

Harwich Center Initiative Committee
Monday Dec. 10, 2019 at 5 pm
Small Hearing Room, Harwich Town Hall
732 Main St. Harwich MA 02645

AGENDA

1. Call Meeting to Order
2. Public Comment
3. Introduction of New Members
4. Approval of Minutes of Nov. 27, 2018 meeting
5. Election of Chair and Vice Chair
6. New Business:
 - A. Discussion of Committee Priorities for 2019
 - B. Planning for Proposed Stakeholder Meetings
 - C. External Communication Procedure
 - D. Date of Next Meeting
7. Adjournment

Authorized posting officer

Posted by

Virginia A. Hewitt, Committee Clerk

Harwich Center Initiative Committee

Town Clerk's Office

Agenda submitted electronically to Town for posting by Committee Clerk Virginia Hewitt on Dec. 5, 2018.

** Per the Attorney General's Office: Boards/Commissions may hold an open session for topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting following "New Business"*

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Harwich Center Initiative Committee
Town of Harwich
732 Main St. Harwich MA 02645

MINUTES
Nov. 27, 2018 Meeting

DRAFT

I. Call to Order

Interim Chairman Paul Doane called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm. Committee members Lane Meehan, Lincoln Hooper and Virginia Hewitt were present and reported having been sworn in by the Town Clerk. Others in attendance included Paul Lagg, Greg Winston, Richard Waystack, Matt Hart, Peg Rose, Cyndi Williams, Patti Smith, Bill Galvin, Arthur Bodin and Steve Tupper. Committee members and attendees took turns introducing themselves. Mr. Doane advised attendees that the Selectmen will be interviewing candidates for the two remaining vacancies on the Committee. He urged anyone interested in serving to submit the Citizens Activity Form, which can be found on the Town website or obtained from the Town Administrator's Office.

II. Organize the Committee

Motion: to appoint Ginny Hewitt as the Committee Clerk (m: L. Hopper, s: L. Meehan).
Approved unanimously.

Mr. Doane deferred the vote on a Committee Chair until the next meeting when it hoped we will have a full committee of 7 appointed and sworn-in members.

Committee member Dan Wolf arrived at 4:08. As he had not yet been sworn in, Mr. Wolf did not make any motions or participate in any votes at this meeting.

III. Mission Statement Approval

Mr. Doane proposed the following Mission Statement for the Committee:

"Develop and advocate specific, well thought-out recommendations for effective action – legislative, regulatory, and administrative – to promote the historic, multi-use character of Harwich Center, to regain the Center's active "village" atmosphere and charm, and to stimulate, nurture, and support the investment and economic activity needed to accomplish those goals."

A discussion ensued with the following points noted: the proposed mission statement is concise but also encompassing, recommendations can take the form of proposed Town Meeting action, state legislation or other Town action, and that the use of the term "multi-use character" is important. Since this wording differs from the Committee charge approved by the Board of Selectmen it was noted that they would be informed of this in our first progress report.

Motion: to accept the proposed mission statement as presented (m: L. Meehan, s: L. Hooper). Unanimously approved.

IV. Establish Working Groups

Mr. Doane presented a proposal to create working groups composed of committee members and interested community members, business owners, property owners, municipal officials, and other stakeholders. These smaller working groups would be able to focus on different areas, generate ideas, gather information and report back to the Committee. It is anticipated this structure would allow the Committee to accomplish its work more quickly. Mr. Doane noted that as subcommittees, these working groups would have to comply with Open Meeting Law requirements. He provided the following information on his thoughts on the focus of each working group:

Infrastructure – this group would focus on issues such as parking, street design and layout, streetscape, sidewalk, sewer and septic and related issues.

Regulatory - this group would look at questions such as "Is existing zoning conducive to revitalization of the village?" and "Are Historic District regulations effective in accomplishing their goals?" This group would liaison with the Planning Board. It was noted that some have suggested the Zoning Bylaw may need to be reviewed in terms of its ability to effectively guide revitalization.

