

Long Range Plan Steering Committee Regular Meeting Minutes Monday, March 27, 2023 7:00 PM

Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by Corrin at 7 pm. Roll call was taken. Present at the meeting were Shelley Baron, Tom King, Anastasios Angelides, Stephan Platzter, Terry Weiner, Corey Odentz, Patrick Carnahan, Joy Pan, Shyla Ruiz Kachwaha, Andrew Berke, Erica Weida, Cheryl Thibodeau, Minoo Tehrani, Bruce Colton, Dan Zwirko, Dave Marinelli.

Approval of Draft Meeting Minutes

Minoo Tehrani made the motion to approve the minutes of January 23, 2023, with Anastasios Angelides seconding. The minutes of the draft meetings were approved, with Cheryl Thibodeau and Andrew Berke abstaining.

Organization Meeting

Organizational meeting for the election of a committee chair and clerk. The respective duties of each position are...

- Chair – lead the meetings, move with the agenda, receive motions, open and close the meetings
- Vice Chair – this position is optional as they would step in as needed for the chair
- Clerk – review the draft minutes before going to the full committee

Organizational meeting for the election of a committee chair and clerk: Nominations were sent out via email. The duties of the chairman are to lead the meetings, move through the agenda, receive motions, and open and close the meetings. The commitment time would be one hour or less outside of the regular meetings. The role of vice chair is optional, and would be to step in as chair when necessary. The clerk would review the draft minutes before they go to the full committee. The commitment outside of the general meeting would be one hour. Because there is only one nominee for each position, one vote was taken for all three at once. The candidate for chair is Cheryl Thibodeau, the candidate for the vice chair is Bruce Colton, and the candidate for clerk is Shyla Ruiz Kachwaha.

Bruce Colton made the motion for a single vote on the entire slate of candidates since each of the 3 candidates were running unopposed. Cheryl Thibodeau was elected Chair, Bruce Colton was elected Vice Chair, and Shyla Ruiz Kachwaha was elected Clerk.

Guided Discussion: Planning and Equity

Lauren Lind, senior planner for the Barrett Planning Group, along with Judi Barrett led a discussion on equitable planning in Longmeadow. Equity is defined as a just and fair inclusion

into society where all can participate and prosper to reach their full potential, no matter their starting point. Inequity is the lack of equity, intentionally or unintentionally. The purpose of this conversation is to challenge the LRPSC to think about what services are offered equitably in Town, and inequities may be present in Longmeadow and how they are being perpetuated. What equities are presently in place in Longmeadow? Members answered:

- The sidewalk network is well built in Longmeadow, and sidewalks tie neighborhoods together as well as providing space to walk and bike to parks and schools.
- Open Town Meeting form of government means that voters have a direct voice in major town decisions
- Bliss and Greenwood Park pools and playgrounds are great resources for not only residents, but are open to non-residents as well
- Longmeadow has a highly educated population

There was then an open discussion as to the inequities and where improvements could be made....

- Some LPS programming, such as clubs or sports, field trips, etc., require a lot of money to participate in which leaves some students unable to participate
- Housing needs were identified as a concern. Lack of marketability, and lack of smaller, more naturally affordable homes mean fewer properties accessible for first-time or downsizing homebuyers
- Traffic flow through town—some streets experience heavy amounts of traffic, and some side streets are experiencing more and more traffic congestion as drivers try to avoid using the main roads
- Could use more public transportation options to cut down on emissions, and to provide alternatives for working families whose children attend school and sport activities
- Lack of ADA accessibility in public facilities, at playgrounds, or in some schools. Access to public buildings, such as the Community House for voting, nearly impossible with a wheelchair or stroller
- Structural inequities in how public and Town meetings are run. Town Meetings are in-person, which limits who can attend, especially if they are parents of young children, elderly or have a disability that would prevent them from staying for hours.
- Riverfront – can we develop or increase access?
- Lacking in pedestrian crossings on Longmeadow Street and Converse Street

- The infrastructure in town – sewer pipes, gas lines – are we prepared with the proper technologies to take us into the future?
- Equity for non-human residents of Town, ie environmental pollution and degradation of Cooley Brook
- Faculty at Longmeadow Public Schools is not very diverse, which can make it difficult for students of color to find adults to connect with in a way where they feel represented. Can schools do a better job recruiting staff of color?
- Town drinking water quality violations: some can afford water purification, most can not

Tom King asks: Will this LRP take a deep look into why Longmeadow is lacking in diversity, when so many communities around us are very diverse or even majority-minority? The LRPSC is majority white – how will we engage people of color in Longmeadow? What do we mean when we talk about diversity in Longmeadow, and on the Committee?

Lauren Lind states that the process will take a look at Town policies and at our code—essentially, the framework the Town has established for itself—that has created inequities and perpetuated them through today. This question will not be answered in one meeting, but the LRP update is beginning that process. Lauren then asks the Committee: Are the organizations that have access to the population under-served? Are they being engaged or excluded? Who should the consultants reach out to?

Terry Weiner points out that according to the 2020 Census, the Town is over 84% white, non-Hispanic, around 4% white Hispanic, around 7% Asian American, and around 1% Black. The median income is very high compared to the region. She asks, do we want to change this? How would we start?

Stephan Platzer announces that on the upcoming Wednesday, March 29, the Town's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee will be having their first meeting, and invited LRPSC members to attend as members of the public. The non-Town coalition, Longmeadow Anti-Racism Coalition (LARC), also holds standouts against racism.

Anastasios Angelides seconds Tom King's comments that the Committee needs to define what it means by equity and diversity in order to develop actionable and achievable goals. We can't change our community overnight, and change will be slow. So what can we do to engage in this topic?

Cheryl Thibodeau asks Lauren and Judi if they can speak to how the LRP update will address these questions. Lauren responds that in upcoming activities, the consultants will be getting a

deeper sense of how and where some populations may be under-represented in community conversations, what types of services and businesses may be missing, what conditions contribute to these inequities, and why these conditions exist. Judi notes that in every engagement, the consultants ask the question to attendees: “who’s missing” and “who else should we be talking to”—which not only helps the consultants determine who else they need to speak with, but also helps the community realize who isn’t at the table from the beginning.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Steering Committee Member Comments

Stephan Platzer reports on the 2004 Long Range Plan Implementation Report (2006), and states he spoke with Cynthia Somers, Chair of the 2004 LRPSC, to learn about what was implemented from 2004.

Patrick Carnahan states there will be challenges in implementation if we don’t define what our goals are. Planning is one thing but the implementation of some strategies will be controversial, and so we need to have a framework on how to move forward. Tom King agrees.

Next Meeting Lookahead

The next meeting will be at the LPS Room A15 on May 22, 2023 at 7pm.

Adjourn

Bruce Colton made the motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Corey Odentz.