

**Minutes**  
**November 17, 2016**  
**Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee**

Present

Craig Gorris, Vice-Chairman  
Tex Haeuser  
Robert Foster  
Councilor Maxine Beecher  
Stephanie Carver  
Rick Harbison  
Zoe Miller  
Barry Lucier

Marilyn Reilly  
Quang Nguyen  
Councilor Brad Fox  
Tom Falby  
Kevin Adams  
Representative Kevin Battle  
Merrie Allen

**1. Welcome**

The following documents were provided:

- Minutes from the October 20, 2016, meeting
- Agenda

Vice-Chairman Craig Gorris welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members of the Committee and guests introduced themselves.

**2. Adoption of the Minutes**

Barry Lucier noted that Craig Piper needed to be added as present to the attendance.

**Bob Foster moved to adopt the October 20, 2016, minutes with the addition of Craig Piper to the attendance; Maxine Beecher seconded. Unanimous approval.**

**3. Mill Creek Zoning Update**

**Tex** gave a quick background on the Mill Creek Master plan and an update on the zoning. There was a first reading with the City Council that passed unanimously. There were amendments suggested by Councilors including things like increasing the E Street front yard setback, allowing a transportation facility as a permitted use in Mill Creek Core, items related to enabling alternatives to required off-street parking for cars, and standards for bike storage. These don't need to go back to the Planning Board and they are set for final adoption this Monday, November 21<sup>st</sup>. He asked the Committee to send ideas on how to thank Mark Eyerman.

**4. West End Master Plan Kick-Off Meeting**

**Stephanie** gave the overview and showed a PowerPoint of how the team sees the project being laid out. She showed the team organization and what aspects of the plan each member will work

on, noting that everyone will be part of the forum. She showed the study area, noting that connecting to areas outside will be a main focus.

### Neighborhood goals

This includes improving connectivity and looking from outside and inside the project area. They want to connect outside the neighborhood: bike/ped to the mall, trails, and schools. **Rick** has data on existing conditions that will be verified. In regard to interior connectivity, it seems that most residential areas have entrances in and exits out without many linkages within. There is an identity with each area and they will work on how to balance these identities so people aren't isolated in pods.

### Enhancing transit stops

They have looked at scheduling for some bus lines and noted that one bus doesn't make stops on Saturdays. They will look at other opportunities such as paratransit and shuttles.

**Tex** suggested talking to Tom Meyers, the City's previous transportation director, along with Art Handman, the current director.

### Zoning that reflects the neighborhood vision

This is a large area but not big enough for this many zoning districts. Some are residual from many years ago and some are new. They've looked at ideas for new districts, including mixed use and requiring connections to outlying areas.

**Maxine** asked what she meant by connections. **Stephanie** spoke about the plaza adjacent to MacArthur Circle. Walking there, you see the backs of the buildings and it isn't very attractive. She spoke of redevelopment, a possible second entrance, and requiring landscaping and lighting.

### Expanding housing opportunities

There is not a lot of variety in housing; it is mostly townhouses and apartments. The size of apartments isn't always adequate for families. Density is another issue.

### Improving rec and open space areas

**Rick** noted the playgrounds, basketball courts, dock, and trail near the river. He is curious about the lack of fences in the Redbank area and asked about the green space.

**Kevin B.** said the original design was for the war, between one of the streets was supposed to be soccer fields. There is meant to be enough space for additional play zones—soccer, football, etc.

**Rick** will try to map out recreational spaces so it can be seen visually. **Stephanie** noted that it seems like amenities are in Redbank and Brickhill neighborhoods. She spoke about connecting them.

**Brad** said there was a discussion about a community garden in Redbank. It fell through, the new mayor is interested in that. It's something people wanted to happen.

**Marilyn** asked if it fell through because they needed land. **Brad** said there were a number of issues but no real reason for it not to happen.

**Stephanie** said part of the process is documenting things like this. **Tex** said that is the important thing: they don't want to create false expectations about what the City can put in, but they don't want people to think there's a constraint present that might stop something they want to happen.

**Stephanie** spoke about different phasing, as was done in the Mill Creek Master Plan.

#### Identifying underutilized parcels and areas

Photos were shown of areas that could use help. What is zoning that might help push this forward and put something there that the community wants?

**Rick** asked what is under construction. The group said it's the new Risbara housing development.

**Stephanie** said Richardson & Associates will look at parcels and will help come up with visions for what could be there.

#### Community vision

They didn't come in with a vision because they believe it's something that should evolve. They want it to come from the bottom up, from residents, for about the first half of the process. They asked:

- 1- What do we want to preserve?
- 2- How should the neighborhood evolve and grow?
- 3- What are the challenges we want to confront?

