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REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD MEETING HELD ON MAY 16, 2001

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting of the Strategic Planning Board was called to order at 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 16, 2001, in the Town Council Chambers, by Chair Lesly Smith. On roll call, the following board members were found to be in attendance: Chair Lesly Smith, Vice-Chair Bruce McAllister, Board Members William Cooley, Alec Flamm, William E. Hutton III, and William Watchman, Jr. Also present were: Town Manager Peter Elwell, Town Attorney John Randolph, and Deputy Town Clerk Susan Eichhorn.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Chair Smith.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The Agenda was approved through motion of Vice-Chair McAllister, seconded by Board Member Flamm, and carrying unanimously on roll call.

IV. APPROVAL OF THE REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD MEETING ON MAY 4, 2001

The report of the Strategic Planning Board meeting held on May 4, 2001, was approved through motion of Vice-Chair McAllister, seconded by Board Member Hutton. On roll call the motion carried unanimously.

V. DISCUSSION OF THE VISIONING AND PLANNING PROCESS TO BE EMPLOYED BY THE STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD, LED BY MR. JOHN FERNSLER OF WALLACE ROBERTS & TODD, LLC.

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD MEETING HELD ON MAY 16, 2001

Mr. John Fernsler, AIA, Principal of Wallace Roberts & Todd, LLC., addressed the Strategic Planning Board, presenting a PowerPoint presentation, discussing the expectations, issues, priorities, and management of the planning process. He explained that it had been important to him to poll the board in order to determine the degree of consensus, and he synthesized the issues of concern as:

1. Solving present deficiencies and anticipating future deficiencies.
2. Avoiding and managing unwanted change.
3. Determining the degree of control necessary.
4. Defining, maintaining, and improving the quality of life.
5. Designing the process itself, i.e., with a sequence of community forums.

Mr. Fernsler then expanded on each of the issues of concern, with comments included from his discussions with the individual Board Members.

1. Solve present deficiencies and anticipate future deficiencies:

Infrastructure: avoid future inadequacies/risks; ensure that the drainage solution and backup water supply were being addressed as efficiently as possible; ensure that there was the ability to support present and future development.

Problems and deficiencies that could affect the quality of life were identified as truck traffic, difficulty with parking, and the use and need for schools.

2. Management of Change:

Discussion regarding the nature of change in the community varied from accommodating change, precluding undesirable change, searching out vulnerabilities that would tend to erode the quality of life, resisting an erosion of the quality of life; and the degree of isolation of the community from other communities. The management of change had been discussed with each board member, and all had identified the north end development as a key issue, as well as the increase in construction, too much commercial development, the gradual change in the population profile; a positive change had been noted as being the greater unity of the north/south communities. Changes that were identified as key issues in the future were the future infrastructure crisis, external impacts, the loss of the small town character, and the erosion of the quality of life.

3. Degree of Control:

The extent of limitations on the use of private property, a way to curb unwanted attractions, the extent of limitations to scale and development, contemplate a limit on visitation capacity.

4. Defining/Maintaining/Improving the Quality of Life:

The opinions of the erosion of the quality of life had varied, from being satisfied and keeping it the way it was, to others feeling that the quality of life was rapidly eroding, to others accepting the evolutionary change of the quality of life in the community.

5. The planning process:

Getting the community involved with the planning process had resulted in comments that ranged from suggestions to get the local press involved, to the comment that the community was already actively engaged. The issue had been raised that the topics that the Strategic Planning Board would deal with were already being dealt with by other commissions, such as the Architectural Commission, Zoning Commission, and Landmarks Commission, and some type of coordination would need to take place. In order to understand the nature of the process, and to focus on the particular issues identified, a reading list would be provided; other methods of learning could include an initial strategic planning symposium, a tour of the Town, and the assembling of an inventory of Town properties.

Mr. Fernsler then discussed the components of a strategic plan, which would include:

- Mission - what was intended to accomplish
- Vision - what was the destination - describe what was to be achieved
- Environmental Scan - an awareness of challenges, opportunities
- Goals - conditions to achieve or maintain
- Objectives - measures of effectiveness in achieving goals

- Policies/Actions - what must be done to meet objectives

Mr. Fernsler suggested a five step planning process:

1. Mobilization:

- "Launching workshop" - sharing of suggestions about the approach
- defining process, products, and milestones
- a reading list to compare with what academia and other communities had suggested
- plan a symposium - bring in other community leaders that had gone through the planning process
- organization of community forums - make decisions on when, where, and with whom
- linkage to other committee/commissions - how to make the linkage without duplicating effort or work at cross purposes.

Milestone: Project organization - have a document defining how the effort will be organized.

2. Articulating the vision:

- a process of asking what the Town of Palm Beach should be like, based on the values of residents, based on consensus, defining quality of life and community character

- the process of articulating the vision would be started today with a visioning exercise; later on the same type of exercise could be used in community vision forums

Milestone: Vision Statement - the board will draft a vision statement, put it out into the community to obtain feedback, and then adopt it.

