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Minutes of the Meeting of the CIP Steering Committee Held October 26, 2005, in the Stone Building 33 New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs, MA

IN ATTENDANCE (P = Present; - = Absent)

- John Abrams	P Ann Floyd	P Bret Stearns
- Clarissa Allen	P Ray Laporte	- Henry Stephenson
P Marie Allen	P Ned Orleans	P Paul Strauss
P James Athearn	P Kerry Scott	P Richard Toole
P Prudence Burt	P Linda Sibley	P Susan Wasserman
P Tom Chase	- Elio Silva	P Durwood Vanderhoop
- Steve Ewing	P Russell Smith	

Staff: Mark London (Executive Director), Christine Flynn (Affordable Housing & Economic Planner), Paul Foley (DRI Coordinator), Srinivas Sattoor (Traffic Planner), Chris Seidel (GIS Specialist), Jo-Ann Taylor (Coastal Planner), Bill Veno (Senior Planner), William Wilcox (Water Resource Planner), Jeff Wooden (Administrator)

Audience: Mimi Davisson (MVC commissioner)

Committee chairman Jim Athearn opened the meeting at 4:30

1. Welcome / Introduction

Jim Athearn, committee chairman, welcomed and thanked those attending, saying that the committee is charged with helping the community identify what future it would like for the Vineyard and outline strategies to help create that future. Members of the MVC staff were introduced.

2. Background to the Comprehensive Island Plan

Mark London reviewed the MVC process of creating the Steering Committee and handing development of the CIP to the committee.

Over the past few months, the "CIP Process Committee" made up of six MVC Commissioners – Jim Athearn, Paul Strauss, Ned Orleans, Linda Sibley, Chris Murphy, and Megan Ottens-Sargent – met many times to get the CIP process going. The committee selected the members of the Steering Committee from over a hundred names of people who had expressed interest or who had been suggested.

In addition, the committee discussed many aspects of the planning process. The document in the appendix is a draft outline of the proposed planning process as discussed by the CIP Process Committee and prepared by MVC staff. The following are some of the working premises.

- Length of Process: The main public part of the process should be kept to a maximum of two years. Based on the experience of Nantucket and other locations, it will take at least that long to get the work done, but the public will lose interest if it takes longer than that. Most work should be done in the off-season, except for reaching out to summer residents.
- Steering Committee: The Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing the preparation of the plan, both the process and the content. The draft plan will be presented to the MVC for adoption.
- Monthly Meetings: Since Steering Committee members have various degrees of availability, and to provide focus to a complex process, there should be a regular monthly Steering Committee meeting at a standard time that is the main informational and decision-making forum. Material should be prepared and distributed in advance by subcommittees or staff. Members are encouraged to participate in subcommittees and topic task forces.
- Advisory Committee: It is suggested that an Advisory Committee be created that would receive regular information about the process (e.g. meeting minutes, working documents), that would serve as a pool of people to participate in various activities, and that would meet a few times a year, at key stages of the process, as sounding board.
- Task Forces: It is suggested that a task force be created for each of the identified topic areas and work intensively for 4-6 months. For various reasons, the task forces that could start soon are: water quality, housing affordability, and transportation.
- Staff/Consultant Support: Support to the committee will be primarily done by MVC staff, with consultants or extra staff being brought in when special expertise is needed.
- Action-Oriented: It would be desirable to come to consensus pretty early on the main goals, objectives and policies, and then focus most efforts on implementation. To do this, Mark suggested having a synthesis of past documents prepared (Regional Island Plan, visioning efforts, community development plan) that the Steering Committee could review to identify areas of consensus and then deal with areas of divergence.
- Cyclical Process: Mark suggested that the planning process not be expected to be completely linear, where one step is completed before the next one is started, but be rather cyclical in which we deal with all aspects and flesh out detail as time goes on. It will be difficult to address too many topics at any one time, but no topic cannot be completed until all the others have been largely addressed.
- Public Involvement and technology: Woody Filley worked on the preparation of the last regional island plan and has offered to discuss with the committee the use of technology to involve the public.

- Work Program: It is suggested that one or two subcommittees be created to put together the Advisory Committee and Task Forces, and to prepare a more detailed work program to propose to the entire committee.
- Fundraising: The planning process entails expenses beyond basic Commission funding. Part of this is coming from town assessments, but the MVC committed itself to trying get grants and private donations to cover the rest. A list of potential donors has been compiled but simply sending a request in the mail is of little use; it needs a personal contact. Steering Committee members are invited to write covering notes or otherwise contact potential donors as solicitations are sent out.

Mark London referenced the large binder of background information presented to each of the members and distributed data profiles and 418 Community Development Plans to be included in the binders.

3. Roundtable of Steering Committee Members

Members identified themselves and stated why they agreed to be involved in the CIP process. They also outlined what they would like to see come out of the process. The following are some of the comments.

