

Meeting of the
Hillsborough County Master Plan Committee

January 11, 2008
Bouchard Building, Goffstown, NH

Minutes of the Public Session
(Not Official Until Approved by the Committee and signed)

Present: Comm. C. Holden, G. Wenger, M. Castagna, L. Kaiser, D. Reidy, F. Plett, R. Sawyer, and L. Stonner.

Call to Order

Comm. Holden called the meeting to order at 8:08 a.m.

Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of May 11, 2007. By F. Plett, second by L. Kaiser. Motion carried.

Motion: To approve the minutes of December 14, 2007. By F. Plett, second by L. Kaiser. Motion carried.

Comm. Holden introduced Dan Reidy, UNH Cooperative Administrator, who has agreed to facilitate the meetings of the Master Plan Committee. Mr. Reidy led the committee in a discussion of its goals. He referred the members to a memorandum titled Hillsborough County Master Plan, which Comm. Holden indicated was presented to and adopted by the Board of Commissioners as an outline for the Committee. Comm. Holden referred the group to paragraph II, noting this paragraph outlines what the Board is looking for. She explained that where the Board of Commissioners is elected every two years it makes sense to have a planning tool and guidelines that can carry the County into the future. She pointed out the following highlights:

- *“the best and most appropriate future development of land and facilities under its care;*
- *to aid the Board in designing policies that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture in Hillsborough County; and*
- *to guide the Board in the performance of its duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning and resource protection.”*

Comm. Holden went on to review the steps taken to initiate the process which included:

- *“Organizing*
- *Reviewing county lands and facilities*
- *Reviewing the present utilization of said land and facilities*
- *Identification of studies necessary to support the committee’s work*
- *Development of a timeline for completion of its work*
- *Development of a budget recommendation to support its work.”*

She went on to note that the Board followed this with the creation of a Master Plan Committee through which it sought to involve interests from across the County as well as our host community, Goffstown. The committee has been constituted as follows:

- *“One representative of the Board of Commissioners,*
- *One Hillsborough County State Representative,*

- *One representative of the Town of Goffstown*
- *Two private citizen representatives from Commissioner District One,*
- *Two private citizen representatives from Commissioner District Two,*
- *Two private citizen representatives from Commissioner District Three,*
- *The County Administrator, ex-officio.”*

Comm. Holden reviewed the Committee membership and identified the individuals serving on it. She read the Committee’s charge as follows: “The Committee shall be charged with meeting for developing a master plan for recommendation to the Board comprised of a set of statements and land use and development principles for the County with accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and descriptions as necessary to support the implementation of the plan. The sections of the master plan shall include, but not necessarily be limited to, a vision section, land use section, transportation section, community facilities section, economic development section, natural resources section, natural hazards section, recreation section, a cultural and historic section and an implementation section.”

Comm. Holden referred the Committee to paragraph III, which details how the Committee will continue its work. It is at a juncture where it has a Wetlands Study with the wetlands mapped and flagged (referring to the presentation that was made at the last meeting), noting that with the large map included in the Wetlands Study which identifies wetland areas, the Committee is at the stage where it can begin the planning process.

Mr. Reidy explained the importance of getting their task accomplished in a short amount of time, particularly if the Committee wants to develop a budget ready to be presented to the Board of Commissioners by Friday, March 14 for inclusion in the next fiscal year. He asked the Committee what other things they would want to accomplish by March 14.

Fred Plett suggested that the Committee develop a timeline, consider the steps necessary to complete the Master Plan, and identify the resources available; then they will be able to develop a budget. Mr. Reidy asked the Committee to consider what level needs to be completed by March 14 of this year versus what you might be proposing to accomplish the following fiscal year. Mr. Plett noted that the Committee does not need a Master Plan by March 14, it needs a project plan to create a Master Plan, a timeline.

Mr. Wenger explained that two years ago when this plan was conceived, money was appropriated in the County Complex budget which was used to fund the Wetlands Study. He noted that during the most recent budget process the Board requested funds without specific identified projects attached to the request and the funds were removed from the budget, thus there are currently no monies available to support the Committee’s efforts. He suggested that if the Committee wished to have funds approved during the next budget process, it would be important to have established specific goals or projects attached to the request. Mr. Reidy suggested that it would be important to focus on what will be proposed for FY09. Linda Kasier noted that more needs to be done, such as soil and further wetland studies, vernal pools, flood plane and wetland delineation.

