

## Oak Bluffs Planning Board

### Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2016 at 5:00 p.m. in the Oak Bluffs Library Upstairs Meeting Room

Members in attendance: Brian Packish (Chairman), Robert Fehl, Erik Albert, Kris Chvatal, Ewell Hopkins (remote)

Members absent: none

Staff in attendance: MacGregor Anderson (Clerical Assistant)

Chairman Brian Packish called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

#### **Town Hall Survey Discussion, Review and Vote**

Chairman Packish announced that Member Hopkins had called in and was participating remotely due to geographic location. All votes would be roll call.

Chairman Packish asked Member Fehl to update the Board on the survey. He said he spent twelve hours reviewing best practices on survey methodology including 140 page reports from Carnegie Mellon and Harvard. He described a seven stage process that was widely accepted: identify objectives, characterize audience, create a sampling plan, design and write the questionnaire, pilot test the questionnaire, distribute the questionnaire and analyze the results. Haphazard construction leads to misleading results. Good surveys are systematic, impartial, representative and quantitative. Member Fehl said based on this research he felt the Board could not meet the criteria for survey effectiveness in time, which could lead to misleading results. He recommended that the Board not move ahead with developing a survey. He did feel a carefully designed survey would yield indisputably effective results.

Chairman Packish said he felt that way last week. A seven day timeframe was impossible, but Streetscape showed a well done survey was valuable. Member Hopkins said he was comfortable with Member Fehl's analysis.

Chairman Packish then said the Board needed to come up with a clear direction and timeframe with next steps showing the process. He felt the Board was well intentioned but got ahead of itself the prior week. He wanted the Board to consider process for big items. The Fire Station and North Bluff showed process not being followed. He felt finishing this by Town Meeting was overly ambitious. Member Fehl agreed and supported following a process that felt good in the end. Member Hopkins said he supported the focus on process. Chairman Packish said the Board was all in agreement.

Member Chvatal asked if the legal requirement was a site plan review. Chairman Packish said yes but they were asked by the Selectmen to manage public outreach on the project. Member Chvatal said that was a mistake, he regretted his vote for the survey, and the Board should stick to its role. He thought outreach should be done by the Capital Review Committee and the Selectmen. Chairman Packish said the Selectmen came in asking for site plan review, the Planning Board said the plan wasn't ready, and that led to the outreach. Member Chvatal said he was sorry for missing that but thought it was outside the bounds of the Board's responsibility.

Mike Santoro said the Selectmen planned a hearing but decided the Planning Board should conduct it. He said he never proposed the survey thinking it would all come out in a hearing. Chairman Packish said

the Board was clear it would be starting at a much more comprehensive level if it handled it. He said people in Town believed in the planning process.

Member Chvatal said overseeing a single building was not planning. Chairman Packish agreed. Member Chvatal said we had an 18-year-old master plan. Chairman Packish said they were talking about a campus, a police station, a council on aging, it just started with one building. Member Chvatal said it was the opposite of planning.

Bill McGrath said he tended to agree with Member Chvatal. If there were a current master plan then it would be in the purview of the Planning Board, and recommended that be developed. He said a campus wasn't possible without lots more in place. His perspective was that some needs could be met now and some later, and town hall could be done now. The Town could afford it. Once you bring in sewerage plans and many other plans for a campus it will cost too much and it will get denied.

Chairman Packish said that ultimately they wanted to get to the point where things converged and facilitate that process. Mr. McGrath said he thought the Facebook post saying a survey might be done was a bad idea. Member Albert said he saw no outreach before and that the social media outreach was valuable.

Chairman Packish said he had no need to own this but that the Planning Board needed the people to be heard and he felt the Board did a really good job at that.

Gail Barmakian summarized the timeline of the town hall actions. She said it wasn't a priority, it hadn't been discussed comprehensively or as going on the warrant, but it was given to the Planning Board to vet. Mr. Santoro said they wanted a public hearing, and Chairman Packish said he didn't know how they could go faster. Mr. Santoro said the public complained about being held to codes the Town buildings didn't meet. Mr. Packish said that was all the Town buildings, but hopefully not the fire station.

Amy Billings asked what the Town got for the six million dollars it would cost for a new town hall, and wanted the Board to get more facts. She said she saw a lot of wasted space. She acknowledged the poor state of Town Hall, and Chairman Packish said he felt the masses wanted a new town hall. He said the close vote in the Fire Station and the defeat of the town hall showed the public was not confident in the plans.

Chairman Packish said he believed this belonged at the Planning Board, that it didn't belong on this Town Meeting warrant, and that they needed a new town hall. He said the survey could run in the background as public hearings happened, just as had been done with Streetscape.

Member Chvatal said there were a number of people he still wanted to hear from in the room.

Mr. Vail said the Selectmen had come to the Planning Board in December asking for a site plan review to take it to the voters again, that it would require hearings and thinking about other ways to get it out to the public, but the goal was to get it to town meeting in April. Mr. Vail reiterated the need for a new town hall and said there very well could be an order to vacate the current building. He felt time was short and a survey should be avoided. He acknowledged the Selectmen had not talked about where to go next with it. He said it had been covered in strategic planning sessions and they knew they had to deal with town hall. He asked for a representative from the Planning Board for the building committee.

