

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING

OCTOBER 19, 2010

MINUTES

Chairperson Paul Novak called to order the regular meeting of the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) on Tuesday, October 19, 2010, at 7:00 p.m., Jarvis Hall, 4505 Ocean Drive, Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, Florida.

II. Upon call of the roll, the following Committee members were present:

Chairperson Paul Novak
Co-Chairperson Edmund Malkoon
Sandra Booth
Robert Eckblad
Ken Kugler
John Panitas
James Rogers
Helene Wetherington

Upon call of the roll, the following Committee member was absent:

Marjorie Evans (Excused)

The following individuals were present:

Mayor Roseann Minnett
Vice Mayor Stewart Dodd
Town Manager Connie Hoffman
Assistant Town Manager Bud Bentley
Jeff Bowman, Director of Development Services

III. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of September 21, 2010

A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of September 21, 2010; the vote carried unanimously.

IV. Public/Member Comments

Chairperson Novak remarked on being aware of comments made that the MPSC, as a group, was accomplishing little, which he felt was an unfair assessment. The MPSC had numerous changes to its agenda in the last few meetings done mainly by the prior administration, and the Committee was given no clear direction on what was expected. Many members of the MPSC were new to the process and were catching up quickly, and he expected the Committee's accomplishments to be significant. He opened the discussion to public comments.

Nectaria Chakas of the Law Firm Lochrie & Chakas, P.A., and representative for the Aruba Beach Café, expressed concern as to the Town's Master Plan, referring specifically to a sketch included in the backup. The sketch illustrated proposed public restrooms and what appeared to be revisions to the parking area of the Aruba Beach Café. They understood the sketches were preliminary and an issue the Committee would be discussing on the present agenda, and they wished to express some of their concerns regarding what they felt would be the negative impacts of these plans on the Café. She discussed the proposed restrooms slated for location in the alleyway between the hotel and the Café, noting the subject area recently underwent renovations by the dumpster area, costing about \$250,000. Thus, the Café was using the area not only for parking but for access to the dumpster enclosure. Her client did not feel locating restrooms in this area was appropriate, and they seemed better suited along the beach. The restroom location was also prone to flooding, despite the presence of a sea wall. Ms. Chakas commented on the parking area, noting it was privately owned by the Café and was used for valet parking drop off and pick up. She pointed out the proposed site plan eliminated that parking area and this was a major concern to the Café owners. She mentioned researching the Town's Code which prohibited the construction of facilities or structures on a right of way, which the abovementioned alleyway would do. She asked the Committee to consider this in their decision-making process.

Chairperson Novak received no further public input.

V. Discussion With Town Manager Regarding Town Master Plan

Chairperson Novak indicated Town Manager Hoffman's report consisted of considerable research and work, including recommendations, and it was hoped the report would give the MPSC focus to move forward.

Town Manager Connie Hoffman discussed planning a town at a higher level and hoped to elevate the Committee's thinking as to the details involved in such a process, as she felt it was these details that became issues, stalling the progress of the big picture. She reviewed various factors, such as what made a town memorable, taking Committee members through an exercise in which they spoke of places they found memorable and

the feelings being there invoked. There were patterns of design, human interactions, nature and rules of thumb that worked for the millennia, all of which were evidenced on a worldwide basis; when they were put together correctly, they created a memorable place. She felt the MPSC, along with the Town's administration and citizens had to reeducate themselves about factors they were already aware of. The MPSC was in the unique position of being charged with steering the Town's future, to examine specific projects that came up and render their opinion. It was important for all parties involved to be on the same page as to the big picture regarding the Town they wished to create, and what were the critical factors or rules that should not be violated. She thought such ability did exist in Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, as the Town already possessed so many fabulous features, and the goal was to determine how best to work together to create that vision and make it happen. The discussion moved specifically to Lauderdale-By-The-Sea and the factors that made the Town memorable using the city of Venice as an example. She commented in the U.S. there was such great concern with creating rules and regulations, particularly in planning circles, that oftentimes sight was lost of the bigger goal. Rules of thumb in areas such as building design were often repeated over time to maintain continuity; things were not necessarily identical but shared a pattern. For Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, they needed to explore and determine what the patterns of the Town were and how to ensure their continuity while not restricting the freedom that made each place unique. She asked Committee members what things they thought made the Town memorable in terms of physical structures and human environment.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon thought what made the Town's environment memorable were such things as the ocean, the breezes, the sounds, the smells, etc.