Assets include the tightknit community, strong community organizations, rec and open space opportunities, access to highways, Jetport, and Mall, affordable housing options, served by transit, and opportunities for development.

Challenges include Western Ave., I-295, and the Jetport, connectivity/shared amenities between neighborhoods, retail/commercial access within the West End neighborhood, affordable housing, transit frequency and access, bike/ped comfort and safety, ADA accessibility (inadequate sidewalks, crosswalks, ramps), Safe Routes to School and complete streets.

The group discussed attracting retail that serves neighborhood

**Marilyn** said the library is across the street and she doesn't want that safe route forgotten.

**Rick** asked if kids walk or bike to school.

**Brad** said some are bussed to other side of town. Not many kids walk.

**Stephanie** said there's a certain threshold where they require bussing.

#### Community engagement

Includes the South Portland West End Neighborhood Association, office hours at community center, the CPIC, City Council, public forum, Planning Board, stakeholder interviews: residents, business owners, nonprofits, community leaders, city staff, students, kids.

They will also have addition help from USM's Muskie School and the high school (pending), particularly kids who live in the neighborhood.

#### Next steps

Include existing conditions, community participation, and drafting a vision statement. The statement should be a basic concept, simple but descriptive. When you look at zoning recommendations, you should be able to see the connection between the vision and zoning.

**Maxine** said one important thing is that people from the outside feel that it's safe and welcoming; bringing the outside in.

**Stephanie** said some public space enhancements could help with this. Creating rec space that bring people into the neighborhood; there's access to the river. There are design changes that could be made there that would open it up and make it more user-friendly. This could address some of the issue of bringing people in.

They will recommend strategies, draft zoning, and prepare the Master Plan.

The planning process was reviewed. Scheduling isn't definite and they will talk with Tex.

#### Priorities for vision statement

**Brad** said he's been trying to get the street repaved and curb work done. They had been working with Jim Gailey on trying to enhance the street. There are issues around traffic: with the new apartment project in Brickhill, residents are concerned about additional traffic on Brickhill Ave. They were hoping there would be another entrance out near Airport Dr. The bigger picture includes new business development. He likes the idea of Knightville, with storefronts and apartments above.

**Stephanie** asked if the new development is in the G3 district. **Tex** said yes, it's just residential.

**Brad** spoke about something like Scratch Bakery or similar shops. He spoke about the towing company that wanted to go on the corner that was rejected and another piece of triangular piece of property that is vacant.

The group discussed the triangular piece of land, its history, and what could happen there.

**Kevin B.** said it's called People's Park. The family was interested in basketball court there. They asked residents and they didn't want it. They were looking at volleyball there as well. **Quang** said he would like a small plaza there that could enhance connectivity. All of the parcels are in a line.

**Tex** said if there's a strong community consensus, there is the option of the City acquiring it. It's not something the City does often but that is how you can ensure you get what you want.

**Brad** said the neighborhood association has talked about this for years. That is what would stimulate people to come out and be involved.

**Rick** asked about the connections. Have they been discussed in the community before?

**Tex** said the Bike/Ped Committee took a walk from Westbrook to the schools to see what it was like. **Stephanie** asked if the recommendations came from them and **Tex** said yes. What is there now is barely adequate for walkers and dangerous for bikers.

The group spoke about biking and walking in the area as something to look into.

**Tom** asked what the dock is used for.

**Rick** said it's substantial. It looks like there have been fires on the dock.

**Tex** said it's an issue; the ownership people at Herring Cove are complaining—they feel they can't use it because there's inappropriate activity going on, people trespassing.

**Stephanie** said that could be a good focus area.

**Tom** talked about Rippleffect in Portland and starting a satellite program here.

**Zoe** said having worked by the trail, there's a lot of opportunity to create. Portland Trails does a lot of landscaping, rustic benches, better stairs.

**Kevin A.** said they currently do kayaking on Willard Beach for adults, families, and children. They could bring something like that here. They have to contract it out.

**Kevin B.** said there could be problems on the Fore River; it's a power zone for the tugs. Just past Merrill's they are putting in a platform dock for crew and they have to time it with the tugs.

**Tom** asked about on the other side of the bridge towards the airport. **Kevin B.** said there is a channel. The shallow part is eight feet at low tide. You can go up to the waterfall. He offered to take people there if they are interested.

**Rick** said they got a meeting with Cumberland County Soil & Water Conservation District. They are interested in anything reducing impervious and also biogardens. The triangle property may be a good place for this type of project. **Zoe** spoke about the possibility of edible agriculture.

