

**North Kingstown Route 2 and 102 Stakeholder Visioning Process
Meeting 1
August 23, 2012 5:30-8:45pm
Beechwood Senior Center, 44 Beach Street North Kingstown, RI**

Meeting Summary

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for September 6, 2012, from 6:00-9:00pm.

Meeting Participants: See Appendix A.

Next Steps:

- Project Team – Confirm member email addresses to be made public (by Sept 6)
- Project Team – Plan site visit (by Sept 6)
- Project Team – Revise Operating Procedures (by Sept 6)
- Project Team – Make maps to prepare for Meeting 2 discussion
- Project Team – Post link to Rhode Island Land Use 2025 Plan
- Members – Identify & let Project Team know if you will have an alternate (by Sept 6)

Welcome and Introductions

Ona Ferguson, facilitator from the Consensus Building Institute welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda. The goal of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for everyone to meet each other, to determine how the group was going to work together, to identify topics and issues that need to be addressed at future meetings, to review the current context, and to set a geographical boundary for the study area.

Stakeholder Group members introduced themselves, giving their affiliation and describing a quality they bring to the process. All materials from this meeting, including presentations, can be found within 10 days of the meeting at <http://www.northkingstown.org/visioning-process-routes-2-and-102>.

Purpose of this Visioning Process

Jon Reiner, the Director of the North Kingstown (NK) Planning Department and non-voting member of the Stakeholder Group, described the need for this group. The North Kingstown Town Council convened this group and allocated funds to support this process to generate a community vision for the western intersection of Routes 2 and 102. The NK Comprehensive Plan must be in compliance with the Rhode Island Land Use 2025 State Guide Plan Element and that requires that a plan and vision for this intersection be developed. The group is expected to meet regularly to explore interests, increase understanding, highlight and refine options and seek agreement, if possible, on what should happen in the area by the western Rt. 2/102 intersection. If this group reaches consensus or broad-based support for a recommendation, the Town Council and the Planning Commission will take that under serious consideration. Ona noted that there are a lot of strong opinions, feelings and interests at the table and in the community about what happens at this intersection, and that many have indicated hope in this group bringing some clarity of what to expect in the future that will benefit everyone.

Process Overview

Group Agreement Reached:

- Members will permit the team to share contact info (email and address) publicly.
- Members approved the Operating Procedures except for the Decision Rule (to be discussed further at Meeting 2), with changes as noted below re: alternates.

Members discussed how the Group will function (see more details in the draft Operating Procedures).

Overall Approach & Outcomes - Ona will be managing the process and facilitating meetings. The overall purpose of the process is to develop a shared concept for what should happen in the Rt. 2/102 area that most everyone can accept. The process for getting to that point will be to identify general issues, then discuss the varied interests and hopes and brainstorming ways to meet these interests, then to create a unified vision by combines these interests and brainstormed solutions into one comprehensive package or approach. There will be summaries of each Stakeholder Group meeting, focusing on agreements reached and the range of discussion points for various topics. The overall outcome/vision the group develops to will be synthesized in one report, including appropriate maps or technical language. The outcomes of the group depend on how the group works together and its ability to work through numerous topics to productive decisions. Possible outcomes range from no agreement to partial agreement to an overwhelming agreement.

Meeting Plan – The intent is to have three Stakeholder Group meetings (this one plus two in September), then two Public Workshops with a way to contribute online (which Stakeholder Group members will help design and attend), a focus group with residential neighbors, and then two to three more Stakeholder Group meetings after the Public Workshops.

Operating Procedures: Participants discussed and made some adjustments to the draft Operating Procedures. This list synthesizes key points and decisions made.

- Stakeholder Group meetings – Meetings will be open to the public. They will be summarized, and summaries will be posted on the project website. Members should strive to attend all meetings and scheduled events, and work to catch up after any meeting they miss.
- Alternates - Members discussed the role of alternates and decided there will be a minimum of one alternate for each of the two major stakeholder groups (rural/residential and business/development). Each group will choose their alternate. Alternates will be included in all member communication, will receive the introduction packet of materials, and are expected to attend all meetings to be fully up to speed should they need to sit at the table in place of a member.
- Communication - Members agree that email is the best form of communication for this process. They were asked to abide by the operating procedures / groundrules between meetings as well as at meetings, and to speak only for themselves, not for other people or for the Group as a whole.
- Decision Rule – Members discussed the threshold for reaching agreement in this process. They agreed that the goal is to seek overwhelming agreement across many perspectives so that any outcome is widely supported by the Stakeholder Group, while not setting the prohibitive threshold of unanimity. Participants did not reach final agreement on this topic, and it will be

taken up again at the next meeting. Participants discussed pros and cons of several decision thresholds, including

