

Acton Today, Tomorrow, Together

Boards, Commissions, and Committees Session #3

June 28, 2008

Attendance

- Bernice Baran Housing Authority
- Nancy Kolb Housing Authority
- Bob Whittlesey Housing Authority
- Steve Baran Council on Aging
- Brian Bendig Historic District Commission
- Bill Klauer Cemetery Commission
- Les Gerhardt Cemetery Commission
- Michael Fisher Transportation Advisory Commission
- Dick Calandrella ACCP Commission
- Peter J Berry Board of Selectmen
- Celia Kent Sidewalk Committee
- Paulina Knibbe Sidewalks, Senior Center Expansion
- Ann Sussman Design Review Board
- Daphne Politic Planners Collaborative
- Jim Purdy Planners Collaborative

Missions, Goals, and Issues

Members reported on their mission and the issues they are addressing

Acton Housing Authority

(See attached written statement)

- Owns 142 units – 2 locations with housing for elders and disabled residents at Windsor Ave. and Sachem Way
- Mission is to serve low (50% of median income) and very low income (30% of median) population
- 39 family units on Sachem way and scattered throughout Acton
- Housing for 12 disabled people in a house owned by the Housing Authority

- Family self-sufficiency program

- 155 local preference applicants on Section 8 rental housing assistance program waiting list and 25 on the elderly housing waiting list
- Hope to add more units at Sachem Way
- Want the Master Plan to include an explicit statement of the goal to increase affordable housing
- Most suburban towns have policies that discourage diversity, Acton is an exception
- Challenge to create sense of community -
- There is a tremendous amount of diversity and support for it

Council on Aging

(See attached goals statement)

- Council on Aging refers to both the COA Board and the Senior Center
- Senior Center has sense of vibrancy, modern feeling
- COA goals for seniors are a full quality of life and connection to the community

Objectives for the future:

1. Outreach to ethnic and cultural roots
Friends of CoA sponsors activities of this kind
2. Accommodate baby boomers
They did a survey with 490 responses
Physical activity is a major interest– T'ai Chi, aerobics, etc
3. Response to caretaker needs
CoA has a social worker to help families with elders
4. Create a green center
Senior Center on bird flyway, try to provide opportunities to enjoy nature
5. Advocacy to prevent elder abuse – neglect, battering, financial abuse
6. Need for expansion – 65 and over population growing rapidly:
1994 2000
2006 3000
2020 4400

Therefore will need more space, more programs

- Senior Center expansion group
- Current center is inadequate in size for current seniors – fastest growing demographic group in town by far
- Town goal is to keep seniors in the community – better quality of life for them, and it improves economic vitality
- Challenge for the Future 10-20 years

- What would encourage them to stay?
 - Core central values
 - Maintain web of social connections - changes with life changes
 - Continue to be useful
- Three Choices for Senior Center
 1. Remodel existing center – value proposition good for 4-5 years
 2. Lease space in vacant commercial buildings good for 5-10 years
 3. New building – best in long run
 - A number of potential sites
 - Multiple uses for community

Historic District Commission

- Different from Historical Commission (which is town-wide)
- Regulatory/permitting group for the town’s three historic districts – 190 parcels
- Formed 1990 under Ch40C of the Mass. General Laws
- Historic resources and character very important/central to town
- East Acton station master’s house saved by town
- Tremendous commitment of resources, including CPA funds (1-1/2%)
 - Town Hall and monument have been restored and maintained
- Robust commitment to enforcing bylaw
- Attention given to Exchange Hall
- Goal: want to expand the districts in size and number
- HDC is all-volunteer; no staff – but will need it if expansion occurs
- Chapter P refers to town-wide resources
- Two buildings in West Acton Village currently in demolition delay

Goal: Enact a demolition-by-neglect bylaw – need to educate the public and encourage an attitude among homeowners to maintain their historic property

Issues

1. Protect town history and character
2. Minimize aesthetic degradation of environment

Cemetery Commission

- Three cemeteries:
 - Woodlawn (1737)
Original plan to expand into adjacent soccer field
Alternative is to move to Morrison Farm
Expanding into woods would be expensive
 - South Acton
 - Mt.Hope
- Enough property North, off Rte 27, to suffice for many years to come
- Maintaining grounds, historic buildings and tombs
- Complaints of dogs in cemeteries, especially with elderly and children
- Plan to expand as needed – soccer field and woodland
- Need facility to house vehicles and maintenance equipment
- Cemetery roads need repair
- Environmental damage to head stones
 - 1820-1890 marble stones – eroding
 - Deer damage to vegetation
- People are not buying lots up front any more – loss of income for Commission

