

MONADNOCK REGION FUTURE

LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING

MINUTES

December 17, 2013

Present: Larry Robinson, Chair, *SWRPC Board of Directors*; Eileen Fernandes, Vice-Chair, *Cheshire Medical Center*; Dick Berry, Ben Daviss, Elaine Levlocke, *SWRPC Board of Directors*; Susan Ashworth, *Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services (HCS)*; Tom Moses, *NH Homebuilders Association*; Ryan Owens, *Monadnock Conservancy*; and, Jen Risley, *Monadnock Food Coop*.

Staff members present were Tim Murphy, Executive Director; Rebecca Baldwin, Office Manager; Tara Germond, Senior Planner.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Due to the inclement weather Chairman Robinson asked those in attendance if they wanted to continue with the meeting or postpone it to another date. Those attending unanimously agreed to move forward with the meeting.

Chairman Robinson called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m., welcomed those in attendance and introductions were made.

II. Minutes of September 17, 2013

The minutes of September 17, 2013 were approved by unanimous vote.

III. Discussion Topic: Regional Challenges and Opportunities

Tara Germond provided a presentation on the regional challenges and opportunities that were identified at each of the eight focus group meetings as follows, noting that in all over 100 people participated:

Economic Development Focus Group: This group met on October 4, 2013 and consisted of members of the Economic Development Advisory Committee. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Encourage economic diversification
- Concern for changing demographics
- Increase economic competitiveness
- Invest in education
- Maintain adequate infrastructure

Energy Focus Group: This group met on November 15, 2013 and consisted of State Representatives and building professionals. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Increase use of renewable energy
- Increase energy efficiency of buildings

- Promote travel demand management
- Increase energy planning and education, especially around climate change

Housing Focus Group: This group met on November 21, 2013 and consisted of members from Heading for Home. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Improve quality housing stock
- Reform property tax structure
- Need for diverse, affordable housing options
- Encourage mixed use development

Natural Resources Focus Group: This group met on October 15, 2013 and consisted of members of the Natural Resources Advisory Committee. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Concern for improving air quality
- Importance of water quality protection
- Support for land conservation efforts
- Concern for loss of habitat, biodiversity
- Concern for climate disruption
- Need for multi-town and regional coordination

Public Health Focus Group: This group met on November 15, 2013 and consisted of members of the Council for Healthier Communities. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Need for early intervention for substance use/behavioral health issues
- Concern for impacts of aging population
- Need for improved transportation options
- Need options for urgent care

Transportation Focus Group: This group met on October 28, 2013 and consisted of members of the Transportation Advisory Committee. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Lack of funding to support transportation infrastructure
- Impact of changing demographics
- Importance of community transportation
- Limited intercity bus transportation
- Need to develop and promote multi-modal infrastructure

Water Infrastructure Focus Group: This group met on October 22, 2013 and consisted of wastewater and water treatment plant operators. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Lack of funding to maintain and upgrade aging infrastructure
- Difficulty complying with state and federal regulations
- Impact of natural features such as beaver dams, topography and surficial geology on water infrastructure

Working Landscapes Focus Group: This group met on August 22, 2013. Challenges and opportunities identified were:

- Need to protect and encourage biodiversity
- Limited enforcement of regulations
- Increased support for the conservation initiatives
- Economic viability of agriculture and working landscapes
- Decreasing development pressures on agricultural lands
- Improve regional coordination and collaboration

Tara Germond asked members for their general impressions and reactions to what was identified through the focus group discussions. Ben Daviss noted that the observations made were very comprehensive and paralleled issues in his community. Larry Robinson observed that a lot of the concerns deal with problems related to education and funding. Ben Daviss said that people should be encouraged to work together and find ways to share services. Eileen Fernandes pointed out that a lot of the focus groups shared similar concerns which shows that in many ways they are all interconnected. Tara Germond shared a listing of the recurrent themes from the focus groups as follows:

- Impact of changing demographics (aging population and loss of youth/young professionals)
- Lack of reliable sources of funding
- Need for more public transportation options
- Importance of regional collaboration/coordination
- Concern for climate change
- Need for improved and maintained infrastructure
- Challenges with enforcement of/compliance with regulations

Group members noted that where some communities would like to see more regional collaboration, others want to preserve their individual identity. Ben Daviss noted that there would be a need to identify common problems and have an understanding of what it trying to be achieved. Larry Robinson suggested finding a success story that the majority could identify with. It was suggested that most communities would measure success by how it relates to either saving or making money.

Tara Germond asked if there appeared to be any issues that had not been addressed by the focus groups and it was generally agreed that based on the overlap between groups almost everything seems to be accounted for. Dick Berry suggested removing the word public from any mention of public transportation. He questioned if the need for more jobs was sufficiently addressed and suggested more emphasis be placed on locally owned businesses.

Group members briefly discussed the importance of the type of recruitment process that is needed to get businesses to come to our Region as well as how to get those currently here to remain here. Emphasis was placed on the idea that we need small businesses as well as large industries. It was also agreed that when dealing with items such as education and air quality they need to be portrayed as regional rather than town specific issues. It was noted that concerns over our current tax structure are related to several of the issues identified by the focus groups. Tim Murphy suggested that time be set aside at the next meeting to discuss strategies.

IV. Revisiting the Regional Vision Section

Tim Murphy suggested that the vision statement should have a succinct opening, followed by bulleted items identified by the focus groups and end with a statement that links everything back to the opening one. Tara Germond distributed the following draft copy of a vision statement noting that it would also need to have a visual element added to it.

“This plan is guided by a vision of the Monadnock Region where thriving communities rich in culture, educational opportunities and natural resources work together to support a resilient and robust regional economy, which offers its residents freedom of choice and, embraces our heritage and distinct sense of place.

This future depends on a network of interconnected factors including:

- Maintaining high quality infrastructure & community services
- Managing & protecting natural resources & working landscapes
- Supporting accessible housing, transportation, & employment options that meet the needs of individuals of all ages & abilities
- Sustaining a diverse & attractive regional economy
- Promoting energy efficiency & conservation
- Fostering regional collaboration & partnerships
- Addressing climate change through adaptation & mitigation
- Encouraging civic engagement & volunteerism involving multiple generations
- Promoting public health & healthy aging
- Offering quality educational opportunities for all levels of learners

Each of these elements plays a critical role in connecting and supporting our region's residents and communities to ensure that this vision is achieved and maintained in the years to come."

Tara Germond asked members what they thought of the draft vision statement and it was generally agreed that this was a good starting point and the bulleted items should be included. She noted that she would make the draft statement available to members that could not attend today's meeting and encouraged everyone to contact her with any feedback.

V. Regional Plan Component Development - Staff Update

Due to the weather conditions it was agreed that this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

VI. Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting sometime during the early part of February. Chairman Robinson asked staff to conduct a poll of the full membership to determine which date would be the best.

VII. Public Comments/Questions

No public comments were made at this time.

VIII. Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca I. Baldwin
Office Manager