

Livelihood/Commerce Work Group Core

Meeting Notes of October 25, 2006, 4:00 pm, Cronig's Market

Present - Members: John Abrams (Chair), Jim Athearn, Sherm Goldstein, Sean Welch, Linda Sibley, Steve Bernier

Present – MVC Staff: Mark London, Christine Flynn

Present – Others: Holly Stevenson

1. Meeting Notes

Draft meeting notes will be sent out within one week. Members should review and comment within 48 hours. Final notes will be sent to all members of the Work Group in advance of the next meeting.

The following corrections were made to the October 11th meeting notes. The meeting date was incorrect. Steve noted that his comment that the economy has changed more in last five years is his personal opinion and not necessarily fact.

2. Why 50 Years?

At the end of the previous meeting, Sherm had questioned the 50-year horizon. John explained that the benchmark of 50 years was chosen by the Steering Committee for several reasons. Some things are slow to evolve and can only happen over long time periods. The 50-year goals are supposed to represent our ideal vision of the future. The Livelihood and Commerce Work Group needs to be in step with the other groups with regards to the 50-year horizon. It is intended that the Island Plan not have a specific end, but will be an evolving process that will adjust to changes. The plan needs quantifiable goals and objectives that can be evaluated and modified over time.

3. Can We Actually Have an Impact on the Economy?

A second question that was raised the previous meeting was "Can we really have an impact on the economy?" There was a wide-ranging discussion that considered some of the ways that we might, and also recognized the global and national economic forces largely beyond local control. What we can do is to minimize the impact of those forces by producing more of our necessities – food, energy, and materials – locally, and building our local economy using mechanisms like local currency and local social venture capital funds. There was a concern that some of the written materials – e.g. Business Alliance for Living Local Economies and Michael Shuman (The Small-Mart Revolution) – were one-sided with a narrow focus. It was agreed that the materials are for information sharing only and for introducing each other to new concepts.

4. Relation Between Work Group, Core, and Steering Committee

The interface framework between the Work Groups (WG), Work Group Cores (WGC), and Steering Committee (SC) was clarified. Cores will work with the Work Groups to identify goals, objectives, and strategies, and make recommendations to the Steering Committee. It is up to the Steering Committee to identify issues that impact several Work Groups, if they have not done so already.

Work Groups and Work Group Cores need authority and ownership of their work, but the Steering Committee needs to ensure that the different Work Groups' efforts are compatible with each other and fit into

an overall vision. The decision-making process should allow us to work out issues as we go along, so the completed work by all groups will meld together. The Steering Committee has a responsibility to the public to ensure that the community takes ownership of the Island Plan; if done well, the Island Plan will work.

It would be desirable to bring a few new members into the Core, particularly people from towns other than Tisbury, people representing points of view other than small business owners, and women. We will discuss this after the first meeting of the whole Work Group.

5. Business Alliance for Living Local Economies & Complimentary Currencies

The BALLE (Business Alliance for Local Living Economies) and the Complimentary Currencies were examples for the group to discuss in the future. It may be worthwhile to invite speakers from these groups to the Vineyard. The group agreed to think about how these concepts could be applied to the Vineyard.

By creating opportunities to problem solve, it may provoke us (and others) to think about the economy differently. It is exciting for groups to connect the dots and be able to achieve a few tangible goals. Creating a think tank would allow individuals to identify needs and areas where there could be a strategy to accomplish, say, 3 items within 5 years. It was suggested that local currencies, bio-diesel production from waste oil, used building materials exchange, more local energy production, and association with a business alliance are great ideas that are achievable and worthy of examination.

6. Who Else Do We Need to Reach Out to?

We should reach out to the following sectors: Health and Social Services, Education, Public Works Department, Public employees, immigrant workers, tradespeople, retirees, seasonal residents, Wampanoag Tribal members, DRI applicants, and those who may view government regulations as impediments to running a healthy business.

7. What Else Do We Need to Know

It was suggested that the following topics be added to the discussed at the October 11th meeting,

- Cost of Doing Business – cost of commercial space, employees, insurance, other costs; and
- Exit Survey of those leaving the Island,

8. November 15th Meeting

The meeting of the full Work Group would consist of three segments:

- Presentations about the Island Plan and Livelihood and Commerce (30 minutes),
- Break-out sessions on various issues, to allow participants to contribute, engage, and connect in smaller groups;
- A plenary with the highlights from each break-out session.

In preparation for the larger Work Group meeting, it was suggested that that the Core identify the top 10 issues or economic trends to follow over the next 10, 20, 50 years. (John agreed to bring "Ten Basic Rules for Planners" to the next meeting.)

Next Meeting: Wednesday, November 8, 4:00 pm upstairs at Cronigs Down-Island. Topic: Preparing for the meeting of the full Work Group.