Board of Selectmen

- Priority: Sustainability
 - Walkability
 - Bike paths
- Cultural change needed
- Kelley's Corner – potential new town center. Could look like W. Concord.
- South Acton: Exchange Hall is a large issue
- Want to change town from automobile friendly to people friendly

Sidewalk Committee

- Established criteria – priority list of improvements
- Funding, implementation are key
- Limitations: \$ and staff time
- Need plan
- Going back to Town Meeting with next step
- Negotiating easements with land owners

Design Review Board

- Overall goal: make design and building more human – centered
- Design Review Guidelines, May 2007, for commercial development – would like to get form-based zoning in place and to be consistent with concept
- Sidewalks
 - Develop links b/w destination
 - Inter-relate with other committees
- Increase of commercial development
- Planning and educating for sustainability needs to be inter-generational

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.

Issue	Votes
Preserving rural and historic character	9
Enhancing neighborhoods	0
Enhancing village centers	6
Addressing high cost of living	3
Addressing the lack of walking/biking facilities	4
Addressing traffic issues	5
Addressing growth management and site and design review issues	3
Planning and educating for sustainability	5
Improving the Senior Center or building a new one	4
Supporting diversity – socioeconomic, and cultural	5
Get movie house in Acton	1

Acton elder quest - Vision 2008 - notes

"We're seniors walking for health and for fun..

"We're seniors surfing the Net, emailing grandchildren in Australia, getting tickets online, organizing our finances on spreadsheets, learning to use our new digital cameras.

We're seniors learning French, listening to Broadway composers and operas, creating heirloom quilts, discussing major world issues, showing our creative side."

Friends of the Council on Aging

Mission - enabling elderly to enjoy a full quality of life and remain connected to the community.

Goal - undertake outreach to varied ethnic and cultural groups - Chinese, Indian - students.

Goal - accommodating baby boomers - 60+ - exercise - tai chi - aerobics - intellectual and educational programs.

Goal - responding to caretaker needs - parents, spouses, friends and themselves.

Goal - creating a green center - birds, plants, flowers.

Goal - advocacy - real estate property taxes, elderly abuse.

Goal - expansion - responding to increases in population and more varied space requirements.

Steve Baran (Council on Aging board) and Paulina Knibbe - Expansion Committee

PRESENTATION ON BEHALF OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING

I am here as a member of the Board of the Acton Housing Authority to address the need for affordable housing in Acton.

First a little background on the Housing Authority. Established in 1970, the Housing Authority is funded by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It is part of the Department of Housing and Community Development's efforts to provide affordable housing throughout the state. In Acton, the Housing Authority owns 142 units of state aided housing and also provides 170 rental subsidies. These include rental units for elderly and/or handicapped individuals on Windsor Ave. and Sachem Way. In addition, there are 39 family units, twelve of which are located in our family development on Sachem Way and 27 in condominium apartments scattered through Acton. There are also 12 disabled people living in a house owned by the Housing Authority. Preference is always given to Acton residents for housing. There is a five person Board, 4 of whom are elected, which is responsible for setting policy and establishing financial oversight.

The town of Acton has supported the Housing Authority through making grants of Community Preservation funds. These have been used for capital improvements and support services. The Authority is particularly proud of its Family Sufficiency Program which has assisted many families in their lives. Several families have been able to move from our housing into first time home ownership.

The Housing Authority strives to maintain attractive, quality units for its residents. It has its own maintenance staff. Tenants have planted and maintained gardens within the developments.

There is a steady stream of Acton residents who are applying to us for housing. We have recently housed two families with children who had grown up in this community and were at risk of homelessness. Out of the last 6 family units 5 were provided to Acton-Boxborough families. All of the senior units have gone to Acton residents. We have 155 local preference applicants on our Section 8 waiting list and 25 people on our elderly waiting list.

The present goal of the Housing Authority is to increase the stock of affordable housing in Acton. We are therefore exploring the possibility of adding units to property we own on Sachem Way. We are hopeful that the community will support us in this endeavor.

We believe that the town benefits from having quality housing for its diverse economic populations. We are therefore hopeful that the Comprehensive Community Plan will include an explicit statement that increasing affordable housing is one of its goals.

Bernice Baran

ACTON COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN
 BOARDS, COMMITTEES & COMMISSIONS
 JUNE 28, 2008 10:00 AM SIGN-IN SHEET

<u>NAME</u>	<u>COMMITTEE</u>	<u>E-MAIL OR PHONE</u>
Bill Klawor	Cemetery Commission	
Ann Sussman	Design Review Board	
BRIAN BENDIG	HISTORIC DISTRICT COMM'N	
NANCY KOLB	HOUSING AUTHORITY	
Bob Whittlesey	"	rbwhittlesey@verizon.net
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