

City of Takoma Park
Takoma Junction Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 17, 2010

The City of Takoma Park Takoma Junction Task Force met on Wednesday, November 17, 2010, in the Heffner Community Center, Oswego Avenue, Takoma Park.

Members Present: Billy Coulter, Kay Daniels-Cohen, James DiLuigi, Steve Dubb, Megan Gallagher, Roz Grigsby, Seth Grimes, Linette Lander, Barbara Muhlbacher, Katrina Oprisko, Lorraine Pearsall, Susan Robb, Roger Schlegel, Jennifer Sisane, Jeffrey Trunzo, and Ellen Zavian.

Members Absent: Hailu Aichehi, Lorig Charkoudian, Andy Kelemen, Howard Kohn.

Staff Present: None

Others Present: None

1. Call to Order

A quorum present, the meeting was called to order at 7:47 p.m. The agenda drafted by the steering committee for November 17, and meeting minutes from November 9, 2010, were distributed. The draft timeline prepared by Co-Chairs to support the work plan discussion and the Vision/Mission statement drafted by Roger Schlegel were also distributed.

2. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review, Acceptance of November 9 Minutes

Discussion: Seth Grimes called the meeting to order and asked for cooperation in limiting discussion to the suggested timeframes on the agenda. Items which can not be completed in the allotted timeframes will be tabled until the next meeting.

Action: The meeting minutes of November 9, 2010 were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the meeting minutes of November 9, 2010 as modified. The meeting minutes were accepted as modified.

Vote Results: Yes-15, No-0. The motion passed.

3. Task Force Meeting Schedule for First Quarter 2011

Discussion: Jeff Trunzo recommended that the TF continue to meet twice a month for the first quarter of 2011. Members affirmed that the established cycle of

alternating Tuesday/Wednesday meetings are workable and should continue for the first quarter, at the twice per month frequency. Jeff Trunzo will work with Sara Daines to schedule the first quarter 2011 TF meetings and provide the meeting schedule to the TF at the next meeting on December 8th.

4. Urban Land Institute / Other Consulting Engagement

Previous Discussion: This agenda item was tabled in the interest of time at the November 9th meeting. During the work plan discussion (item 6), ULI involvement was discussed briefly, with questions introduced about the usefulness of ULI involvement as well as the appropriate timing of such involvement within the 10-month TF schedule.

Discussion: Additional time was allotted to allow continued expression of individual perspectives on the proposed engagement. An issue about the procurement process based on the proposed \$12k cost was raised. Opinions were expressed about when to engage ULI or other consultants, ranging from “immediately” to “soon” to “later” to “much later” to “never.” Some TF members thought the efforts of consultants would be duplicative and thus create confusion, others felt the expertise of consultants could be complimentary, while others thought insufficient information was available to reach a conclusion. Several members were concerned that the specific expertise needed to produce value may not be available from ULI. Other members thought the engagement is too limited to be detailed enough to be of any value, and may overlook important considerations in developing recommendations. The objectivity of an outside party was viewed as valuable by some TF members. Concerns were expressed that the City would be receiving a set of recommendations from the consultants that were not influenced by or under the control of the TF. “What” any consultant would address was a topic of concern expressed from many different perspectives. An opinion was expressed that excluding the engagement outright would be “hubris.” Opinions about how to focus on the proposed engagement and become more unified included doing some white board exercises, as well as determining what expertise and skills were available before making a decision to engage consultants or dismiss the idea.

At the discussion conclusion, the TF consensus opinion was summarized as value and expertise may be accessible through the use of an outside consultant such as ULI or others. The TF is not ready to make a decision in the December timeframe. A scope of work, with options, is desirable in order to make a discussion. It was decided to compose a set of questions about the proposed engagement, and continue this discussion at the December TF meetings, with the goal of having more consensus by January. Kay volunteered to draft the discussion points to initiate this action plan.

5. Mission Statement

Discussion: A draft Vision/Mission statement was distributed and introduced by Roger Schlegel. TF members expressed during the meeting of November 9 that having a statement would be useful in focusing future efforts of the subcommittees as well as the work plans. Roger's effort was praised and accepted as a very well developed initial statement. Suggestions were offered about defining the physical dimension of the TF study area (confluence: district), expressly defining the Junction as "lying predominantly within the Historic District," mentioning harmony and respect for the residential districts within and abutting the area, and how to express the values inherent in the phrase "strong entrepreneurial opportunities." Roger offered to do more work to address the concerns and further develop the statement, invited others to help, and recommended the TF review the statement again at the next meeting. The TF concurred with this plan.

6. Subcommittee Discussion

Discussion: At the November 9th meeting, the TF agreed to the following subcommittee structure:

- A. Business district, including the city lot, focusing on potential development uses and issues. Planner and developer input/assistance needed to understand options. Parking.
- B. Research and outreach, organizing TF engagement of business and community stakeholders. Synthesizing previous Junction work, studies, proposals (e.g., OTBA market study, Fireplace group, neighborhood initiatives, charettes, other historical initiatives).
- C. Traffic, pedestrian, streetscape, livability (Dan Burden walkability report, liaison parking with subcommittee A's work).

The TF discussed the structure of the subcommittees. It has been observed and discussed that subcommittees "A" and "C" are content driven, while "B" is background and a resource to "A" and "C." Though some reservations were expressed about the division of tasks, the TF expressed a strong desire to initiate subcommittee work. Adjustments in focus of the subcommittees will be addressed in the future if obstacles are encountered, the workloads are not in balance, or other issues emerge.

TF members previously expressed their interest as follows:

- A. Megan, Lorig, Linette, Billy, Roz, Lorraine
- B. Kay, Andy, Megan, Steve, Roger, Ellen, Jim
- C. Katrina, Linette, Susan, Lorraine, Barbara, Jennifer, Jeff

Members broke into the subcommittee(s) of their preference to discuss the logistics of setting up meeting dates, times, locations and initial discussion topics. The full TF reconvened after 15 minutes of subcommittee time and resumed the full meeting.

7. Near-term Junction Improvements

Discussion: This agenda item was skipped in the agenda of November 9, 2010, in the interest of time. The TF discussed how to address any potential near-term improvements, based on recent recommendations from the Fireside group, obvious repairs, observations, or relatively easy consensus improvements such as a sign to designate parking at the City lot. Billy Coulter volunteered to lead the communication to the City Manager and Mayor. Scope of the question will include immediate plans for the City lot, traffic signal, cross walks, signage for parking at the City lot, any traffic studies, and related subjects. The reply to this inquiry will be reported at the next TF meeting.

8. Task Force Work Plan

Discussion: The draft work plan with timeline introduced and discussed at the meeting of November 9th was reviewed. Some TF members expressed concerns that the timeline is too aggressive. As discussed earlier in the meeting, the consideration of engaging ULI / consultants in December is probably not feasible, but may be possible in January. The subcommittees are constituted and most plan to meet at least once before the December 8th TF meeting. TF agreed to proceed with presentation of draft work plans at the December 8th meeting.

The TF concurred that a web site would be helpful, and Seth Grimes volunteered to proceed with setting up the web site and report on progress or obstacles at the next meeting.

Next Topics

Discussion: The group agreed to include the following items on the next agenda:

- Q1 2011 meeting schedule confirmation
- Mission/Vision statement
- Near-term Junction improvements communication
- Preliminary presentation of subcommittee draft work plans
- White board, markers, pads will be requested for the December meetings

The group agreed to provide the steering committee with any additional topics for the next agenda.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Jeff Trunzo, Secretary

Roger Schlegel, Secretary