- Counts suggested
 - 7 out of 11 voting members agreeing indicates Group agreement
 - 8 out of 11 voting members agreeing indicates Group agreement (seven of nine voting members present at this meeting could live with this, the highest of the three options tested)
 - Capturing the final count for and against, whatever it may be (“taking the temperature of the group”) and reporting that number (possibly with language such as “majority favor, super majority, recommend, strongly recommend, overwhelming agreement, unanimity” tagged to different levels)
- With additional possible caveats to a strict numerical vote of:
 - At least one (or at least two) participant(s) from each of the two major groups must support it. This would mean any agreement would have to be acceptable to at least a portion of each of the two 4-person interest groups.
 - A minimum of 6 participants must agree (6 is a majority of 11 voting members)
- Discussions of options and criteria:
 - People don’t want the group to get stuck with too high a threshold for agreement. Some suggested aiming for between 60%-73% (75% requires 9)
 - People should have to convince others that an issue causing them to vote against something is important enough for others to vote with them to prevent agreement.
 - Abstention (step out of the vote if it isn’t a key interest for you) should count as dissenting and included in the count.
- Other discussion:
 - The final report will give the final count for and against an agreement and list the names of members who supported, abstained, or did not support the final agreement.
 - People decided that absent members not represented by an alternate may sign on to an agreement after the fact *but that this cannot change the outcome*. Given that everyone may have an alternate, the preference is for people to always have someone present to represent them.

Key Issues for Future Stakeholder Group Discussion

Members were asked to indicate what they hope to see as a result of this process and what topics the Group needs to work through. Their ideas are compiled and synthesized here.

Hopes for the Process

- That the residents get to weigh in on several options and get to voice their thoughts fairly
- That participants start with an open mind and clean slate
- That it respects the landowners
- That the interests of all participants are surfaced jointly
- That residents and business representatives work together productively
- That it becomes a model process for other sites in town
- That the excellent members and support team are creative and get to solutions

Issues / Topics the Group Wants to Work Through

- Community Goals - Goals that are shared by and distinct for NK and Exeter
- Interests of all participants – what do different people see as a vision for the area? Why do members hope for particular (and differing) levels of development?
- Water – quantity / how to protect water resources, quality
- Planning Tools - What innovative tools (ordinances, etc) can we use to advance joint goals?
- Development pressure – What is the reality and what does this mean (i.e. WJ station impacts)?
- Traffic Concerns
- Past History – full context and background
- Impacts on the full town, impacts to Exeter
- Development proposals – what is proposed and what might be acceptable / beneficial to residents?
- New ideas for designing intersections (see Grow Smart Rhode Island)
- Connectivity – Pedestrian and bike-friendly design, safety
- The Character of the area – how to add to it, how to leave a strong legacy in this place
- How to regulate growth to benefit everyone with clarified expectations, streamlined processes, appropriate protections
- Issues raised by Statewide Planning in denial of the NK Comprehensive Plan
- What is a growth center in this context?
- Transitional vision – how can the transitional space from big box to rural benefit residents and businesses? Look at north/south and east/west transitions
- Urban Services Boundary – how does it work, what does it mean?

Hopes for the Outcome

- It is acceptable for all the Stakeholder Group members
- It is sensitive and appropriate for NK & Exeter’s existing agricultural and rural character
- It considers impacts on all of NK and is beneficial to the town as a whole
- It makes sensible growth possible
- It adds to the character of the place, rather than detracting from it, it doesn’t have any significant negative impacts
- It describes development that neighbors find acceptable in scale and scope
- It protects water resources
- It enables for development while maintaining the character of the town
- It becomes a model for what future growth might look like in other parts of NK
- It is evidence based, numbers are used to support decisions as much as possible
- It will benefit many and meet the needs of many
- The NK Town Council respects any consensus / package proposal developed by the Stakeholder Group and understands that support for one piece may be contingent on another piece.
- It fits with current regulations and state guidelines
- It does not harm the natural environment, it is environmentally sound
- It does not include sprawl
- It is economically viable for landowners
- It streamlines the process for businesses to get approval, reducing the need for problem solving through litigation
- It gets incorporated into the current Comprehensive Plan and the 2013 Plan re-write

The Context: Overview of the Current Situation

Nate Kelley, from Horsley Witten Group, described the current context of the area. He explained the planning regulation at the State level and local level. He explained the role that Statewide Planning, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, and Rhode Island Housing play at the State level. On the local level, he described the role Department of Planning, the North Kingstown Planning Commission, the Water Department, the Town Council, other boards and commissions play in the process. He described the current regulations on the area. He explained the tools and options available to developers, such as the TDR sending and receiving areas and the compact village development ordinance. Statewide Planning has both recently rejected a petition for an up-zoning of the Rit Schartner parcel and requested a vision be developed for the area. Nate's presentation, available on the website, has more detail and is designed to be read with links to key information.