Mr. Castagna asked if the Committee needs to go into that detail-he suggested that the Committee focus on “big picture stuff,” meaning that it is important to identify usable land. He feels that the most dynamic part of this will be a design charrette, which will include:

- The main focus is listening sessions
- Identify and gather all the stakeholders that will touch this (plan)
 - Listening sessions
- Broad scope Master Plan design session
 - Look at design potential for usable pieces of land
 - Identify the conservation areas

- Look at traffic issue
- Look at quality of life issues
- Issue with Goffstown Back Road and the west side of Manchester
- The effect of any development on County land and how it affects the surrounding area
- Could involve Real Estate issues, marketing issues and the Tax Base in Goffstown

Comm. Holden noted the importance of giving all the 29 towns in the County a say. F. Plett suggested that it is important to identify not only current uses of the land, but also any conceivable future County use of the land so that when the plan is completed, it addresses the County's future use of the land and use of the land for purposes other than the County. Mr. Sawyer noted that it has been suggested that the Committee be looking at uses for the County government and the County as a whole.

Mr. Castagna noted there is an enormous amount of information to be gathered, and much of that can be determined through listening sessions. A discussion followed in respect to the scope of what should be looked at regarding the County's needs. R. Sawyer noted that in April the Committee had decided the plan could be developed with volunteers, however, he questions that. He noted that some professional help may be needed, and noted this is one of the biggest questions the Committee must answer, because the cost will need to be included in the budget, or if not, it needs to immediately begin searching for the volunteers. He expressed his belief that this is an immediate decision that must be made. Mr. Castagna suggested that the Committee might be able to avail itself of some professional help pro bono. A discussion of potential opportunities and processes followed.

L. Kaiser informed the Committee that she is involved with the Master Plan Committee in her community. She noted that that group decided to hire a consulting firm but subsequently learned that they could have hired the Regional Planning Commission to assemble data for them, which would have been cheaper, and they would have been working with people who knew their immediate area versus a Massachusetts firm. She noted that they had to first identify what they have to develop, do a vernal pool study, establish critter quarters, look at connecting quarters, identify wildlife conservation corridors, commission a soil survey map, and a more complete environmental study.

Discussion ensued about the importance of considering other valuable tools that have already been completed such as Goffstown's Master Plan, the corridor study and any other plans that have been developed, and the need to identify that portion of land, which is untouchable, and how to give everyone in the County a chance to be heard. Base mapping was noted as a valuable tool to use as a part of the design process. M. Castagna suggested that the Committee ask, "What are the goals, what will the County get out of it, how will it use the product, and what are the potential possibilities that are going to come out of it?"

Mr. Wenger noted that the charge given to the Committee tracks the statute applicable to municipalities developing Master Plans. Regarding what the objectives of the Committee are and what the County will ultimately get out this process he suggested the Committee not get lost in the minor details of a County plan versus a Municipal plan. L. Kaiser expressed her belief that all areas need to be addressed, even if briefly. M. Castagna suggested that all groups are stakeholders and will have an opportunity to have their say, and that is how all those issues will be addressed.

Discussion ensued about best dates for the Committee to meet in order to maximize attendance. F. Plett had to leave and noted that 8:00 a.m. meetings do not work for him, noting that any day but Tuesday or Friday would be better for an early meeting. The Committee discussed schedules. L. Kaiser is available any morning; M. Castagna is not available on the second Friday of each month, noting that the next couple of these meetings may need to be more lengthy and suggesting Saturday mornings as possible dates; G. Wenger and C. Holden are not available on first Fridays. R. Sawyer indicated that nights are nearly impossible for him. Comm. Holden suggested considering a morning meeting along with a Saturday

meeting. She indicated that Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are not good for Representatives.

M. Castagna suggested that the Committee identify the scope of the task, and get whoever will be involved to share and lay out the scope of the work to be accomplished between now and the end of the fiscal year, as well as what it wants to accomplish next year. He noted once the Committee reviews the list of items that has been identified, other items need to be added and expanded. The Committee will then be able to make a game plan, and from that, the Committee can set the budget, look at how to accomplish its goals, determine what the Committee needs to do, and consider what resources it needs to tap into as well as identifying all the stakeholders.

