

## Plan Implementation Review Committee Meeting Notes for January 18, 2011

**Background:** Chairman Bill Fonvielle called the meeting to order at 7:43 PM. Members present were Henry McCarl, Liz Steele, Linda Brayton, Donna Polizzia, Tony Gross, and Michael Rubin. Also present were Marcia Hart, RN, Steve Curcuru City Councilor, Rick Noonan, Planning Board Chairman, and Damon Cummings.

**Discussion:** On a motion by Donna Polizzia, seconded by Linda Brayton, the notes of the December 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 meeting were approved as submitted. Henry McCarl and Liz Steele abstained.

Bill Fonvielle noted that there were several visitors attending the meeting and asked if they would like to introduce themselves. Responding were Marcia Hart, of the Committee for the Arts, Rick Noonan of the Planning Board, Steve Curcuru of the City Council and Damon Cummings. Bill then asked the committee to introduce themselves and asked if the visitors had any questions for the committee. Councilor Curcuru asked what the mission of the committee was. Bill answered that the origins of the committee would be found in Plan 2001 which provided for the establishment of a body to oversee implementation of the Plan. He said that the Comprehensive Plan is the province of the Planning Board, not the Mayor and not the City Council. The committee is tasked with the review of the progress of the Plan on a regular basis. When the Plan was adopted in September of 2001 the Planning Board established the interim committee. It took 10 months of meetings to get the committee off the ground. There was no model on which to base the committee. As far as we could find, we are the first committee to monitor a community's Master Plan. The committee was established in 2002, Bill Fonvielle has served as Chairman since then. Janis Stelutto, who was Planning Board Vice Chair, and Chair of Plan 2001 served as vice chair of the Committee until her untimely passing. Since that time we have tracked implementation of the Plan by semi annual and then annual reports to the Planning Board. The reports are posted on the city's web site. A few years ago Janis had the idea to do abstracts and summaries instead of the detailed report to the Planning Board because over the years the documents became very large and unwieldy. The committee's second task has been the Boards, Committees and Commissions annual meeting, which was also a strategy of Plan 2001. It has historically been labeled the Mayor's Meeting which was done to boost attendance. Some years ago in conversations with the Planning Board, they asked for our recommendations for changes and amendments to the Plan. Several were offered over the years but nothing has made it into print. Through the years, large portions of the Plan are still vital and needed. Some have been implemented, such as the Railroad Ave. improvements and many more. The City meanwhile has undertaken an ambitious program of Plan 2001 recommendations, such as the new Harbor Plan, Capital Facilities Plan, Open Space Plan, and Economic Plan. Some have thought that there was a mandate to do a comprehensive plan every 10 years but there is not a requirement in either state law or city charter to do so. So our options were a from the ground up Plan, which there was no enthusiasm or funds to do and which the Community Development Dept. pointed out-no manpower to do it, or we could undertake a modest Plan revision, a virtual Plan-online only-if you wanted a paper copy you could print it out-incorporating the plans that have been recently accomplished, with on line links to those documents. We believe that Plan 2001 is a flexible living document and can be adapted to changing times and conditions. The first steps that the committee has made is a strike through document. We were searching for ways to involve the Public where

