

The Board of Selectmen held a workshop meeting on January 31, 2012 with members from the Planning Board, Sewer and Water Commission, Economic Development Commission and Conservation Commission. It began at 7:00 p.m. in Room 112 of the Town Hall.

Board of Selectmen members:

Eric Kraus
Mark Gallivan
Chris Timson
Nancy Mackenzie
Michael Berry

Also present: Stephanie Mercandetti

Betsy Dyer
James Taylor
Christopher Walker
Paul Lunn
Donnell Murphy
John Murtaugh
Richard Mazocca

Richard Adams

Roger Turner
Michael McGrath
John Keefe
Dick Nottenbart
Paul Millette
Margaret Walker

The following members were present.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Kraus welcomed the Board members present representing the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Sewer and Water Commission, Economic Development Commission. He spoke of Economic Development being one of the top issues in Town. The Downtown needs to be more user friendly.

Ms. Mercandetti spoke in terms of Economic development in general, the economy is playing a huge role for businesses wanting to expand and get funding. What opportunities there are for development in town, constraints and challenges. She presented the economic development map noting the Route one area, Route 1A area and the Downtown. The downtown was a focus for mixed use, had some businesses that have expanded including Walmart and Walpole Mall. Have had some businesses open and close in the downtown. At the Downtown streetscape meeting in January, thoughts and ideas came out that we had done a business and resident survey and the downtown looks old an outdated. With public investment you leverage private investment. We have land available for lease or purchase.

Things to note we have no control over lease arrangements we can have some control over zoning and incentives. Need to look at strategy and creative solutions. Mr. Timson talked about the Selectmen being interested in overlay districts. Looking at five areas of the town. The Downtown, Route 1A, Route One (2 areas) and E. Walpole. One of the ideas is having each member taking each spot and put together a team and you would

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focus on one area. Once you compress it down. It will spur ideas. Look at the areas infrastructure and what a developer would need to make it work. If you have a good team, will come up with what the issues are.

Look at the downtown, what are we missing, what our surrounding towns downtowns have. What kinds of business should we be attracting to the downtown. It doesn't seem like we are getting our lions share of business.

Ms. Mercandetti past around handout that had ides from the Streetscape meeting. One issue has been outdoor dining. Some existing businesses are interested in doing outdoor dining. The businesses are looking for a simplified process for outdoor dining on the public way. She stated she has lost three businesses that wanted outdoor dining. The Sidewalks need widening.

Mrs. Mackenzie noted when it is on private property it is Planning Board, looking to fit one or two tables into the public way we could look at it as a special permit. You need enough room for ADA compliance.

Mr. Berry arrived at 7:20 p.m.

Mr. Timson suggested you need downtown housing some development of a decent size.

Ms. Mercandetti spoke of mixed use zoning and exploring a 40R project. Mr. Timson felt there are 3 or 4 property owners in the downtown that are suitable for major residential development. If you have a Team they could approach these owners.

Mrs. Mackenzie noted one problem is the Giadomenico property multiple owners there. As far as transit goes, if you look at the walkway, that goes by the Kendall bldg and promote housing there. Downtown is not just Main Street.

Mr. Adams feels something needs to be done to the station, and the Kendall bldg. The lighting in that area is poor. The whole bridge area needs to be cleaned up. Any improvement would be a shot in the arm.

Mrs. Mackenzie spoke of Mass planning offering workshops and getting them for the business owners.

Mr. Kraus discussed what are the next steps. Ms. Mercandetti suggested looking at short term improvements such as better signage for parking, adding a park bench or two. Having business owners working collaboratively. Partnering with the businesses and meeting with the chamber.

Ms. Mercandetti is putting together a low cost conceptual design.

Mr. Kraus explained we do not have significant resources. Do it through internship or have a graduate school take this on.

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Ms Dyer had heard a rumor that the downtown doesn't want any more sandwich shops and was wondering if there are agreements that stipulate no more sandwich shops or coffee shops.

Mr. Berry talked about businesses closing and we think either the town was not supporting, but sometime other things are going on. He suggested an exit survey. Subway is selling because his franchise fees are high. If we know businesses that are leaving town, is it something we could have done to help them succeed.

Mr. Walker- with respect to subway, they try to attract foot traffic. As I look at the downtown, I see access and egress issues, foot traffic, the facade, to get other business to want to come in. It does not look attractive.

Mr. Kraus wanted to know what can they do to attract business to the downtown.

Mrs. Mackenzie suggested coming up with a short term and long term plan.