Member Kugler felt the low-rise structures made the Town unique, along with the absence of high-rise buildings that blocked the view of the ocean.

Chairperson Novak said the variety of buildings along the oceanfront was memorable; there were no cookie-cutter buildings, as every structure had its own character.

Member Kugler believed the high level of pedestrian activity was a positive factor for the Town.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon concurred, stating it increased accessibility for patrons wishing to avail themselves of the Town's amenities.

Town Manager Hoffman agreed, pointing out it might be quite easy to live in the Town without a car, and one was able to regularly interact with one's neighbors.

Chairperson Novak indicated much of the pedestrian traffic during the day along streets such as El Mar Drive were tourists rather than residents, as Lauderdale-By-The-Sea was a tourist destination.

Town Manager Hoffman pointed out this too was a part of the social interaction; that residents observed others enjoying a time off while they were working. These were just examples of the Town's patterns the MPSC needed to think on, and it was important for the Committee and the Town's administration to think on this level if they wished to be good town planners. A memorable place would be difficult to create if the Committee and staff simply went through the list of recommendations a town planner furnished them with. She suggested going through a process of individual awakening as to what were some of the patterns and rules of thumb the Committee should be mindful of in designing the Town, reviewing projects and discussing what the Town's vision should be. Speakers on the topic should be invited to address the MPSC and engage in a discussion about what factors already existed in the Town that should be built on; what patterns deserved more attention. Ms. Hoffman discussed how the Committee should move forward with the whole master planning process, noting the Master Plan was voted on by the Town in 2004, and it was extremely expansive, ambitious and contained tremendous ideas. With six years having passed, it should be noted that not much of that Plan had been implemented. The MPSC needed to think about how to get the process moving again, how to get the community involved, and the role the Committee would play. She believed the Committee's input on the 2004 Plan was necessary and should be discussed as an agenda item in subsequent meetings for the next several months; this might involve holding additional meetings to facilitate steady progress. There was so much detail contained in the 2004 Plan that she felt it could take 20 years or more to implement. She thought before taking the Plan to the public for discussion, the MPSC and staff needed to narrow the existing Master Plan down to the elements that were priorities within a certain time frame in order to move forward. She sought and received a Committee consensus to invite speakers to discuss the aforementioned higher-level issues with the Committee over the next several months.

Chairman Novak agreed the 2004 Plan needed to be narrowed down and prioritized, agreeing it would take over 20 years to implement. He wondered what time frame was best, recognizing changes could be made to the plan over time.

Town Manager Hoffman commented, while serving with the City of Fort Lauderdale, they had a ten-year master plan of which nine tenths was executed due to the City's administration and residents being engaged in the process. She indicated their plan did take 15 rather than ten years, noting the power of the good ideas the public embraced should never be underestimated.

Member Eckblad questioned how to involve and inform the community, particularly those persons that remained indifferent until they saw something they did not like and felt moved to attend meetings to voice their opposition.

Town Manager Hoffman indicated one way to battle the community's indifference was to create an environment of participation, giving citizens a real role in the process.

Member Rogers concurred but felt some basic guidelines should be established before inviting the community to comment.

Town Manager Hoffman observed the Committee was saying community participation should be at a high level with some built in controls.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon thought the Committee members should speak with the Town's various civic organizations and formally invite them to give input in the Master Plan process.

Member Booth stated when the MPSC was introduced in 2004, the residents and businesses were invited to attend and give input, and the meeting was well attended.