3. Perceiving the dynamic of Change within the community:

- Asking the question of where is Palm Beach headed; what will it be like in five to ten years; how much change could be seen in that time – focus on regional issues that may influence change, and local change issues, such as infrastructure capacities, redevelopment and quality of life issues. A technical reference book on key issues could be created, a "Data Book."

Milestone: Definition of the issues

4. Establishing Strategic Directions:

- Choices in policy, direction, strategy. There will be a need for a deliberate consensus building process for decisions that will be supported throughout the community; ways to interact through intergovernmental coordination.

  Milestone: Consensus on Strategic Directions - some sort of document that will describe the strategic direction for which there is consensus. Once that is achieved, the next step will be to prepare the "to do" list.

5. Implementation Agenda:

Identify who is going to do what, when, with what resources and with what authority. Will involve integration of policies and plans; determine regulatory modifications, consider necessary changes in capital improvement programing; consider new partnership initiatives with civic organizations or other entities in the community.

Milestone: The adoption of the Strategic Plan, which ought to be done in a way that will enable action on each element.

Mr. Fernsler completed his presentation, and opened the floor for questions.

Board Member Cooley commented that he was unclear about interaction between the Strategic Planning Board and the other boards and commissions in place.

Mr. Fernsler responded that the other boards/commissions could be invited to attend a joint meeting, or they could be assigned a project to study and come back with choices and concepts, or the Strategic Planning Board could proceed ahead and develop its own concepts and hope that the other boards/commissions would agree with them.

In response to Chair Smith, Mr. Fernsler explained that the next step would be to write an organizational plan, describing and clarifying the mission of the Strategic Planning Board, the nature of the strategic plan, its influence on other entities, the schedule or activities, the way in which the community will be involved and when. He noted that his next assignment was to provide the Strategic Planning Board with a brief written document suggesting a structure.

Vice-Chair McAllister asked how the list of "stakeholders" would be developed, as well as the means by which they would be consulted?

Mr. Fernsler suggested that it may be safer to say that the entire community was a stakeholder, and that the organizations representing them need to be more directly involved. He explained that many communities had invited neighboring communities into the process, and had created a technical advisory committee composed of their own department heads, and government officials from neighboring communities; he suggested that the Strategic Planning Board consider the creation of some form of a technical review committee, as distinguished from its policy making role.

Board Member Watchman commented that there was considerable controversy over a number of issues in the community, and he questioned how and when input from the community would be received?

Mr. Fernsler responded that he was aware of some of the controversial issues, and he cautioned that the focus should be on what unites the community, not what divides it – if very divisive issues were considered, the risk of not having an adoptable strategic plan was a possibility, since some residents/groups would be unhappy with the results. He cautioned taking on the most divisive issues in the community with the hopes that there would be consensus; he suggested that the Strategic Planning Board must be very selective and realistic in considering what could be put on the agenda for consideration. He explained that some issues seemed to have a life of their own, and were headed for resolution in one way or another, and he was not sure of what good would come of the Strategic Planning Board tackling them.

In response to Chair Smith, Town Manager Elwell advised that he saw the role of staff as being very limited until the process was more firmly established; as more specific information was required staff would be available as a resource. He confirmed that Resolution No. 16-01, which had enabled the Strategic Planning Board, directed that the Strategic Planning Board submit a proposed strategic plan to the Town Council for consideration no later than May 2003.

In response to Chair Smith, Mr. Fernsler stated that he believed that the process could be completed in less time than two years. He explained that meeting with the public could be facilitated in such a manner as to make those participating comfortable, such as breaking up into small discussion groups; that would result in an effective measurement of public opinion, as well as leading people to see the present situation, and to imagine the future management of items of concern.

Vice-Chair McAllister commented that he believed it was important for the Strategic Planning

Board to be very active immediately at gathering the opinions of the community; he noted that there was a large amount of data that needed to be collected, and he suggested that Town staff be requested to provide pertinent data organized in a certain fashion; he suggested that an organized presentation of the legal structure be given, which would define any limitations on commissions or the Town Council that were set by the Town Charter, State Constitution, etc. He suggested that members of the Strategic Planning Board meet with community organizations, as fact and opinion gatherers, and ask them what they see as issues of concern.

Town Attorney Randolph advised that fact gathering could be done without violating the Sunshine Law, however, he encouraged that only one person at a time meet with organizations, because it would alleviate the opportunity for violations of the Sunshine Law.

Town Manager Elwell suggested that any such sessions could be held in public, with no risk of violation of the Sunshine Law.

Board Member Watchman noted that half of the residents were not year round residents, and questioned the value of input gathered from only half of the community – he suggested that there be some way of involving all community members.

