

TOWN OF ALTON
MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE (MP)
MINUTES OF 2021
MARCH 31, 2021

APPROVED

Members Present: Paul LaRochelle, Selectmen's Rep.

Others Present: Jessica A. Call, Town Planner

Others Attending Remotely: Aimee Terravechia, Citizen Member
Ron Rubbico, Citizen Member
Bob Regan, Planning Board, Chair
Russ Wilder, Planning Board

Mr. Regan read the remote attendance instructions into the record.

“UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE: To keep our members and staff safe, and to comply with RSA 91-A, the COVID-19 State of Emergency, and the Governor's Orders on restrictions at public gatherings, the Town of Alton is holding "remote audio participation meetings". If you cannot attend remotely, please contact the Planning Department at (603) 875-2162 or planner@alton.nh.gov for further instructions. To remotely attend the meeting, visit our website: www.alton.nh.gov for telephone access and Zoom access instructions listed under News and Announcements on the home page the day of the meeting. If you are having difficulties accessing the remote meeting, please call (603) 507-1002.

****As a reminder, at the Master Plan Committee's October 7, 2020, meeting, the Committee voted to temporarily suspend in-person public attendance. If the public has any comments on anything discussed at the meeting, they can email their comments to the Planning Department at planner@alton.nh.gov, or mail them to: Town of Alton Master Plan Committee, PO Box 659, Alton, NH 03809.***

Roll Call Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m. +/-

Mr. Regan started off with noting that four (4) RFPs were submitted and wanted the Committee to comment and give their opinion on who to interview. He wondered if funds were left over next March from the warrant article, could the Committee use those funds during that year. Ms. Call stated that the funds were good for a period of four (4) years. Mr. Wilder asked if the Committee was required to select the lowest bidder. Ms. Call stated, no, and that was specified in the RFP.

Ms. Call shared that Dubois & King seemed to be in business for a really long time since the 1960's. She thought that they were a big company and she did not think that they were a perfect fit for Alton. Mr. Wilder shared that he used to work with Dubois & King in the environmental consulting business and they were a very reputable firm. He did not have a lot of knowledge about them with their planning experience and he noticed that most of their experience has been in Randolph, Vermont. Ms. Call stated that it was not that she did not like them, she did not think they were the best fit. Mr. LaRochelle thought that they were well rounded and worked on all aspects of Master Planning, but thought that the Committee should look at all of the submittals to choose the best ones

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to interview. Mr. Regan noted that his thoughts were similar. He thought that their proposal was “by the book”. His biggest issue was, “How did the Committee reasonably and effectively get community engagement?” He shared that they talked about a survey, but he was not sure if a survey would be good to use this time around. Mr. Wilder pointed out that this firm’s strength was transportation. Mr. Rubbico thought that the fact that Mr. Wilder worked with them before was good to know. He thought that this was going to be a tiny contract for a big company. Mrs. Terravechia did not think that anything really stood out from their proposal, and she wondered how much dedicated manpower they would have since they were such a large firm. Mr. LaRochelle agreed with the other members. The Committee decided not to interview Dubois & King.

Ms. Call stated that she really like the SE Group. They had a solid background in Master Planning. They had experience working in Vermont and Colorado, but they did perform some Master Plan work in New Hampshire. The team consisted of three (3) members. She noted that the proposal that they submitted showed that they took the time to answer the items in the RFP. She liked the chart that they prepared that listed specifically the tasks that each of the groups would be responsible for, them, the town, and what would be delivered at the end of each task. She proposed the SE Group to be interviewed. Mr. Wilder, Mr. Rubbico, Mrs. Terravechia, and Mr. LaRochelle agreed. Mr. Regan shared that what caught his eye was that they appeared to study the RFP and their proposal addressed what the Committee was looking for. Mr. LaRochelle like how everything was spelled out what their projection would be each month and it appeared that they spent a lot of time on their proposal. Ms. Call pointed out that their proposal mentioned that they would be able to assist the Committee if they needed further assistance. Mr. Wilder thought that they had the appropriate amount of depth to get this done. Mrs. Terravechia thought that this proposal was very thoughtful. She liked that they mentioned they could work with us further if need be. The Committee decided to interview SE Group.

Ms. Call stated that her opinions of Emerge were similar to Dubois & King, meaning she was not so dazzled with their presentation. She noted that she liked the layout of SE Group the best. Mr. Regan thought that this proposal was very machined, and it appeared that they had a set process to respond to RFPs. Mr. LaRochelle agreed. Mr. Wilder thought that Emerge was another large company. He pointed out that one of the team members was moonlighting on this job because he worked for another company. Mr. Wilder did not think there was enough information showing how they would be assisting the Committee, and they did not have a lot of experience in preparing small town Master Plans. Mr. Rubbico asked Ms. Call how many companies received the RFP. She said roughly eight (8), but it was published in the NHMA website, Planlink, the department’s Facebook page, and on the Town’s website. Mr. Rubbico noted that he shared the views of the other members on the first three RFPs so far. His concern was that the Committee was eliminated from some of the companies that had considered submitting a proposal because of the budget that was available. The Committee decided not to interview Emerge.

