

APPROVED MINUTES
Town of Sheffield
Community Development Strategy

COMMITTEE MEETING

October 30, 2013
Sheffield Town Hall
4 pm

Attendance

Committee members: Rene Wood, Martin Mitsoff, Ed Lord, Alicia Dulin, Phyllis Webb, Kathy Orlando, John James, Helen Johnston, Jim Collingwood

Ex-officio committee members: Rhonda LaBombard

Members of the public: Michael King, David West

BRPC staff: Patricia Mullins, Jaclyn Pacejo

1. Transportation

Transportation sections, as drafted by individual committee members

Rene:

- Aggressively work to expand public transportation through BRTA, public rail and additional rider options through state sanctioned Good Samaritan driver program and better awareness of existing transportation options through BRTA and SBETC.
- Expand non-car transportation, such as walking and biking, through reclamation, expansion and integration of sidewalks and trail systems and biking opportunities; work with MassDOT to address speed and signage issues on Route 7.
- Establish a road/pavement management system and take advantage of available funding and grants for bridge and road repair, including Chapter 90, STRAP and road/byway designations.

Alicia:

- Implement pilot bus service and establish other transportation opportunities to transport seniors and youth to and from shopping, appointments, recreation and social events.
- Identify additional revenue sources for road maintenance and repair.
- Continue repairs and upgrades of streets and sidewalks including bicycle friendly upgrades when feasible.

Martin:

- 1. Encourage and provide non-motorized transportation choices as alternatives to vehicular modes of transport.
 - Work with state and local officials to reduce speed limits along Routes 7 and 41 to make pedestrian, bicycle travel safer.
 - Develop public private partnerships to develop and maintain non-automobile pathways through land acquisition, easements, long-term leases, possibly offering tax incentives for such development and maintenance
 - Involves SLT/NC/Trustees of Reservations/BNRC to investigate inclusion of otherwise-protected lands for possible pedestrian/bicycle paths
 - Emphasize local roads as public spaces of Sheffield, which help define the town's quality of life
 - Environmentally-responsible/sustainable

- Promote shared-vehicle/shared-ride services with Town sponsorship
 - [develop community bulletin board that would enable physically/medically-impaired and lower-income residents to avail themselves of “errand runners” in the region]
 - Environmentally responsible
- Continue to encourage concentration of commercial establishments in the Town’s center, reducing development sprawl along Route 7
- 2. Support paved and non-paved roadways/bridges/culverts/bridges and culverts management that complements pedestrian and bicycle modes
 - Road projects should emphasize making the network safer and better for all user, thus encouraging (through public and private investment) the variety of transit option available to residents and visitors
 - Review Amherst’s “Complete Streets” Policy for additional guidance

Paths/routes requiring CDS attention:

- Town hall, town park
- Ashley Falls / town center / Canaan
- Sheffield Plains / town center / Great Barrington
- East-West (Berkshire School Road / Salisbury Road / Bow Wow / Other / New?)

-Concern that it will take too much time if the committee attempts to create transportation section. This topic is tabled. BRPC will merge drafts and bring back to committee for review.

2. Retaining 18-34 year-olds

Session with youth

- Phyllis is in contact with school. Youth are excited to have a voice in this process. Logistical details TBD.
- Suggestion: Pick a few main themes and check youth responses (otherwise conversation may drift)
- Encourage youth to talk and be cautious of guiding conversation
- Questions: What do you think is great about this place? What would you like to see changed? If you are going away, what would bring you back? Who is going to college and what will you choose as a major? Who is staying, and what will you do? Are we giving them enough to prepare? What is missing in our educational/vocational system? Any thoughts to where you will live? Is Berkshire County home? What is your ideal place to live? Do you have a family obligation to the area?
- Long-term we need information from the other end of the 18-34 age group.
- OK to invite youth to next committee meeting? As a concern re: use of time, a few committee members should talk to youth and bring back information to the committee
- Concern of making a few people’s opinions into a global issue

General

- Issue is so critical we should highlight it in the introduction of the CDS
- Capture next steps in plan: identify issue and suggest what we might be able to do
- Work with existing organizations to address this issue
- Issue cuts across economic development, housing, transportation, etc.
- Are there people that come here that have never lived here before?
- This area is attractive to people of all ages
 - Older, more aware of challenges associated with re-location
 - Artisans, craftsmen
 - Age 25-35 have a better handle on what they want

Retaining 18-34 year-olds, as drafted by individual committee members

Martin:

