Committee should look at these concerns particularly in planning for Phase 4; take down barriers to participation. Public members can sign up for e-newsletters at www.natick360.org, to keep in the loop. Notices are also in real estate tax bills, and in the Senior Center newsletter.
- e. **Next Steps:** Mr. Blackerby reviewed the process steps for the next month. Committee members will work with Boards and Committees to review focus areas and scenarios, and to identify policies, programs and projects to implement the scenarios. The Committee discussed complications of scheduling around election Tuesday and organizational Wednesday. *Action Item (c):* Mr. Ross and Mr. Parish will discuss possible rescheduling with Mr. Blackerby later.

Item 5. Continued Public Input on Phase 3: The Committee discussed using Survey Monkey to put up vision statements as research questions, soliciting responses to it, people would have an opportunity to provide input about gaps between where we are today and future vision; what are barriers to achieving vision? Open rate for e-newsletter is 50% and click-thru rate is 20%; compared to most other email blasts at 20% and 5%, respectively. The Committee suggested separate announcements to business community contacts and to other contacts. Survey Monkey does not permit interactivity and feedback; the Committee referenced an earlier discussion about blog technology, which the Committee did not endorse. A blog would have to be moderated, which would require additional resources.

Item 6. Other Business

Matt Gardner reported on opportunities to interview Natick High students during their social study classes. The SPOC gave Mr. Gardner permission to develop an agenda and work the details with the High School. Mr. Parish suggested using his session at the Walnut Hill School as an example.

Mr. Parish briefed the SPOC about Focus on Natick – a photography exhibit being organized by Natick 360 and TCAN. Members of the public are invited to submit photographs by March 30. More information is available on the website.

Ms. Evans moved to adjourn the meeting, Mr. Gardner seconded the motion, and the Committee voted 6-0-0 to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Summary of Action Items:

- a. Send email to sponsoring boards of invitees and attendants of key informants meeting (see item 4.a., above).
- b. The Committee should integrate the catalog of resources from the Phase 1 report into the report on the Key Informants Meeting.
- c. Mr. Ross and Mr. Parish will discuss possible rescheduling of the late March meetings with Mr. Blackerby.