Ms. Regan proposed to bring Tara Bamford in for an interview. He noted that this was the lowest bid, but it had more than that going for it. He thought that one of the important things Ms. Bamford stressed was community engagement. Mr. Regan thought that the Committee could conduct Zoom meetings for each organization that is identified, for example, the Police Department, Fire

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Department, Alton Business Association, Alton Rotary, and the American Legion. He was really not too keen on doing a survey again this time around, and was more inclined to have group discussions to identify objectives and needs. Mr. Regan also pointed out that what Ms. Bamford talked about was the getting the participation of various organizations in town, like departments heads and the Selectmen. He thought that the cost estimate would leave some remaining funds. Ms. Bamford was an individual and seems like she would be more dedicated, with a background in rural communities. Mr. Regan pointed out that the current Plan stated that the townspeople wanted to keep the rural feel of Alton. He liked the SE Group proposal as well. Ms. Call agreed. She wanted to interview her as well. She noted that she saw Ms. Bamford involved with answering questions on Planlink often. She thought that Ms. Bamford was very informative and she really knew her way around planning, and she would be a good fit for Alton. Although her proposal did not have a fancy chart like SE Group, she did think the Committee could get outside help. Mr. Wilder thought that Ms. Bamford would be doing a lot more of the work, and noted that she had been a professor at Dartmouth who had the technology to set up the Zoom calls. Mr. Wilder pointed out that Ms. Bamford had municipal experience and was part of the North County Council. Mr. Wilder wondered when the initial input was received and an outline of the plan was done, how the document would be produced, and would she be the right one to do that or would she have to team up with somebody. Mr. LaRochelle thought that could be asked during the interview. The Committee decided to interview Ms. Bamford.

The Committee chose Ms. Call, Mr. Regan, and Mr. Wilder to be part of the Interview Committee. Mr. LaRochelle thought that he could attend as a Selectman, but if Mr. Monziona could attend instead, that would be better because he was an attorney. Mrs. Terravechia wondered if it would be up to Ms. Call and the Committee Chair to choose who to hire. Mr. Wilder noted that whoever does the interviews should give the Committee their recommendation on who to hire and then they would vote on who to select. It was suggested to have the members submit questions ahead of time before the interviews and Ms. Call would compile them and redistribute, but that did not mean that each vendor may get the same questions to answer. Mr. Regan thought that each vendor should do a presentation. Mr. Wilder thought that the interview should include a presentation not to exceed 20 minutes, pre-determined questions, and then allow for a general discussion. Ms. Call also added that the questions that were discussed at prior meetings would be sent to the vendors ahead of time to be included in their presentation. Mr. Wilder noted that he did not like the wording of question #4; he did not think it was necessary to include that the warrant article was for \$25,000. He stated that the question should be asking what the vendor would be providing the town at the end of the contract. Mr. Wilder suggested changing question #3 to say, how do you envision the Master Plan to be organized. Mr. Regan thought that a precursor question should say, "How do you envision the initial vision?", because he thought that the plan would evolve over time. Mrs. Terravechia thought that the vendors' presentations should also include an outline of their organization.

Mr. Regan suggested that whoever was picked, they should read the minutes so they can get a better grasp of what the Committee had already discussed. Mr. Rubbico thought that other questions like, in your experience what can go wrong, what should be anticipated, and what has gone wrong and how was it resolved.

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Mr. Wilder **MOVED** to approve the minutes of October 28, 2020, as presented. Mr. LaRochelle seconded.

The Chairman called for a roll call vote:

Paul LaRochelle, Yes; Aimee Terravechia, Yes; Ron Rubbico, Yes; Russ Wilder, Yes; Bob Regan, Yes.

Ms. Call brought up that the Committee needed to set a day for interviews. The Committee decided that Friday, April 9, 2021, at 10:00 and 11:00 am, via zoom. Ms. Call would contact the two vendors to let them know, and she would send out an email to all Committee members letting them know of that date. Mr. LaRochelle would be talking to Mr. Monziona tomorrow night and he would check with him to see if he could be part of the interview panel. The Committee scheduled their next meeting on Thursday, April 15, 2021, at 6:00 pm, which was when they were going to discuss choosing a consultant. The Committee did not talk about the Vision section any further. Mr. Regan did not think that going back to discussing the Vision section was going to gain the Committee a whole lot more because we did not have a full Committee.

At 7:23 p.m. +/- Mr. Wilder **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting.
Mrs. Terravechia seconded the motion.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Call
Town Planner

Minutes approved as amended: April 29, 2021