

TOWN OF MANSFIELD ■ SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE
Draft Meeting Minutes ■ March 2, 2012 Special Meeting

Present: Stoddard (chair), Sherman, Schwab, Lennon, Ward, Lindsey, Matthews (5:05 p.m.), Hart (5:05 p.m.), Painter (staff)

Guests: Mark LaPlaca (Board of Education)

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by chair Stoddard.

School Building Project

Stoddard opened the meeting with introductions, including new member Meredith Lindsey and Mark LaPlaca, who was attending the meeting on behalf of the Mansfield Board of Education.

Stoddard, Schwab and Lennon provided an overview of the subcommittee's approach to evaluation of the school building project. Due to the Town Council's determination to move forward with a proposal to construct two new schools, the committee focused its efforts on sustainability factors related to the siting of two new schools, not an evaluation of which option would be more sustainable, new construction or renovation. Lindsey noted her disagreement with the assumption used.

Rather than evaluate particular sites, the subcommittee approached the process of siting new facilities using ecological principles to identify and map constraints and opportunities. The subcommittee also based their work on the concept that schools can drive the location of future development, and therefore, the siting of new schools is an opportunity for the both the educational system and the long term growth and sustainability of the town. Using the Town's Plan of Conservation and Development, the subcommittee focused on a two mile radius around Storrs Center and Mansfield Center. Within each 2-mile radius, the committee mapped a series of constraints and opportunities, including wetlands, agricultural soils, preserved open space, civic and cultural facilities, historic districts and potential for creating complete streets.

In conducting their analysis, the subcommittee focused on larger planning considerations such as community identity and long term impacts of school siting; therefore, they did not limit themselves to existing school sites or town owned properties. The subcommittee also noted that any formal recommendations made by the Sustainability Committee with regard to school siting should also address off-site improvements. For example, should the Council choose to construct a new school in the Vinton area, recommendations could address changes to Route 32 to increase pedestrian access and development of more civic uses.

Sherman questioned whether the committee should also be evaluating areas with high concentrations of families and young children. Subcommittee members acknowledged that there were other potential opportunities that could also drive selection of a site, such as proximity to existing residential neighborhoods with high concentrations of family and young children. Lindsey questioned whether the reuse of existing school facilities was considered; Stoddard indicated that reuse was not evaluated as part of the subcommittee's work.

After extensive discussion, the Committee determined that due to the limited time available and the need for additional analysis and input on how to prioritize constraints and opportunities, it would not be possible to develop an official position on specific sites prior to Monday's public hearing. However, there was consensus that work done on developing siting considerations by both the subcommittee and the Committee as a whole in 2010 should be provided to the Town Council prior to the close of the public hearing.

Matthews MOVED, Lennon SECONDED to authorize a member of the subcommittee to compile a package for submission to the Town Council that would include the previous siting recommendations of the Sustainability Committee, draft subcommittee meeting minutes, and a summary of the full committee's discussion from tonight's meeting. No specific decisions or recommendations regarding school siting would be included.

The motion passed unanimously; Hart abstained.

Adjournment

Stoddard adjourned the meeting at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda M. Painter, AICP
Director of Planning and Development