Mr. Fernsler responded that a vision statement should provide the opportunity for all community members to provide input; he suggested that public input be gathered over the summer months for the purpose of identifying issues from various constituencies – a formal public forum for the purpose of developing the vision could be held in the fall when most residents were back –probably more than one community forum would be held. He suggested that the members of Town commissions could be asked to delegate a representative to attend the Strategic Planning Board meetings in order to provide input.

Town Attorney Randolph commented that, because of the Sunshine Law, he would not advise the Strategic Planning Board to delegate a representative from Town commissions, however, the members of the various commissions could be invited to attend Strategic Planning Board meetings and give their input.

Chair Smith commented that a very clear, unanimous statement on the vision of the Strategic Planning Board may be appropriate, so that it could be explained to the community and input could be gathered.

Mr. Fernsler replied that the first step in creating a vision statement was the exercise that he would now conduct, which would identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, and was a means of testing the degree of consensus in terms of the issues that would be addressed by the Strategic Planning Board. He noted that the same type of visioning session would take place during future community forums.

At the conclusion of the visioning exercise, Mr. Fernsler indicated that he would formulate the feedback he had received and provide a document that could be used to map out the next step of organization; ultimately, the Board would need to take that information in a series of its own meetings to decide how to mobilize. He suggested that the Board consider the following: overall reaction to the process described today; reaction to the visioning exercise as a means of offering a vision statement; make some decisions about its intention over the summer months.

Board Member Cooley suggested that the visioning exercise be expanded to involve as many citizens as possible, or that a survey be conducted to obtain the viewpoint of citizens.

Mr. Fernsler replied that the chemistry that happens in a round table discussion produced richer and more valid input than a survey would – alternative points of view could be heard, and the result was more than the sum of individual perceptions and biases. He explained that in a typical forum, a large group would break up into small groups with trained facilitators – normally the members of the steering committee – with himself acting as master of ceremonies; he indicated that he would provide a written report within the next two weeks with the information obtained from the visioning exercise, and could provide the information in person at a scheduled meeting, if so desired – he agreed that he would forward the report in advance of the meeting to the members of the Strategic Planning Board, as well as the proposed reading list.

In response to Board Member Flamm, Mr. Fernsler explained that "mission" was what the Board would create, and what they wanted to do as a game plan; "vision" was something that would come out of public input – typically he would compile all information, sort it out, organize it as themes, and provide it back to the Strategic Planning Board – that would become the first step in creatively writing a vision statement.

Vice-Chair McAllister asked if there was any sentiment among the Strategic Planning Board to meet with organizations, i.e., the Chamber of Commerce, to allow them to indicate how they see the future of the Town, what issues are of importance for consideration by the Strategic Planning Board, etc.

Board Member Cooley indicated that he would be willing to participate.

Town Attorney Randolph advised that any Board member, without designation from the Board, were free to sit down individually with any organization, and come back with a report – a Board member could be delegated as a fact finder on a one-on-one basis, however, he expressed concern whenever two or more members performed a function of the Board.

Vice-Chair McAllister commented that further discussion could take place regarding fact finding delegations at the next meeting.

VI. NEXT MEETING

A. Date, Time and Place

Board Member Cooley suggested that future Strategic Planning Board meetings take place during the week of the regularly scheduled Town Council meeting, as people were generally in Town at that time.

After discussion, it was determined that the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Board would take place on Tuesday, June 19, 2001 at 9:00 a.m in the Town Council chambers.; tentative meetings were scheduled for July 11, 2001 at 1:00 p.m., and August 15, 2001.

Mr. Fernsler indicated that he would include the June 19th meeting as part of his current authorization; he would be prepared to present a proposal as to the next steps to take, and would then be available to continue on an hourly basis, working at the pleasure of the Strategic Planning Board.

B. Agenda

Town Manager Elwell clarified that the following items would be on the Agenda for the meeting of June 19th:

- Discussion of report of Mr. Fernsler, which would be received in advance of the June 19th meeting for study by the members of the Strategic Planning Board.

- Discussion of fact finding delegates – identify civic groups and Board members who would meet with them.

VII. ANY OTHER MATTERS

Town Manager Elwell commented that two documents had been provided to the Board today: The Retail Water Service and Franchise Agreement, and Ordinance No. 18-99, dealing with the Town Charter. He indicated that the book, "Suburban Nation" was available in the office of the Town Manager.

Town Manager Elwell requested that each Board member provide an itinerary for the summer months.

Town Attorney Randolph noted that it was appropriate for a Board member to appear by telephone, as long as the requirements for a forum were met.

VIII ADJOURNMENT

The meeting of the Strategic Planning Board was adjourned at 4:38 p.m.

Mayor Lesly Smith
Chair, Strategic Planning Board

Next Scheduled Meetings:
June 19, 2001 @ 9:00 a.m.
July 11, 2001 @ 1:00 p.m. (tentative)
August 15, 2001 (tentative)

Report prepared by:
Susan Eichhorn
Deputy Town Clerk