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Strategic Planning Report - Community Forum 11/16/01

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD COMMUNITY FORUM MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 16, 2001 AT THE BREAKERS HOTEL

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Community Forum of November 16, 2001, held at The Breakers Hotel, was called to order at 3:30 p.m. by Mayor Lesly Smith.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. WELCOME BY MAYOR SMITH

Mayor Smith welcomed all in attendance, and thanked them for coming. She introduced those who would be acting as facilitators of the group discussion, and those who would be acting as scribes for the facilitators. She commented that this was an extraordinary opportunity for citizens to help shape the Palm Beach of the future. She explained that the Strategic Planning Board had been meeting for several months, and had created a mission statement. There were no preconceived notions, and the Board viewed itself as simply the facilitators; the actual plan would come from the comments of the citizens at the community forums being held this week. The first task of the Strategic Planning Board had been to gather

information as to what was already in place in order to plan for the future. A great deal of data had been made available to the Board, such as the population figures, which indicated that slightly more than half of the residents of Palm Beach were over 65 years of age; there were now as many residents in the 45-55 age range as there were residents over 85 years of age; ten-percent of the population was under 19 years of age. The plans for the future must therefore include not only a vision for enhancing retirement, but a quality of life that supports working professionals and families with young children. Most communities in the throes of the planning process must deal with development potential, however, that was not an issue with Palm Beach, as it was completely built out. Development was not one of the items to be included in long range planning. Instead, re-development would be a focus; some challenges would include defining the balance between environmental protection and infrastructure needs, the balance between landmarks and smart new buildings, and between the legacy of yesterday and the promise of tomorrow. She thanked everyone for coming, and urged everyone to speak freely in expressing any idea or thought today in the group discussions which would follow.

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**IV. OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN PURPOSE AND PROCESS AND
DESCRIPTION OF STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND
THREATS**

Consultant John Fernsler explained that he would discuss purpose, process and protocol in order to provide everyone in attendance with an idea of why the forum was being held and what was intended to be accomplished, and ultimately what was intended to be accomplished with the Strategic Plan that would be created.

Purpose: He encouraged the value of a Strategic Plan to be thought of in four ways. First, the Strategic Plan must be a reflection of the values and the aspirations of the citizens of Palm Beach. Second, it was a guide for the management of change. Third, it was a reference point for future Town policies and decision making. Fourth, the Strategic Plan, in some cases, would be the “to do” list of the Town.

Process: He suggested that the strategic planning process be thought of in three steps. **Step One: Vision.** The purpose of the community forums was to provide the raw material for the Strategic Planning Board to craft a specific vision statement that would incorporate the consensus of the community with regard to quality of life, and community character. **Step two**

was to examine what was happening within and without the Town of Palm Beach; to provide strategic course corrections that may be needed to achieve the vision. Step three would be the specific actions that must be taken in the short term to put the Town on course. The information gathered at the community forums would create the vision that would inspire the Strategic Plan. The Strategic Planning Board would prepare a vision statement, after all of the community forums had been held, for presentation to the community.

Protocol: He explained that discussion groups would now proceed, with each group being assigned a facilitator to keep the discussion moving and a scribe to record the ideas. The time would be divided into two thirty minute segments during which discussion would take place concerning the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that were present in the community. Strengths would incorporate those characteristics of the community that the citizens were not willing to give up to growth and change; weaknesses would incorporate problems that the citizens believed were not being adequately addressed, or would require short range resolution. Opportunities would incorporate things that could be done now to make Palm Beach a better place; threats would incorporate those things that may influence the community negatively.

At this time break-out groups were formed, with a facilitator and a scribe provided for each group. Mr. Fernsler urged everyone to share opinions, noting that at the end of the session, there would be an idea of the consensus of the community, as after each discussion period a vote would be taken within each group to identify which five characteristics were most critical to them.

(The break-out groups proceeded with the S.W.O.T. exercise until the conclusion of the meeting.)

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Lesly Smith
Chair
Strategic Planning Board

Prepared by:

Susan Eichhorn
Deputy Town Clerk