there are major revisions but involving the public is the realm of the Planning Board. Hearings and neighborhood meetings are their province. Steve Curcuru asked about Bill's statement about suggestions to the Planning Board not going anywhere and asked again where is your direction coming from. Bill said he was not sure what he was getting at. Steve Curcuru repeated the question about the direction of the committee. Bill said that he has said that the Planning Board has the responsibility of comprehensive planning and since Plan 2000/2001 the Planning Board has been happy not to be involved in the day to day process. They have matters of more immediate concern and when we were asked to consider amendments to the Plan we said sure. We were filling the void. When we undertook this process, the Community Development Dept. was on board but when they learned that there was work involved for them they backed down citing reductions in staff etc. This committee agreed that we would do the work. We voted with an unanimous vote to present "the Plan to Plan" to the Planning Board for their endorsement. Since that time we have not seen Sarah Garcia or any staff member from the Com. Dev. Dept. Bill said that he had heard from Gregg Cademartori, the City Planner, that he could not make tonight's meeting due to a previous engagement. Bill said that the loss of communication from the Com. Dev. Dept. has cost the committee. Henry McCarl said that he has been a member of the Planning Board and this committee for about 9 years. He said that the committee has members appointed by the Mayor and by the Planning Board and as an entity is a sub committee of the Planning Board. He said the mandates for the committee come from the Planning Board. He disagreed that nothing that the committee has recommended has been implemented. He said our main function as far as the public is concerned is the Boards, Committees and Commissions meetings, which he thought have been highly successful. Henry continued that the Chair of the Planning Board has always been either Chair or co-Chair of these meetings. He said that the Mayor is always there as well as members of the City Council. He said all reports of the committee go to the Planning Board. He said that other issues that the Planning Board has been involved in have taken precedence. He said that during his time on the Planning Board he has served under 4 different Chairs, Jack Clark, Paul Lundberg, Jen Fahey and Rick Noonan. He said they have tried to show people what is going on, that they have wanted all efforts to be coordinated with the Comprehensive Plan. He said that the Community Development Dept. has gotten grants to do these plans and there has been a fair amount of citizen input but not much coordination. Michael Rubin stated that when he was on the Planning Board they were an advisory and statutory board at the state level. He said that Plan 2001 was an extraordinary inclusive process with more than 1,000 or so people involved. He said that the concern over the last couple of weeks that there is some sort of secret revisions going on, in a funny way, is a good thing. It has made people aware of the Plan again. Henry McCarl said that sometimes on the Planning Board he has heard comments that the City has no Master Plan. Some people are not aware that we have one and that a lot of it has been implemented. Linda Brayton said that the Community Preservation Act was all through the Plan and that has been accomplished. Marcia Hart said that the committee for the Arts came out of Plan 2001. Henry said yes that and many others. Bill said that we should be trumpeting what is happening. Plan 2001 was innovative unlike any other Plan you are likely to stumble over. The Boards Committees and Commissions meetings and things like that are in the forefront and most people don't know they are happening. Marcia said that she thinks that more people than we realize are aware and that the Plan to her is a living document and that she has been aware of the committee's diligent work. Now she is hearing that some people don't know what is happening and that there is some sort of evil scheme and a general sense of disconnection. She said that she frequently quotes the Plan at public meetings. She said that Plan 2001 was an amazing process that

most people would not understand unless they were participants. Tony Gross said that the current School Committee is not aware of the Plan. He said that during the reviews he would go to the Superintendent for his information. He said that what we are doing is not a re-write but an evolution to bring the people on board, the commissions and committees to look at their sections of the Plan and give us feedback. Steve Curcuru said that Marcia is right the Plan is there, it is the people who have changed. Marcia said is it the community that is changing or the people? Steve C. said that the economic conditions are different today than 10 years ago. Marcia said that the economy has changed but the connection of the city to the people has not. Tony said that we are trying to get the community more involved not less. Marcia said that she did not want the committee to think that people are taking pot shots at them, they want to help you. Damon Cummings said that he went back a long way with Plan 2000. He said that he typed up many of the documents and put them on his personal web site. He said that he has ownership in the Plan. He said that when he participated in the new Harbor Plan he did not hear a peep about Plan revision. He said that Marcia had told him about the meeting tonight and that it was not posted on the city's web site. He said that the lack of notices on the web site and no minutes at the clerk's office created disquiet. He said that the Harbor Plan committee no longer exists but when an issue comes up about the Harbor we reassemble. Linda said that twice a year everyone is invited to the Boards and Commissions meeting. Michael said that what was interesting to him is the level of knowledge and skill in the community is very unusual and does not exist everywhere. He said that people stay involved here. He said there is a great deal of expertise in our community but he said over his past few years on the Planning Board it seemed to him as if the Mayor and the Community Development Dept. wanted to make the decisions themselves, not in an evil way, but to translate that into a stream of Grant applications, which he thought ignored the expertise in the community. He thought that the recent Listening Posts which have been held were an opportunity to let people speak and not listen to them. Councilor Curcuru said that sometimes the same people show up to those meetings with the same opinions and that is what concerns me about the Plan. The economy dictates the direction. He said to Damon that his questions about secrecy prompted him to come to find out what the committee was all about. Bill said that recommendations from the committee were not acted upon because there is no mechanism to do it. The Planning Board did not blow us off. Steve Curcuru said he was under the impression that some were adopted. Henry said "minor stuff". Liz Steele said that the semi annual review went to an annual review. Damon asked if the City Council votes on the Plan. Bill said that they do not. He continued that the committee asked them to endorse the Plan. The Planning Board voted to adopt the Plan. Marcia said to Councilor Curcuru that there are still a lot of people who are involved who were with the Plan and are perplexed that you don't know what this committee is all about. Steve C. said that he has to deal with many many committees in his work as a City Councilor. Marcia commented that since the Plan has been adopted that the decision makers in the City have changed and that they should know what is happening. Henry McCarl discussed historic preservation and the efforts of his wife, Mary Rhineland McCarl, which he hopes will bring money into the City. Damon brought up the Park Service study that was done about 15 years ago.

