

**Natick 360
Strategic Planning Oversight Committee
Meeting Minutes 9/20/06**

DRAFT 10/4/06

Present:

Rosemary Driscoll, designated by School Committee
Terri Evans, at-large member
Matthew Gardner, designated by the Conservation Commission
John Heerwagen, at-large member
David Parish, designated by the Board of Selectmen
George Richards, designated by the Planning Board
Craig Ross, designated by the Finance Committee
Harlee Strauss, at-large member
Fred Witte, at-large member

Absent

None

Mr. Chris Bradley, Town Procurement Officer was also present at the meeting.

Meeting called to order at 7:00PM.

Item 1 Minutes

Motion to accept meeting minutes of 8/30/06 made by Mr. Parish, seconded by Mr. Heerwagen. Voted 6-0-2.

Motion to accept meeting minutes of 9/6/06 made by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Heerwagen. Voted 7-0-1.

Item 2 Coordination with Sponsoring Boards

Ms. Driscoll reported that will provide an update to the School Committee at their next meeting. She will speak as part of "Public Speak."

Mr. Gardner reported he will provide an update to the Conservation Commission at their meeting of 9/21.

Mr. Richards reported he will provide an update to the Planning Board at their meeting of 10/10.

Mr. Ross reported he will provide an update to the Finance Committee at their meeting of 9/29. Mr. Ross will also present to the Board of Selectmen at their meeting of 9/25 the recommendation from tonight's meeting. The Board of Selectmen will need to vote to authorize the contract.

Item 3 Phase II-IV Consultant Selection

Mr. Ross and Mr. Parish developed a process for building consensus around the selection of the consulting team. Mr. Ross offered the following guidelines for the group to help move the process forward.

1. Accept that the collective wisdom of the group is greater than the wisdom of any individual on the committee
2. Accept that there is no perfect solution. That the best decision must be made from the options available
3. Agree that not arriving at a decision during this meeting is far worse for the process than moving forward
4. Be open to fully hear and understand the issues, concerns, and points of view of fellow committee members.

Mr. Ross distributed and reviewed a document that created a table with feedback from each committee member about each consulting choice. Not all committee members were in agreement at this point, based on feedback received during the week.

Mr. Ross and Mr. Parish led a short exercise where the Committee listed the critical success factors for the process and the unique advantages and disadvantages of each respondent. The results of this exercise were:

Critical Success Factors

1. The consultants understand what we are trying to accomplish and the process we are trying to use
2. That during the project we deliver a consensus-developed plan with prioritized options
3. That the consultants have the skill necessary to drive the process forward
4. That we have a high degree of confidence in the consultants so that we can “sleep at night”
5. That the consultants can be effective in helping to engage the community

We then looked at each consulting group and tried to identify what uniquely distinguished what they had to offer the project.

Cecil Group

They have the advantage of local expertise with lots of resources who can help develop options in Phase III. They will have an advantage in ramping up for the visioning weekend.

However, there is a concern that Cecil Group will deliver a “standard answer” to a non-standard problem – that is that they will not fully understand the process and will migrate toward a master-planning solution. There was also concern about the strength of some of the resources proposed to lead the project.

Blackerby Associates

The principals interviewed were very strong – among the strongest of any group. It was agreed that Blackerby would successfully drive the process to build consensus and would have the skills to deal with various Boards and Committees. It was also agreed that they fully understand our process – that they “get it.”

However, there was concern about Blackerby’s geographic location and the lack of Massachusetts Municipal experience. The Committee noted that this concern would probably have the least impact on the needs of the project.

Mullin Associates

The committee agreed that Mullin was unusually insightful and persuasive in past projects – that he in fact could be called a “brilliant visionary.”

However, the committee felt that the roles and responsibilities of the team (between John and Zenia) were not well understood and that beyond John’s strong skills it was not clear where the value was. There was also concern that Mullin Associates strength in land-use planning would not translate into a broader strategic plan looking at financial and other matters.

Following this discussion, the group agreed that they were ready to make a recommendation.

Motion by Mr. Richards, seconded by Mr. Gardner to select Blackerby Associates to be the consulting firm for Phases II-IV. Voted 9-0-0.

Mr. Bradley informed the committee that they needed to rank the 2nd and 3rd place respondents. The vote for Cecil Group was 5-4-0 and the vote for Mullin Associates was 4-5-0. Therefore the non-price ranking was

Blackerby Associates
Cecil Group
Mullin Associates

Mr. Bradley then opened the price proposals. Blackerby associates price bid was \$119,700 and the price bids from Mullin and Cecil Group were both \$120,000. Mr. Bradley agreed to write up a contract request for the Board of Selectmen and be present at the meeting on 9/25/06.

Item 4 – October Visioning Weekend Process

Mr. Parish distributed an outline of 2 different models for the visioning weekend. People were asked to provide feedback to Mr. Parish over the next few days. Mr. Ross would get the consultants to weigh in after notifying them of the Selectmen’s decision on 9/25/06.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 PM.