Member Panitas was unsure why public input was being sought for something the Committee had yet to discuss.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon believed many of the issues the Town sought to implement were repealed, such as the overlays, etc., and this happened due to a failure to furnish the community with adequate education and explanation as to what was entailed. If the lines of communication were kept open and full explanations were given as to what the recommendations were, this should minimize misunderstanding or aversion to the changes advocated.

Member Wetherington questioned the dynamics in the community that halted the progress of the 2004 Master Plan, as she thought the concepts in the Plan were comprehensive and valid today. Though there some needed adjustment, improvement and modernization, many of the components of the Plan followed the basic rules mentioned by Ms. Hoffman. Since her short involvement with the MPSC, the Committee struggled to determine how much of the existing Master Plan was valid in today's world, and it seemed as though the Committee was going in circles. If the concepts, principals and elements in the Plan were solid and the Committee agreed with them, there seemed no reason to move forward, though she understood the hesitation in light of the Plan's appearing to have failed once before. There was a sense of needing to understand the reasons behind this failure in order to move forward and avoid those mistakes in the future.

Town Manager Hoffman noted she had some ideas how the MPSC could accomplish both goals: one, to understand and resolve the Town's historical challenges and, two, how to move forward and bring the Plan together. At the next Committee meeting, she would present recommendations as to how to do both. She reviewed the 2004 Master Plan with the aid of slides and documents contained in the backup information.

Member Panitas commented Lauderdale-By-The-Sea's downtown area consisted of three streets: Commercial Blvd., A1A and El Mar Drive, the latter two being about one mile in length and Commercial Blvd. probably shorter. They represented the

commercial core of the Town. He opined the changes for all three streets should be coordinated; that is, Commercial Blvd. and El Mar Drive should not be enhanced knowing A1A was only one block away. There was an article in the newspaper stating the City of Fort Lauderdale planned on improving the A1A from Commercial Blvd. down to Oakland Park Blvd.; the improvements included putting in two lanes and a bike lane. The changes would be similar to those on A1A continuing south of Oakland Park Blvd.

Town Manager Hoffman pointed out the Master Plan dealt at length with El Mar Drive and Commercial Blvd., providing some recommendations for A1A in less detail than the other two streets. She asked the Committee if they felt greater emphasis should be placed on enhancements along A1A.

Member Kugler concurred with Mr. Panitas' position on the three main thoroughfares of the Town; in terms of order of priority, he felt they should be Commercial Blvd., El Mar Drive and A1A. The Town already had a project in progress with respect to A1A, and he preferred not to focus on A1A, though he was not suggesting it be ignored. He felt the main priority going forward in the near future should be from the bridge on Commercial Blvd. to the pier.

Town Manager Hoffman indicated this was the present focus of the Plan.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon agreed with Mr. Kugler's sentiments, as the three roads were the Town's vital commercial areas, its economic engine.

Member Wetherington found she could not totally agree; in terms of what could be done and the possible impacts, the Town had more capability to influence the design along Commercial Blvd. and El Mar Drive. In terms of the Master Plan and the overall sense of the Town, this was related to how one felt coming into the Town. She believed when someone drove south along A1A, the feeling was different from that of driving from the north end, and it greatly contributed to a person's decision on whether to drive through the Town. Most people coming into the Town drove along A1A at some point, so that street was an integral area for consideration in the Master Plan, though there were limitations not present for El Mar and Commercial.

Chairperson Novak said the Town was limited as to what it could do on A1A, as it was a state road, and in the specific area it consisted mostly of back-out parking. Thus, until the private properties along A1A were redeveloped, very little could be done.

Member Kugler stated he was focusing on the priorities in terms of the immediate Plan.

Town Manager Hoffman recommended viewing the Master Plan in a ten-year time frame for the purposes of the present discussion.

Member Kugler found that in a ten-year timeframe he agreed the A1A should not be excluded or ignored, as it was a portal running through the Town. As he stated before, A1A below south of Commercial Blvd. was in dire need of renovation; the A1A north of Commercial was very satisfactory.

Member Panitas mentioned the availability of federal and state grants for use in projects to enhance downtown areas and main streets.