**Tex** asked if growing food would be a good thing. **Merrie** said for some, **Brad** agreed. There was a plan to do it here. **Zoe** said a good model is Cultivating Community, which has overseen community gardens for Portland. They model it to have a high level of resident participation.

**Merrie** spoke about a play area in Cumberland and was interested in something like that here. She will get information on it. **Brad** mentioned Story Walks.

**Rick** mentioned that possibility of an ice rink. The group discussed ideas about this, including a year-round model that could be used for sports and then flooded and frozen in the winter for skating. Renting skates at a low cost was also discussed.

**Tex** asked what Merrie's thoughts are.

**Merrie** said she's here to listen. The most difficult part is that they've seen such a rent increase and a shift in people who can afford to live here. Redbank had a substantial increase in rent and it forced people to move out. A two-bedroom is now \$1400, no utilities, and is fairly small. You can have animals and some land since it's a house. Many people move here because they like the neighborhood and City.

**Tex** asked if there are people working at the semiconductor plants living here. **Marilyn** said no.

**Merrie** said residents pay water, heat, and electricity. They also have to mow and shovel.

**Craig** asked about turnover. **Merrie** said the property managers probably know. **Marilyn** said the average stay was two years.

**Merrie** said her concern is the shifting demographics. Redbank alone is 500 households.

**Kevin B.** said there's a negative connotation with Redbank. People are under the wrong impression.

**Craig** asked Stephanie if there is enough feedback to start a mission statement.

**Stephanie** said yes. The presentation will be sent to Tex. She told the group to feel free to email or call. They will be in the neighborhood as well. Come to them with ideas as well.

**Kevin B.** noted an inaccuracy in the map.

**Tex** said he will send out the presentation.

## 5. Comments from the Public

None

## 6. Round Robin

**Merrie** said she thinks it's great to start. She's glad to have planners thinking about it. She would like to work about getting neighbors at the table. She's thinking about churches and businesses.

**Marilyn** said she spoke with a minister. The Catholic church isn't ministering around here and is interested.

**Merrie** said Eastpoint Church is interested. They are talking about rec- and community-based space and intend to share with this neighborhood.

**Tex** asked Stephanie if her group has thought about coming to each of the monthly meetings.

**Stephanie** said she can, but she can't bring all staff. **Tex** said they can get the word out that there are these meetings.

**Merrie** said the third Wednesday is neighborhood connection night and she extends people to come to it. It's a helpful arena to understand the mix of people. There are typically around 150 people. WEX pays for the food and volunteers to serve it, SMCC makes the food with students. WEX also provides scholarships for students. Eastpoint brings tables and chairs to every dinner. There are plenty of people to come to these meetings; they will find people to be representatives.

**Zoe** said there was a session with first-year students at the high school as part of the Comprehensive Plan research process in Portland. Something like this could be great to do.

**Quang** said it's great as a business owner. Business has picked up. He can help with surveys or a small event such as a sponsored lunch at his store so GPCOG can have a table.

**Barry** said he thought there was an advisory subcommittee so there was neighborhood involvement in the planning process.

**Tex** said there was an initial meeting and it became too difficult to run two groups. For the long range aspect, he wants the school back.

The group discussed the school and why it was torn down.

**Craig** said he lives in Cumberland and they don't have an asset like this gym. They paid for access to water. There are a lot of positives here that should be taken advantage of.

**Brad** said this neighborhood has had issues over the years. He spoke about dividing the kids up to different schools. This is a great neighborhood; there are a lot of hardworking people, disabled people. He mentioned the garden committee. There is a lot of good stuff that can happen.

**Tom** said he is interested in the water access; it is huge. He spoke about commuter boats like in Burlington.

**Kevin A.** said he is thinking about the dock and possible ideas, along with the ice rink and community garden. He will get with his staff to see what more they can do out here.

**Zoe** is excited to talk to people; it's a great idea to set up at Quang's store. She would love to talk to young people too.

**Stephanie** is excited to get to know more about the neighborhood and get started on the project. She's looking forward to working with the group. As for neighborhood advisory, this gives them flexibility to get engaged in nontraditional ways. She's happy to come to these meetings.

**Rick** appreciates the feedback. He's enjoyed coming out here; he likes getting to know the neighborhood and looks forward to meeting people.

**Craig** thought this was a great kick off meeting. The community participation will be key. You can have great ideas but need buy-in.

The group decided that there will be no December meeting. The next meeting will be January 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Tex** asked everyone to sign in and provide their email address on the way out.

## **7. Adjournment**

7:50 p.m. Barry Lucier motioned to adjourn, Quang Nguyen seconded. Unanimous approval.