

Minutes of the meeting of the Chesterland Master Plan Steering Committee

held at Chester Town Hall
at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, September 10, 2007

Committee Members:

Present: Bill Laditka
Tom Basista
Ron Cotman
Jack DeChellis
Geraldine Fisco
Bob Somrak
Tim Todaro

Absent: Bruce Becker
Jeff Huntsberger
Joe Mazzurco

Proceedings:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman, Bill Laditka

Minutes of the meeting held on August 27, 2007

Jack DeChellis requested that the sixth agenda item in the last meeting's minutes be amended to include the statement that the committee has discussed the 11 acres of land next to the old Chester School in the previous two meeting sessions. In addition, a couple of members indicated that these minutes were a little too brief.

First agenda item:

Several possibilities of a permanent meeting place for the committee were discussed. One of the options that were suggested is the township-owned Vorel building. Some of the points favoring the use of this facility include its high visibility location and its positive physical characteristics such as large, conspicuous front windows and ample meeting space. It is also currently available although it may be torn down in the future. Other favorable options that were also mentioned are Dan Smith's tenant space in Chester Square (formerly Bayberry) and Tom Basista's tenant space in West Geauga Plaza (near Zeppe's). The Mayfield United Methodist Church was also discussed as another possibility. However, it was turned down as an option due to concerns that a church building may discourage some people from attending the meetings. In addition, due to the building's shared use, the committee will not be able to have a permanent display of information. Discussion of the committee's permanent meeting place is on the Board of Trustee's meeting agenda for this Thursday, September 13, 2007.

Second agenda item:

The committee reviewed the concepts and principles in the Charter of New Urbanism document, noting specifically the ones that are most relevant to Chesterland and may consider adopting when establishing the committee's mission statement and town cornerstones. One key concept that was highlighted as it relates to Chesterland was

turning “sprawling suburbs into communities of real neighborhoods...” The committee also noted some core principles of interests such as “neighborhoods should be diverse in use and population; communities should be designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car; cities and towns should be shaped by physically defined and universally accessible public spaces...” From this discussion, the committee identified several issues that will need further study, including:

- Utilities
- Transportation – exploring different options of public transportation and alternatives such as pedestrian and bicycle systems
- Corridors – types of corridors that connect the different amenities within the town center
- Streets and public spaces – how to link buildings to the streets and their surroundings and how to create pedestrian-friendly streets
- Preservation and renewal of historic buildings – which has already started at the corner of Mayfield and Caves roads

It was also clarified that this is not a discussion on overall town change, only specifically the town center, although the boundaries for the town center have yet to be set.

Third agenda item:

The review of the list of issues for the Ad Hoc Committees continued. Issues three through eleven were discussed.

- *Issue 3 – Government Liaison.* Will need to find someone with political experience and background such as former trustees to coordinate legal and funding matters.
- *Issue 4 – Zoning, Codes, Legal.* Form based code was explored although it was noted that the goal was not to pick the best code but instead should be about gathering information on various codes so as to be able to make informed decisions in the future. Other studies include finding ways to accommodate existing structures while transitioning into something new and looking at other towns for examples of cooperation between township and private developers.
- *Issue 5 – Senior Adult & Youth Liaison.* Find out specific issues and needs of both groups, noting that the youth category can be extended to include toddlers. The goal is to gather information to design and create an environment that allows these two groups to interact and co-exist in a manner that is beneficial to both.
- *Issue 6 – Architecture, Planning, Landscape.* Case studies of historic and newly developed towns focusing on subjects such as architectural style, building placement, and the specific planning consultants utilized. Suggestion: involve the public by showing them a collection of images and get their input and feedback on the style they would like the town to adopt.
- *Issue 7 – Recreation, Parks.* Investigate the township’s needs regarding its green space use, i.e. conservation versus recreational fields, active versus passive parks and types of corridors to connect these spaces. Suggestion: coordinate efforts with Geauga Park District.

- *Issue 8 – Civic Facilities, Township Departments Liaison.* Research the type of facilities the town would like for community use such as a banquet hall or a larger and improved town hall. Research placement of all community and service facilities. For example, not locating the Fire Department right in the middle of town center as part of creating pedestrian-friendly streets.
- *Issue 9 – Municipality vs. Township.* Investigate the meaning of becoming a municipality. Explore different options/levels of municipality such as home rule municipality and local municipality.
- *Issue 10 – Sustainability, Environment.* Explore options such as preservation and improvement of natural environments and develop goals of becoming a sustainable town. Two organizations that were mentioned that could offer information and help are Western Reserve Land Conservancy and Chagrin River Watershed Partners.
- *Issue 11 – Financial, Funding.* Will need to find people with experience on where and how to get funding and most importantly, be able to document all their research, and to make sure all necessary papers and information are in place in the event of any funding application.

It was suggested that we should create a document with a more detailed definition and description of each issue so as to provide guidelines and directions for the sub committees. Although some issues may be related, it may be best to keep them separate so as not to overwhelm any one particular group. As an alternative, these groups could get together when necessary. The committee hopes to finish reviewing the rest of the issues by the next meeting.

Fourth agenda item:

The committee discussed a few details of the upcoming community presentation that is currently scheduled for October. It was agreed weekend is better than weekdays as the presentation may take a few hours. Because most people consider Saturday a family day, Sunday was the preferred day to have the presentation. The suggested location was West Geauga High School. To draw families with kids to attend the presentation, children’s activities could be held including opening the school’s gym. The tentative agenda includes one main presentation, followed by a public forum and individual ad hoc table discussions. Publicity ideas include displaying posters in businesses, advertising in local newspapers such as Chesterland News, and creating a website. It was noted that details of the presentation should also be discussed in the Board of Trustee’s meeting.

Fifth agenda item:

Bill Laditka reviewed the draft version of the Mission and Cornerstone Principles with the committee. He suggested that once the draft is finalized, it should be made available to the public, perhaps in newspapers. At a glance, many of the members felt that the first paragraph is too controversial and challenging to be used. Bill Laditka explained that this may be necessary to get a greater initial response, and that will hopefully translate into more specific inputs from the community. The committee will continue to review the draft in the next meeting.

Sixth agenda item:

For the next meeting, members should be prepared to discuss the committee's mission and cornerstone principles and related issues.

Seventh agenda item:

For the last part of the meeting, the public attendees were invited to speak. Some of the ideas that were shared are:

- Township's open house on October 6th – might want to take advantage of the open house and distribute flyers about the steering committee's work. In addition, should also consider setting up a booth to display information and sign-up sheets for those interested in joining the ad hoc committees.
- A negative example of home rule municipality – Hudson Township: may want to include it as part of the ad hoc committee's research.
- Township-owned Vorel building – is not an ideal meeting space because it does not have a big enough parking lot to accommodate larger groups.
- Member Ron Cotman should recuse himself from the committee – because it may not be beneficial to the committee to have a trustee on it.
- What type of funding does the committee have? – none at the moment. Will discuss funding options when needed.

The meeting officially adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Administrative Assistant, S. Christine Gumal.