Mr. Murtagh did not believe that college kids are not going to do it. You need to present a proper design. We hire the right professionals to do a design for the downtown. The Board of Selectmen should address the funding for a plan. He also feels they are focusing on too many areas. He feels they should focus on the downtown.

Mr. Millette- we have had a lot of conversations about the downtown. There are a lot people driving thru, how do we get people to stay in the downtown. We moved Farmers Market on to the common for better visibility. We need to get people to stop in the downtown. Asked the Recreation to hold the taste of Walpole outside, We are trying to make the people who travel thru the town stay in. From a branding perspective, the Texas Roadhouse did a nice job of what they do. We should work on that as a town.

Mrs. Mackenzie suggested next year when the Board does the renewals, we could attach a survey to our licenses.

Mr. Mazocca felt there was need for better façade in the downtown and Mr. Timson noted there is a grant program. Should get the owners together and come up with a theme design.

Ms. Mercandetti is looking hold a meeting with property owners.
JT talked about the lights in the downtown.

Mr. Murphy felt the downtown changed when Home Depot opened up. The improvements have to be a collaboration. The downtown business owners are not going to want to invest in their properties until they know the RT1A revitalization is going to happen.

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Mr. McGrath noted the big interest is the downtown. Still have you split up on teams and bring in 3 or 5 property owners. Those business have their own focus group and come back with business owners.

Mr. Nottenbart felt a lot of what is being said was discussed during the streetscape meeting. .

Mr. Kraus noted that everyone wants the same thing a better downtown. Lets come up with five categories and split it up. Go back and find funding to do this.

Mr. Timson talked about the Town owned properties and there being 5 to 6 single family house lots that could be sold. There are other issues, it can be a revenue source. It could be done to fund a downtown project. Sell some of these properties.

Mr. Berry suggested looking at what we can do incentives financially, maybe a micro TIF. In turn of using that cash. I am not an expert on commercial taxes. We have the foundry area and what would entice the owner to do some work to that property. Need a lot of work at the industrial park. We can't neglect the enhancement of the industrial park. We need to make sure options are on the table. One problem is the lack of sewer. What is impeding progress in that area. A lot of it is infrastructure. Help improve that stretch of 1A.

Mr. Murphy suggested three groups; RT 1 group, downtown group and RT1A group.

Look at Façade program, getting the state to move on the Route1A project, funding, designing the downtown.

We will take all of this and break it up. Come back in 2-3 months. Come up with the areas and people who are going to join us and having the meetings. Lets get some action Discussed setting up the groups and they can be changed or amended. Mr. Kraus suggested getting an overlay for direction from the MPIC I think Dick's idea is a good one to charge MPIC with this.

Mrs. Mackenzie would like to see a representative from Planning Board, EDC, Conservation, a representative from the Chamber and housing partnership on the downtown group

Action List

Start with vision of areas

Address problems

Start look at short term and long term solutions

Partnership of the owners

Need to go state for resources

What money the town has

Peer review of neighboring towns to find out how they can be more successful

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Look at the bylaws

Then meet with all the players, and owners in your district.

Downtown Group

Eric Kraus-Selectmen

Nancy Mackenzie-Selectmen

Chris Walker - EDC

Dick Nottebart -Planning

Betsy Dyer -Conservation

Donnell Murphy-EDC

Mike McGrath-EDC

Chamber-

Affordable Housing-

Sewer and Water-

Route One Group

Chris Timson -Selectmen

Mark Gallivan-Selectmen

Richard Mazzocca-Planning

Paul Millette-EDC

John Keefe-EDC

Roger Turner-Conservation

Sewer and Water-

Route 1A Group

Michael Berry-Selectmen

John Murtagh-Planning

Dick Adams -Conservation

Paul Lunn- EDC

Jimmy Taylor-Sewer and Water

Provide an updated list to all the Chairs in Town and ask if anyone from the Board or Committee is interested in joining a group where needed.

A frame, Junior Women's Club

MOTION to approve the A-Frame sign for JWCW as requested, seconded by Mr. Timson, VOTED 5-0-0

Letter to Liquor license holders

Mr. Timson updated the Board members on the Drug and Alcohol task force. A letter is being mailed out to the license holders asking for a contribution. They will receive a

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logo showing they have done this good deed. What we are asking for the license operators to contribute money to the account that will support the business of the task force. They would like to perform more stings. Mr. Gallivan would like to have a discussion on the penalties that Board would impose prior to another sting operation.

MOTION moved by Mrs. Mackenzie to adjourn at 8:45 p.m. seconded by Mr. Berry,
VOTED 5-0-0