Member Rogers echoed support for A1A to be given greater consideration with regard to proposed enhancements in the Master Plan. A1A was in need of much improvement, Commercial Blvd. needed some improvement, and El Mar Drive was aesthetically pleasing as it was today; thus, he would almost reverse the prioritizing of the three streets, making A1A the first priority.

Town Manager Hoffman pointed out this was not the focus of the discussion, rather it was whether to add A1A as the fourth focus node in the Master Plan; she received a Committee consensus to do so. She went on to review the recommendations included in the handout, asking the Committee to indicate their support on moving forward with them or voice changes they wished to see.

The Committee agreed with moving forward with the recommendations as to Commercial Blvd.

Chairperson Novak felt the Master Plan should include what El Mar Drive would become, as it was already a hybrid: part tourist and part condominiums, and this was very important. Were it to become all condominiums, those residents lived a different lifestyle than a tourist and spent less of their dollars in the downtown shops. He was unsure how to keep attracting tourists if many of the smaller buildings along El Mar Drive did not improve.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon thought it would be important to create more pedestrian access to the beachfront, as it would look neater and add to the overall environment.

Member Kugler wished to see the alleyways by Oriana and behind Aruba Café become more aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian friendly without losing the use of the alley, taking on more of a street look than that of an alley.

Chairperson Novak was unsure what could be done to make the alleyway aesthetically pleasing, as the dumpster trucks needed to use the alley for access. There was also the safety issue, as there were cars driving through the area constantly.

Member Rogers concurred, stating pedestrian traffic should not be encouraged along the alleyways, as their main function was to service the buildings that backed up to them. However, he did support some form of aesthetic improvement.

Chairperson Novak pointed out one of the problems along Commercial Blvd. was many older persons were reluctant to cross the intersection between Commercial Blvd. and A1A; a bridge over A1A or an underground tunnel would increase pedestrian traffic.

VI. Old Business

a) Update to Master Plan

Member Wetherington remarked if the alleyway served a function to the pedestrian traffic, the logical step would be to make the alley more pedestrian-friendly.

Chairperson Novak wondered how to incorporate a crosswalk on A1A other than placing it at the intersection. At present, there was no crosswalk, and pedestrians were dodging oncoming traffic; they should not be encouraged to cross A1A unless the Town provided a crosswalk.

Member Kugler mentioned some cities printed signage on the pavement; a possible solution was to install the signage and educate pedestrians on how to use them.

Member Panitas felt the Town needed to work on the traffic situation at the intersection of A1A and Commercial Blvd. and how to improve pedestrian access and safety.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon thought immediate adjustments should be made to the timers and sequence of lights, providing a longer time for pedestrians to cross the road.

Town Manager Hoffman discussed the beach/waterfront center at the El Prado Park node, as illustrated in the handout.

Member Panitas felt if a parking lot was built, nothing else could be developed at that site. For the present, this improvement could wait, as there were other more pressing changes that were needed, such as restrooms and a small concession stand.

Member Kugler concurred this was not a priority at present; the priorities should be: El Mar Drive, A1A and the waterfront area.

Member Booth urged the Committee not to forget the marina area, as she believed it to be the best kept secret of the Town, and no thought had been given on how to emphasize this fact; this was something that should be included in the Master Plan.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon commented on the functionality and lifespan of the Town's various physical assets and the cost to maintain and/or improve them. Regarding El Prado Park, he thought the Committee should consider adding a greenway from the Park to the beach to create a public esplanade with a second level that hung over an open space to have a visual connection.

Member Kugler suggested installing a reflection pool between the Town Center and the beach.

Chairperson Novak thought such improvements would be included in the five to ten-year plan of the Master Plan and not in the one to five-year range, as they should not be an immediate priority.

Town Manager Hoffman reviewed the details on the community center node, such as the redevelopment of the Town Hall Complex, including a possible relocation.