Rick Noonan related a story to the committee about Marcia, who is a customer of his business, introducing him to a friend saying "Rick is the nicest guy, my favorite person, who I never agree with". He said the point is we are not decision makers. He said that his role is to run meetings and take public input, to run hearings the way they should be run. He was here to avoid missteps of this committee. The minutes not being posted was a misstep. Those type of things should be addressed. He said he viewed Damon as being a "keeper of the

Process” and in regards to the posting of agendas, he will take it upon himself to figure out how to close the disconnect with the web site. He said that Bill and Bruce Tobey had a meeting last week to have the discussion on a broader basis, ie PIRC, City Council and Planning Board. He would like the committee to make a presentation to the Planning Board and Thursday. He said that when somebody asks what is PIRC doing he would like to have an answer. He hopes we can focus the effort with a discussion on Thursday. He said that he is not proud that he is delinquent on his reappointment. He said that we should foster better communications. Linda said that she was not aware that we were to be at a Planning Board meeting on Thursday. Bill said that he had received an email from Gregg Cademartori but he would not be available due to a previous commitment. Rick said if it is not possible we can re-schedule and that he wanted to avoid the Health Needs assessment problem.

Steve Curcuru leaves the meeting at 9:05PM

Tony Gross said that Henry McCarl is on your Board and that if you make it an agenda item he could fill you in on what is going on here. Bill said we do need a co-meeting of the groups. Linda said that she thought we had already had this discussion. Tony said that not having Sarah Garcia or Gregg Cademartori at our meetings is a problem. Bill said that Sarah is a member of the committee and having a presentation from the Com. Dev. Dept. was always a feature. Gregg has attended in the past as City Staff but was relieved of that duty when Sarah took over. Sarah then asked that the presentation be taken off the agenda. Rick Noonan said that it is his sense that the process is not broken, just picked apart. This all fits together in a grander scheme and his reference point is he needs to better understand the committee and that without Planning Board support things won't happen. He also mentioned the web site mechanics. There was a short discussion on Boards, Committees and Commissions. Bill said that he and Liz had a meeting with Bruce Tobey on Friday but knows nothing about an order to the Council from him. Damon said that there is an agenda item on it for January 25<sup>th</sup>. Donna Polizzia said that she would forward an email that she had received from Bruce Tobey to him. Tony Gross said that isn't it true that we are not very far along in this process and this might be a good thing? Bill said that is true. Marcia Hart presented a report from the Committee for the Arts.

Bill proposed that the committee meet again sometime this month to go over agenda items not covered in tonight's meeting. Rick Noonan said that he thought this is the start of the process and that he will get the web thing straightened out. He thought that a lot of things were aired out and we had a positive meeting.

The next meeting of the committee will be on Thursday January 27<sup>th</sup> at 7:30.

Tony Gross will reserve the room.

On a motion by Tony Gross, seconded by Henry McCarl, the meeting was adjourned at 9:52PM