- Develop apprenticeship / vocational training funding sources, targeting local residents and businesses
 - Support the establishment of a broad-based community coalition to re-introduce apprenticeship / vocational training as a necessary curriculum offering
 - Employers / contractors / innovators and others
- Identify housing stock suitable for renovations / purchase by private and/or not-for-profit interests and rental / rent-to-buy opportunities (Community Housing Trust established as 501 (c)(3)?) that support the retention, at all income levels, of 18-34 year-olds
- Establish local private/public investment fund to provide financial support for education/advanced education/continuing education to this age group that targets such education as “community investment”
- Enhance commitment and resources of “elder” to involve this age group in town governance and community service activities

3. Economic development

- Plastics plants and encourage other businesses in other sections (carpentry, plastics, education, landscaping, farming)
- Provide opportunities for jobs for youth – for those with/without college degrees
- Provide transportation options to help younger people to get jobs
- Develop ways to keep younger people here
- Sad to lose farms – problem to lose for acreage and land base and labor
 - Unfortunate not to have more farms
 - Our countryside needs the farms and products – more traditional size
- Jobs for youth who get college degrees
- Mismatch between skills and jobs that are available
- Some manufacturing companies do want employees with college degrees
- Need more “Made in America” items
- Wouldn’t want to have to commute to Pittsfield every day
- Hidden manufacturing sector here
- Increase trades: machinists, car makers
- Lack of awareness of jobs in the area – how to get the word out? (i.e. machine shop)
- Apprenticeship program with current businesses (develop a program with community businesses)
- Help people know/publicize who/what jobs and businesses are in the business park etc – Shopper Guide, Sheffield Times, etc.
- Business “welcome wagon” – what do you need? What brought you here?
- Revitalize Sheffield Economic Development Committee
- Connect with Sheffield Business Association
- How to attract businesses/what incentives – quality of life, financial, tax, etc
- Engage consultant to help Sheffield market Sheffield
 - Base on master plan
 - Write grant to fund this
 - Businesses that fit in the community – not just any businesses
- Look at zoning and what might be done to help
 - Adjust zoning by-laws to encourage business development
 - What are infill possibilities?
 - Connecting of businesses
 - Clustering of businesses
- Housing for businesses – possibly mixed use
- Sheffield might be eligible for small 40R area with mixed use
 - Housing, etc. (but town does not have transit – rules are starting to be more flexible than they used to be)

- Higher density area
- Transit issue = so far south that BRTA does not reach
 - Perhaps a new business could address this gap (now everything is coming from the north so a southerly option could address the issue)
 - Seniors and students would benefit most – need to have public transit that works with school class schedules
- Encourage businesses that use telecommuting/home occupation
 - Do we have the infrastructure/technology?
 - Hot spots? Where? Where are there gaps?
 - Time Warner is good high speed; Verizon not as fast
 - Put information out there to market this possibility
 - Identify what businesses currently do this
- How to ensure that town benefits from telecommuters
 - as part of community
 - as permanent resident
 - as income
 - Thought that not need to promote this because they come themselves
- Manufacturing also needs high speed so we want to let manufacturers know we have it
- Look for businesses that provide jobs
- What type of businesses do we want to encourage and in what areas
 - Do town bylaws/plans support this?
- Encage consultant to help look at plan and what town wants
- Support current local businesses
- How to do practical public input?
- Make use of Master Plan and Economic Development Strategies – already good foundation and vision for future
- Tie in to high school for mentoring and apprenticeships
 - Good experience and grading
 - “Work-study program” – can combine learning with job
 - College bound and non-college bound
 - Building structures program
 - Agricultural jobs program
- FFA and 4-H – importance and education of farming and agriculture
- Support our local businesses – find out what they need. Are there impediments that the town can help with?
- Community conversation
 - Contractors: carpentry, plumbing, electric, landscapers, etc
 - Farms and processing
 - Small businesses (i.e. Collingwood, PJs, silks, ukulele, pottery, garage/repair, etc)
- Businesses in Sheffield feel it is a positive business environment – how to promote Sheffield’s positive business environment to the outside community?
- Inventory what businesses we do have already and how many people do they employ
- Encourage buying local
- How to do follow up? Econ, planning, etc
 - Does there need to be a town employee to keep this going? (perhaps part-time)
 - Grant funding
- How to gather information with confidentiality and anonymity so people feel free to be open
- How to engage current businesses (and create an actively engaged business community)?
 - Social gathering and community conversation
 - Meetings to talk about different aspects
 - Surveys
 - Kiwanis/Sheffield Business Association

- Sectors
- Opportunities to share business to business
- Engage banking community
- Need agricultural processing and slaughter
- Entrepreneurial center where can rent room and there is shared high speed, address, back office support
- Identify commercial space available and its land use
- Rene, Phyllis, and John volunteered to draft Economic Development sections

4. Housing

- Preservation of housing is important
- Engage with banking structure
- What types of housing models exist?

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.