Chairman Packish said the Selectmen had discussed it at an open meeting. He then asked Mr. Vail to stop trying to scare the people into a new town hall. Mr. Vail objected to this. He said he was being real about it. Chairman Packish said they all got that but the public didn't want to be scared into it.

Renee Balter asked for a Master Plan, saying it should be a priority this year, so the people would understand all the issues with town hall, the police station, council on aging, and all the large projects. You build consensus by listening to people. She said isolated decisions had been made in the past like the sale of the property across the street. She said it was the Board's most important role in the community. She said Leah Smith, a Tisbury expert on master plans, said it could be a grassroots effort, and it should not cost a lot of money. She offered her assistance on that. Chairman Packish said master planning would be discussed on January 28.

Ms. Barmakian said she didn't think it was decided it would be on the next warrant but rather the Selectmen wondered if it could be on the next warrant. She said they needed to figure out why people voted against it, noting the large loss at the ballot box. If they failed again, where would they go? She didn't think there was a dispute about the need, but she also heard they needed new sidewalks and beach rails that affected people in their everyday lives. She said they were looking at a possible \$20 million expansion in wastewater to save the ponds. Was this more important?

Chairman Packish said they had agreed to take this on. If they wanted to vote to do something differently they could. He said some people felt the Planning Board's role was ANRS, master plans, and site plan reviews, which are what it was before and John Bradford did a spectacular job at that. But what he heard day in and day out was about the reinvigorated Planning Board and how valuable it was to the town.

Member Fehl said he was willing to do public outreach but only if it was done correctly. If they were going to do a survey make sure it was being done representatively, meeting the criteria he gave earlier.

Chairman Packish said it went astray when they tried to meet the timeframe. Member Chvatal said the warrant decision was up to the Selectmen. The only question was if they were going to do a site plan review now? Chairman Packish said not until it was ready for a building permit. Member Chvatal asked if they were going to do outreach. Chairman Packish said the outreach was to create consensus, with a very clear statement from the Planning Board saying they support it being on the warrant. Member Fehl said he hoped when it went on the warrant it was a mere formality. He said Ms. Barmakian's point regarding what if it failed again was very strong.

Mr. Santoro said he would not vote to put it on the warrant if the Planning Board didn't support it, because it would fail. He wondered if there could be a special town meeting between then and the following April. Chairman Packish responded that it would depend on the process and others embracing it, so nobody was excluded. Then you would get a great town hall. He noted complaints from employees afraid to speak up on the proposed design. He noted the possibility of sliding the hall to create a new building envelope worth up to \$600k.

John Lolley said master plans gather dust. Why would this one be better than the older ones? Mr. Lolley defended the proposed building plan's square footage saying architects had used tested formula to determine size. He confirmed these procedures with architect in the audience, Moira Fitzgerald.

At 5:51 Member Chvatal departed the meeting to attend a ZBA meeting.

Chairman Packish asked to stop discussing design and focus on process. He asked to hear from Member Hopkins, who said he supported the process and agreed with Member Fehl that the time frame wasn't supportable. He wanted to own it and do the public outreach. Chairman Packish asked for a vote.

Member Fehl made a motion to recommend to the Selectmen not to put town hall on the warrant in April. Member Albert Seconded. The vote was Fehl-yes, Albert-yes, Hopkins-yes, Packish-yes.

Member Fehl made a motion to accept the job of putting together a process that gains consensus with Town residents concerning Town Hall. Chairman Packish asked that Member Fehl state that they would include all of the past work that had been done on this project, that everybody on every board that had put work into this was fully respected, and it would be a massive part of the discussion. Member Fehl agreed to include that. Member Albert seconded. The vote was Fehl-yes, Albert-yes, Hopkins-yes, Packish-yes in favor of the motion.

Chairman Packish took a moment to thank Bill McGrath, Mike Santoro, John Lolley, and Walter Vail and said he would include their work in the conversation. Mr. McGrath offered to help in any way.

### **Planning Board direction, process and vote**

Chairman Packish said much of the topic had been discussed under the last agenda item but he put it on the agenda after the previous week's votes on town hall and master plan, which went in opposite directions. He felt unclear on which direction the Board was going.

Member Fehl said he felt like he was behind other members of the Board because they spent more time on a certain subject. He encouraged the Board to be slow in decision making and to be sure they understood what they were voting on.

Member Hopkins said he valued the public input process and came to meetings without having preconceived notions. He felt the testimony the prior week was compelling and the due diligence presented was very convincing, and even though it may have seemed to compromise what the Board was doing, he valued the information he heard last week. He said he would continue to honor the value of public meetings. He agreed that they should go slow enough to feel good about their votes.

Member Albert said he felt the public had more confidence in the process used in Streetscape, and although he appreciated Ms. Balter's comments he felt an outside consultant would help shepherd things along when the Board got bogged down, and although some things seemed simple he felt the outside guidance was valuable.

Member Fehl noted he and Member Hopkins had not been part of Streetscape and didn't have that experience. Chairman Packish reminded the room that Streetscape involved a Selectman, two Planning Board members, the town administrator, the executive director of the OBA, the past chair of the Planning Board John Bradford, the Friends of Oak Bluffs, and a business owner downtown and member of the harbor advisory committee. This demonstrated that the Board didn't need to own the town hall discussion and worked to include many others. The Board was interested in facilitating and doing it in a comprehensive way.

The Meeting was adjourned at 6:07 pm

### **Documents used in this meeting:**

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Agenda