Visioning Process Geographic Scope

At the request of Peter Flinker, of Dodson and Associates (part of the project's technical team), members discussed what the core geographic area for the visioning process should be and also what broader area that will be impacted should be considered. People talked about the parcels right at the intersection with an interest in commercial use, the role of and connection to Exeter, existing conditions and the market. They then suggested several different ways to consider the two areas, as follows. People have not yet reached agreement on this, and this list captures the various suggestions people had, some of which are contradictory. The project team will come to the next meeting with maps responding to these ideas and proposing geographic scope for the group to make a final decision on.

Suggestions for The Study Area/Core Area to Consider for Change (to seek agreement on in this process)

- The parcels that are currently zoned commercial at the intersection including the Corner Tavern, the Bald Hill Garden Center, Oatley's restaurant, and the Schartner Bald Hill Nursery.
- The parcels that are currently zoned commercial at the intersection including the Corner Tavern, the Bald Hill Garden Center, Oatley's restaurant, the Schartner Bald Hill Nursery, and to include the Rolling Greens application area.
- Focus on the areas the Town Council most wants the group's input on.
- All parcels abutting the intersection until you hit residential parcels
- A half-mile radius from the intersection in all directions: either including Exeter or stopping at the NK/Exeter boundary, in a circle or in a square
- Include Morris Farm (200' in NK, rest in Exeter)
- The road all the way to Rt. 4
- Residential areas also / no residential area

Suggestions for the Area Likely to be Impacted By A Vision (to be aware of in this process)

- A half-mile radius from the intersection in each direction
- All of North Kingstown including: the abutting residential areas, the area to Rt 4, Post Road, TDR sending areas
- Exeter, including its proposed village areas

Other

Participants discussed the desire by the members from Exeter that the Stakeholder Group fully consider the impact of this decision and possibly make decisions that stretch into Exeter. Exeter members indicated that Exeter has a strong preference to maintain a rural character. While the intersection has an impact on Exeter, several people said this process is designed to address an area within the NK border and to include Exeter's interests (as desired by Statewide Planning and by others) by providing several seats at the table while keeping the decision making to North Kingstown representatives. NK does not have authority over Exeter's land use patterns, and cannot make Exeter change their zoning or land use designations.

Members representing the rural/residential perspective expressed serious concern about a perceived conflict of interests about past actions of one of the four members of their interest group, as designated by the Town Council. The facilitator said that the Town Council's decision on Stakeholder Group membership is final and cannot be changed at this time.

Public Comment

Members of the public were invited to share their thoughts. Jim Ganung, resident of Wickford Highlands, asked the group to use as much data and information as possible as part of the visioning process. Matt Richardson, resident, said that what ever happens in North Kingstown will impact Exeter, that what happens at the intersection could draw visitors or drive them away, and that agriculture is an important business interest. Jim Grundy, a Planning Commission member, reminded the participants that they are an advisory, not decision-making, group and said he hopes they will be independent thinkers.

Stakeholder Group Business

The group discussed meeting times, and 6:00 to 9:00 works best. The next two Stakeholder Group meetings are scheduled for Thursday, September 6th and Monday the September 24. There will be a site visit or two between now and the September 6 meeting. The meeting adjourned at 8:47pm.

APPENDIX A: Meeting Participants

Stakeholder Group Members & Alternates Present

Alternates are noted with an asterix

Michael Baker
Ahren Cohen
Frank Digregorio
Paul Dion
Mark Hawkins
Meg Kerr
Kevin Maloney
John Nosatch
Vaughn Oatley
Colin O’Sullivan
Jonathan Reiner
Richard Schartner, Sr.
David Schweid
Jeff Zucchi

(Members absent:

John Patterson, Martha Pughe)

Project Team & NK Planning Dept. Staff

Nicole Bourassa
Ona Ferguson
Peter Flinker
Nate Kelly
Becky Lamond
Jonathan Reiner
Jared Weaver

Also In Attendance

Jerry Duffy
Jim Ganung
Kevin Harris
Mr. Edward Mancini
Mrs. Edward Mancini
Curt Matteson
Chip Palmer
Skip Ponte
David Samson
Marilyn Shellman
Rick Thompson