L. Kaiser expressed her belief that after the County completes its engineering plan, it should have money for a transportation person to look at the inter-connection possibilities of the roadway system as well as what could be mitigating the traffic through this area. M. Castagna replied that will be a charrette issue-there will be a traffic engineer on the charrette team and that will be looked at.

M. Castagna explained the design charrette process further and noted that he felt it was important to do some consensus building, talk to the stakeholders, landholders, and abutters, to bring them together in a listening session, and gather all pertinent information; then design development could be done for the land. The charrette process begins after all the stakeholder's information has been "put in the pot," and then used for the design process. He suggested that if the Committee follows Ms. Kaiser's suggestions, they would be looking to develop the project before the big dollars are spent and further noted the importance of holding the visioning session first so that all those involved be brought into the process and be on the same page. He spoke about other projects where the design charrette method was used, including the Goffstown Main Street program, the Nashua River project, the large Stabile Mill Building project on the West Side, a contaminated chemical site in Merrimack, and others.

L. Kaiser explained that she would approach the project differently, and believes more information is needed such as a more detailed wetland plan, topographical map and noted that inherent in every development project are the constraints of the land, noting that she wants to see the data first. She noted that the County has a transportation issue. She wants to have clear information about what land is usable.

Comm. Holden noted the importance of recognizing what happens with County government, and gave the Bouchard Building renovation process as an example, further noting that if we have all those studies done, they may not be used. She expressed her belief that the Committee should concentrate on the broad picture and focus on what is known to be usable land for Phase I of the development, noting that she does not see it all happening at once.

Mr. Wenger suggested that L. Kaiser's approach may be easier to follow, but opined that if the Committee went in that direction and requests funding to complete numerous studies the project would die. He noted that there has not been a buy-in yet for any future use and suggested that the dynamics of county government require this. He expressed his belief that this Committee can be very successful if it can produce a product that says we listened to all the stakeholders, have taken that input and have incorporated it into the plan. He offered that he believes that a charrette process may be the best avenue to consensus and acceptance of a plan. D. Reidy suggested that people need to feel ownership and that this may be a way to achieve that.

The Committee discussed several meeting times and dates and the goal of having nine people at the future meetings. Comm. Holden will try to recruit members who can attend. Those present agreed to hold its meetings on Thursdays from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. in the near future, and settled on the following meeting dates: Thursday, January 24; Monday, February 11; and Thursday, February 28, if necessary.

There being no other business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 9:38 a.m. Following the

meeting, a question was raised regarding the posting of the meeting date and time. In light of the question, the action taken to approve the minutes was revisited and confirmed at the Committee's January 24th meeting. The Committee did not take any further action.

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 24 at 4:00 p.m.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:43 A.M.

L. Stonner, Secretary

Date

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY MASTER PLAN

Hillsborough County needs to formalize the Board's review of the County's lands and facilities. This is an opportunity to map a solid course for the future. The Master Plan will be a document that will serve several needs. It will be a planning tool, not a static document.

The Board should appoint a Master Plan Committee to review and make recommendations regarding adoption of a Master Plan for County properties.

I. The **first** step is to develop a statement defining the Board's/County's goal and objectives relative to the lands and facilities in our "custody and care." RSA 624:2 Master Plan, Purpose and Description should be used as a guide.

Statement:

The Board of Commissioners is committed to develop a master plan as follows:

- *to set down as clearly and practically as possible the best and most appropriate future development of lands and facilities under its care and custody;*
- *to aid the Board in designing policies that result in preserving and enhancing the unique quality of life and culture in Hillsborough County; and*
- *to guide the Board in the performance of its duties in a manner that achieves the principles of smart growth, sound planning and resource protection.*

II. The **second** step is for the Board to appoint a Master Plan Committee comprised, at a minimum of the following:

- *One representative of the Board of Commissioners*
- *One Hillsborough County state representative*
- *One representative of the Town of Goffstown*
- *Two private citizen representatives from District One*
- *Two private citizen representatives from District Two*
- *Two private citizen representatives from District Three*
- *The County Administrator, ex-officio*

The Committee shall be charged with meeting for the purpose of developing a master plan for recommendation to the Board comprised of a set of statements and land use and development principles for the County with accompanying maps, diagrams, charts and descriptions as necessary to support the implementation of the plan. The sections of the master plan shall include, but not necessarily be limited to a vision section, land use section, transportation section, community facilities section, economic development section, natural resources section, natural hazards section, recreation section, a cultural and historic section and an implementation section.