- Several people mentioned that community – the people – is what they are most concerned about. For example, most Islanders would not now be able to afford to purchase a home on the Vineyard today.
- What is the carrying capacity of the Vineyard? What can the resources support (food, energy, etc.)? What is the limit in order to maintain the Island's lifestyle? Is there a clear limit or is it a matter of having a different set of characteristics with different populations and rates of growth.
- We need to identify why people are drawn to the Island and figure out how to maintain those aspects of the Vineyard that made us want to come or stay here, the Vineyard's unique sense of seduction. We should try not only protect aspects still surviving today, but also to recover some of what has been lost, such as the sense of wilderness.
- It is vital that we preserve and restore the character and environment of the Vineyard, its unique physical beauty. A few years ago, the Nature Conservancy identified Martha's Vineyard as one of the 100 special places in the world. There are not many places left like the Vineyard and we have a responsibility to protect it.
- Change is inevitable, but it can be managed. Planning is hard and it is especially hard getting people to focus and participate. We need real community consensus and buy-in.
- Most change is as a result of forces apparently beyond our control, the impact of people with great resources. Can we slow the pace of change?
- We should take a cold, hard look at where we will be in ten or fifteen years from now. We might be shocked. We need to communicate credible information to the public. Then, we should see what we could do about it.

- We need to not only consider the concerns of the year-round population, but also of seasonal residents who also consider the Vineyard to be their home.
- The people of the Vineyard and their culture embody the natural resources of the Island; that the environment is essential to the community's character. How can we maintain the traditional natural and cultural uses of the land and water?
- Protecting the environment and community does not have to mean turning back the clock nor merely "salvaging" what remains. We should decide where we want to go in the long term, and work to creating that. We can develop some areas and "un-develop" others – not necessarily to what it used to be – but to what the community wants it to be.
- The plan should identify where we are, where we want to go, and how we want to get there. The hardest part will be getting consensus on the third question, the implementation strategy.
- The committee should develop alternative future scenarios that will provide people with information upon which to make decisions.
- We should not hesitate to learn from other locations that have dealt with similar issues. Also, we should not hesitate to try new approaches, being prepared to modify or cast them aside as time goes on.
- The plan must be developed under a collaborative process and will only be implemented if it is understood and supported by the people.

Steering Committee members were asked to put on paper what they think the plan should address or whether there are ideas that should be explored. To that end, two sample questions were distributed to the committee members for them to complete, namely:

- What are the main objectives that the Comprehensive Island Plan should address?
- What specific techniques or proposals do you think the Steering Committee should look at for possible application on the Vineyard?

At the next meeting, the committee will discuss the formulation and use of these questions.

Steering Committee Members

4. Meetings With Town Boards, etc.

While the next couple of committee meetings will likely focus on organization and process matters, that shouldn't prevent the committee from beginning to engage the community.

- Initial contacts should focus on indicating that the planning process has begun, on Steering Committee members introducing themselves, and on inviting individuals or boards to respond to the two questions mentioned above.
- The committee members from each town will ask to meet their board of selectmen for 5 to 10 minutes. Jim Athearn and Mark London will attend, if available. Staff will contact the towns to arrange times. Other town boards (planning, concom, ZBA) should be informed and invited to send a representative to this meeting.

MVC Staff

- A few Steering Committee members should attend upcoming meetings of the All-Island Planning Boards, the All-Island Conservation Commissions, the All-Island Affordable Housing Groups/Committees held at the MVC. MVC Staff will schedule the meetings.
MVC Staff
- We should also meet with other town boards, the county commissioners, newspaper editors, and non-profit organizations such as business groups, conservation and civic groups, the Historical Society, the League of Women Voters, the Water Alliance, the NAACP, etc. Staff will prepare a draft list of possible names.
MVC Staff
- Mark will prepare talking points for the various meetings.
Mark London

5. Logistics

The committee discussed and agreed on the following items.

- Regular Meeting Time: Monthly Steering Committee Meetings will be held on the second Thursday of the month from 5-7 p.m. Meetings will start promptly on time.
- Role of the Public at Steering Committee Meetings: All meetings are open to the public; however members of the public will not customarily be recognized to speak. People should be encouraged to forward information or questions to the committee via staff.
- Televising Meetings: Meetings will be videotaped and edited by MVC staff for telecast on the community public access channel.
- Meeting Minutes: Minutes will not be verbatim, but will summarize the main content. A draft will be sent by e-mail and members will have 48 hours to make corrections. The chair will then approve a final version that will be distributed and posted on the MVC's website.

6. Next Meeting

The committee will next meet November 10, 2005 at 5:00 p.m. Topics will include getting feedback on the proposals about the process, and the composition of an advisory committee and task forces.

The meeting adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Bill Veno and Mark London.