Chairperson Novak understood there was thought given to increasing the size of the existing building to allow for executive offices on the first and second floor with two tiers of parking above, as parking was a major problem in the Town.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon stated if there was an opportunity to redevelop the Town Hall, this could be included in the site plan. The present layout of the buildings was not a good usage of the actual lot, and more could be accomplished with the Town Hall continuing to serve its existing functions.

Member Kugler indicated the possible redevelopment of the Town Hall should be a higher priority than the improvement of El Prado Park.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon reminded the Committee the prioritization could be changed and projects moved around, for instance, if grant funding came through for a particular project.

Member Wetherington thought the emphasis of the vision for the community was much too small by focusing efforts along the three streets only. In an effort to bring the nodes together to create a more walkable community, she felt the Town Hall area was completely underutilized, both in terms of the Town Hall lot and the parking lot across from it. The parking lot was built in direct opposition to the design advocated in the Master Plan and was a poor use of that space; there should be some connection with El Mar Drive into the Town square for a more pedestrian-friendly community. She envisioned town festivals that would expand from the center of the Town to the El Prado space, and removing it from the planned changes was keeping the Master Plan's purpose too small, when the focus should be more expansive.

Member Eckblad acknowledged the benefits of redeveloping the Town Hall area, but saw it as a costly venture that was unlikely to take place in the next five years. Therefore, there seemed little reason to discuss such development.

Member Booth commented the MPSC members were to act as visionaries.

Member Eckblad remarked whatever Master Plan project was being discussed, if they required the purchase of real property, such acquisitions should be the focus of the Committee in light of the present state of the real estate market.

Chairperson Novak opened the discussion to the public.

Mark Brown reminded the MPSC there was a local newspaper that could be utilized to disseminate various ideas for the Master Plan and help generate public opinion.

Guy Contrada of Aruba Beach Café, Lauderdale-By-The-Sea, agreed with the view expressed about the alleyway and keeping people directed to Commercial Blvd. This would help businesses by increasing foot traffic. He recommended getting the businesses and the Chamber of Commerce involved in the process.

Chairperson Novak received no further public input. He mentioned design diagrams in the backup the Committee could review that were prepared by Member Panitas.

Member Panitas reviewed the sketches in the backup, stressing they were mainly for purposes of Committee discussion and were not construction or schematically correct documents. They were graphic ideas of what he envisioned for the Town and hoped they would generate Committee input. He mentioned a memo contained on the first page of Town Manager Hoffman's report that mentioned closing Commercial Blvd. from A1A to the beach and making it a pedestrian mall.

Co-Chairperson Malkoon expressed appreciation for the time and work Member Panitas invested in creating the sketches, as they showed his passion for the Town. Though unsure of the accuracy of the information, he learned at some point the Town proposed purchasing part of a building to expand the alleyway on the east side where the market was located; this was never done. As to closing Commercial Blvd. between A1A and the beach to create a more pedestrian-friendly area, he recommended having no median to provide the opportunity of having seating for events. He said eliminating the parking lot could create an opportunity for a public/private partnership for the use of parking spaces on the A1A lot where the Town owned the land. A private entity could build a structure that included retail uses on the ground floor, along with an informational center. Leaving El Mar Drive open would alleviate many of the area business concerns.

Chairperson Novak believed more discussion could take place at the Committee's next meeting when the economics of the downtown projects in the Master Plan were reviewed, as economics played a major role in what could happen.

Member Panitas commented the issue of parking had to be addressed in the Master Plan.

VII. New Business

Member Eckblad mentioned lot #30 that was bounded by Datura on the north, Bougainvilla on the west, A1A on the east and the Chamber of Commerce at the end; it was a triangular-shaped lot. He previously suggested the Town rezone the lot to encourage future development of a small shopping mall, including parking on the first floor, restaurants, offices and shops on the second. This would provide additional parking for the Town, redevelop part of A1A, and at no cost to the Town.

Chairperson Novak felt this to be another project that could come up for discussion under the economic revitalization portion of the Master Plan.

VIII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

_____ Date: _____
Paul Novak, Chairman