

# **Acton Today, Tomorrow, Together**

## ***Boards, Commissions, and Committees Session #2 June 26, 2008***

### **Attendance**

- Franny Osman                      Transportation Advisory Committee
- Bob Surdel                         Acton Memorial Library Board of Trustees
- Lauren Rosenzweig             Economic Development Committee/Board of Selectmen
- Nick Francis                       Economic Development Committee
- Nancy Tavernier                  Acton Community Housing Corporation
- Kimberly Connors Hughes     Historical Commission
- Peter Grover                       Historical Commission
- Bill Klauer                         Historical Commission
- Paul Turner                        Council on Aging
- Kristen Alexander               Planning Department
- Daphne Politis                    Planners Collaborative
- Jim Purdy                          Planners Collaborative

### **Missions, Goals, and Issues**

Members reported on their mission and the issues they are addressing

#### **Transportation Advisory Committee**

- Review development re: transportation incl. biking/walking
- Shuttle bus to commuter rail and need for other public transportation
- Currently two vans M-F 8:30 – 3:30 for seniors/disabled
- Applying for suburban mobility funding CMAQ
  - More hours, more vans, fixed route service
  - Better coordination
  - Service entire population
- Need willingness to support with \$
- Survey – online/assisted
  - Need to know what support might be there

## **Council on Aging**

- When the Senior Center was planned, had considered including intergenerational space by combining it with Danny's Place, but the timing didn't work out.
- Study committee on age mixing
- Bringing legislators/Selectmen to visit and talk about seniors' questions and concerns
- Hope to work with Congresswoman Nikki Tsongas
- Potential for kids to interact with seniors – oral history - activities at Arboretum

## **Library**

- Goals:
  - Access to all citizens
  - Managing expectation of the patrons
- Experiencing record number of visits, circulation, meeting room use
- Cultural days – Chinese, Indian, Russian, Brazilian – talks, dancing, performances, readings - very successful and well attended
- Future:
  - Civil War exhibit just opened (Community Preservation Act funds used)
  - Need staff hours – ½ million items, staff is pressed
  - 7<sup>th</sup> highest in state in library materials per library staffing
  - More technology to make more productive use of space and staff and meet expectations
  - Efficiency challenge
  - Maintaining facilities – HVAC, roof, etc.
- Did 5- year plan last year – Library Director Marcia Rich presented to Council on Aging
- Invited schools to take tours of library
- Chinese collection one of the best (developed from zero ten years ago)
- West Acton Community Library – elder program
- Held hugely popular lecture series (might be able to share town hall space in future)
- Room for Council on Aging coordination with library
- More large print books

## **Historical Commission**

- Confused sometimes with Historic District Commission
- Maintains the town's cultural resource list
- Responsible for resources outside the historic districts

- 5 properties on National Register of Historic Places
  - 500 on State Register
- Looking into National Register nomination of South Acton as an industrial mill complex
  - Listing on NR protects envelope but doesn't restrict use
  - First industrial complex in colonial America
- Look for new uses for historic buildings, e.g. Vaillaincourt House (as library annex?)
- Towne School as possible senior center
- Acton needs to retain look of a New England town
  - Avoid tear-downs – sustainable, maintains supply of potential starter homes
  - Tear-downs a major problem -
  - Have surveyed up to 1920s era – the inventory should extend forward to 1960s –
  - Housing stock age mix is important to community character
  - Need to enter inventory into a database
- Need to make people aware of cultural resources list and conduct public education on what it means
- Can add properties to list at Historical Commission's discretion
- Pressure from 40B developers – would like 12 months demolition delay in these cases
- Could achieve affordable housing goals through rehab of small houses
  - (Peter: 1/2 acre zoning has been biggest problem – 2 acre better)
- Need options for development that reuse existing housing stock
- Historic landscapes important, e.g. Morrison Farm and the Prison fields
- Heritage Landscape Inventory is great – need to pay attention to it
- Working with Concord to save Wright Holden House on Rte 2 near State Police from demolition during highway improvements to Concord Rotary

### **Acton Community Housing Corporation**

- Often confused with Acton Housing Authority
- Mission: Promote and facilitate housing that is affordable to moderate income
- Priorities: (from “To Live in Acton” report)
  - 1 Affordable rental – low (50% of median income) and very low (30% of median)
  - 2 Affordable rental – low, moderate, senior and disabled
    - Purchased two condo units last year
    - 17 rental units in old Towne School
      - About to apply for 40B permit
      - Interested group of alumni of the school
    - 3 rental units at Assisted Living Facility – very low and low income

3. Affordable moderate income family owned units
  - a. Town should look at inclusionary zoning – negotiable number of affordable units in new development
  - b. Encourage friendly 40B's – ACHC permit policy
  - c. Have recently saved a 60s Cape and a small ranch, working on others
  - d. People will accept density if design is good
  - e. Need Design Review Board to have more teeth/ need more coordination with them
  - f. Property at corner of Arlington St. in West Acton Village coming up
  - g. Design guidelines might be helpful – they need to be specific to each part of town
4. Affordable moderate income senior housing in variety of types and locations – two sales recently
5. Ownership units at below market 80 – 120 % of median (“workforce housing”) – important gray area. MA Dept of Housing and Community Development making this a new priority.– Acton could be pilot.

Future:

- Condo buy-down program - Two garden apartments in past year – (however more of the demand is for townhouse units)
- Closing cost assistance for first time owners
- Education
- Land acquisition
- Aging– in-place capital fund

## Board of Selectmen

### Sponsoring this Acton outreach initiative

- Sustainability
- More diversity
- Support historic preservation

Village enhancement (siting of Sovereign Bank is an example)

### Goals:

1. Greening Acton – protect environment, preserve resources, energy, reducing autos, walking, technology in buildings
2. Understandable budget process – 3-5 year financial plan
3. Acquisition of open space – water, farms, vistas
4. Limit resident growth

## 5. Support seniors

### **Economic Development Committee**

- Began prior to 98 Update
- Interest in more shopping and commercial use – there was originally a balance of residential and commercial development, but residential growth outstripped business growth
- Identified areas for business, but rezoning not always successful
- Acton has recently become a desirable location for expansion of current businesses

#### Future:

- Considering becoming more active in specific developments
- Incentives to attract desirable development
- Form-based zoning
- Looking for synergy (e.g. Crossroads Mall helped by nearby Avalon development)
- Stability
- Diversity of uses
- Reach out to ethnic groups and support business development
- Educating businesses about Sign bylaw
- Seek more participation from organizations
  - Lions Club
  - Rotary
  - West Acton Merchants Association
  - Chamber of Commerce
- Need GIS
- Focus on people who work in Acton – how can they find ways to live here?
- Trade-off between small town feel vs. more use of technology in providing town services – less face-to-face contact with town employees may lessen public understanding of what they do and reduce support for them
- Patchwork of historic homes
- More cooperation, communication and outreach – preservation efforts
- Community service @ high school

## **Prioritizing**

Potential issues were discussed, and then participants were given five sticky dots and asked to place up to three dots next to the items they feel are of highest priority.

| <b>Issue</b>   | <b>Votes</b> |
|--|--------------|
| Preserving rural and historic characteristics                  | 5            |
| Enhancing neighborhoods  | 2            |
| Enhancing village centers                                      | 5            |
| Addressing high cost of living                                 | 1            |
| Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities               | 5            |
| Addressing traffic issues                                      | 1            |
| Addressing growth management and site and design review issues | 2            |
| Planning for sustainability                                    | 1            |
| Improving the Senior Center or building a new one              | 3            |
| Increasing/supporting diversity                                | 2            |
| Acquiring open space   | 3            |