Economic Development/Real Estate – this group could be asked to go through the village, parcel by parcel, identify the owners, find out what their interests are and what prospective uses might be. Several parcels in the core area of Harwich Center are available or may be available. It was noted that some have suggested restaurants would aid in the revitalization of the Center, but septic requirements may limit the ability for restaurants to operate. Town plans do not currently include sewerage in Harwich Center for 15 to 20 years. This group could look at whether current septic requirements do limit restaurants and explore options such as using vacant land for joint septic treatment for area businesses.

Following Mr. Doane's presentation of this proposal, a general discussion was held with committee members and other attendees participated. The following points were noted:

- The Committee needs to talk to people in Harwich Center to find out what they believe the problems are.

- The Harwich Accessibility Rights Committee is applying for a block grant to implement the recommendations in the recently completed Americans with Disability Act (ADA) Self Assessment. This grant would include renovating the sidewalks from the Community Center to the Cultural Center. The application is due Dec. 10th and the Town should be notified in March if the grant has been awarded.
- It was noted that it would be great if we can piggy-back on other efforts such as the HARC sidewalk project and the proposed Harwich Center Cultural District.
- Questions were raised about infrastructure issues and it was noted that attendee Stephen Tupper, the Transportation Program Manager from the Cape Cod Commission, is willing to assist us as we move forward.
- Mr. Doane noted that traffic studies have shown that Main St./Rt. 39 in Harwich Center is one of the most heavily traveled routes in Town, sometimes exceeding Rt. 28 in Harwich Port. Others noted that this provides us with an excellent opportunity for businesses.
- Committee member Link Hooper, director of the Town's Dept. of Public Works, was asked if there are any plans to develop a pathway or other method to attract users of the Old Colony Rail Trail, which is also heavily used, to get off the bike path and utilize businesses in Harwich Center. Mr. Hooper replied that he is not aware of any plans for this.

Mr. Hooper provided the following information on two possible sources of state grant funding for infrastructure improvements:

1. Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) from the Mass. Dept. of Transportation - Any TIP project has to meet "complete street standards" that specify the size of the travel lanes, sidewalks, shoulders, etc. and is not yet known if those widths are available or if the stakeholders would be interested in meeting those standards.
2. Mass. Works – these projects focus on economic development and might be a nice fit for Harwich Center since "complete streets" standards don't need to be met.

Committee members and attendees discussed various concerns related to on-street and off-street parking and other changes that might be needed to meet the requirements for the different grants. Mr. Hooper reiterated that it was much too soon to know whether any Harwich Center project would qualify and what the requirements would be. The first step is to have a preliminary discussion and perhaps a site visit by officials who oversee these grant programs.

Mr. Doane summarized that his thought is that each working group would focus on 8 to 10 targeted activities and that he hoped committee members and attendees would consider volunteering for one of the working groups.

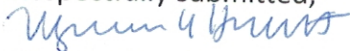
Some Committee members and attendees then questioned creating working groups at this point, noting that it might be premature as we might be moving in a direction that stakeholders do not support. For example, if a proposed solution involves the loss of any on-street parking spaces, businesses will likely object. Attendees then discussed specifics related to parking, previous parking configurations, current parking and various concepts that might be considered in the future for on and off-street parking.

While some supported the idea of each working group conducting its own outreach efforts to stakeholders, after some discussion the consensus was agreed upon that it was premature to break into working groups until we have a consensus on what we are trying to accomplish. It may slow the process down right now but we should take a step back and do some general information gathering. Committee member Mr. Wolf noted that in order to be successful in obtaining grant funding the community needs to speak with one voice. He expressed his concern that breaking into working groups prematurely would not allow us to develop the consensus of stakeholders that will be critical to moving forward with steps to revitalize Harwich Center.

A discussion was then held on the need to involve stakeholders early and how best to go about involving them. It was noted that it is difficult to find convenient times for business owners and working people to attend meetings so it was agreed multiple dates and times should be offered. Various methods for contacting stakeholders, the need to arrange for a moderator for stakeholder meetings and related issues were discussed. The Committee then agreed to hold our next meeting on Monday, Dec. 10th at 5 pm to plan stakeholder meetings.

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Virginia Hewitt
Committee Clerk