

City of Takoma Park
Takoma Junction Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 9, 2010

The City of Takoma Park Takoma Junction Task Force met on Tuesday, November 9, 2010, in the Heffner Community Center, Oswego Avenue, Takoma Park.

Members Present: Lorig Charkoudian, Billy Coulter, Kay Daniels-Cohen, Steve Dubb, Megan Gallagher, Roz Grigsby, Seth Grimes, Andy Kelemen, Howard Kohn, Linette Lander, Barbara Muhlbacher, Katrina Oprisko, Lorraine Pearsall, Susan Robb, Roger Schlegel, Jeffrey Trunzo, and Ellen Zavian. James DiLuigi attended via conference call.

Members Absent: Hailu Aichehi, Jennifer Sisane

Staff Present: None

Others Present: None

1. Call to Order

A quorum present, the meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m. The agenda drafted by the steering committee for November 9, and meeting minutes from October 25, 2010 were distributed. The draft timeline prepared by Co-Chairs to support the work plan discussion was not copied for distribution as expected. Member name plates were distributed. Skype connection was established for remote participation.

2. Welcome, Introductions, Agenda Review, Acceptance of October 25 Minutes

Discussion: Howard Kohn began the meeting by assuring members the Task Force is a team effort, and reminded everyone to submit suggested agenda items. Jeff Trunzo asked that Q1 2011 meetings be scheduled as soon as possible. Megan Gallagher asked for clarification on the mission of the TF, explanation of work plans, and clarification of the physical boundaries and dimensions of the Junction for the purview of the TF. The group discussed and accepted the Junction boundaries drawn in the map included in the back of the resource binder, with the understanding that TF work would take into consideration areas outside the Junction insofar as those areas impact the Junction or could be impacted by changes at the Junction. Lorig Charkoudian reminded members that both long-term and short-term plans and strategies need to be developed

and incorporated into the work plans-don't avoid visioning bold plans. Ellen Zavian stated that current funding restraints should not limit brainstorming for future investments. Consensus expressed to work hard and cooperatively to make the TF successful.

Action: The meeting minutes of October 25, 2010 were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the meeting minutes of October 25, 2010 as modified. The meeting minutes were accepted as modified.

Vote Results: **Yes-14, No-0.** The motion passed.

3. Task Force Officers, Steering Committee, roles and structure

Discussion: The steering committee is charged with building the organizational elements of the TF. Through its efforts to assemble agenda topics, coordinate activities, problem-solve, create meeting minutes, suggest timelines and analyze progress, the steering committee is fulfilling many of the logistics needs of the TF, particularly those that arise between scheduled TF meetings. Members emphasized that the steering committee should not have substantive discussions of issues before the subcommittees, but rather, coordinate and unify the smaller group efforts. The Co-chairs affirmed their intent not to engage in substantive discussions of issues between meetings.

Possible expansion of the steering committee was on the agenda for discussion. Members affirmed that the current structure was sufficient for the immediate needs; that any TF member is welcome at steering committee meetings; and that subcommittee chairs should consider participating whenever needed. While subcommittee chairs may share their committees' progress with the steering committee for coordination purposes, all fundamental decisions will be worked out in the full TF group.

The importance of effective communication among subcommittees was emphasized by several members. It was generally agreed that robust early discussions by the full group, ongoing communication among subcommittee chairs, and the periodic full meetings of the TF will help in this regard.

The TF membership agreed that the steering committee for the near term would consist of the two co-chairs and the two co-recorders, and that this structure can be revisited in the future if needed.

4. Outreach and City Council Involvement

Discussion: The TF discussed three interrelated questions: who speaks for the TF before the Council; what guidance or ground rules, if any, apply to TF members talking

about TF activities; and what kind of ongoing Council involvement with the TF is appropriate.

It was agreed that in formal settings and with respect to policy and status reporting, the co-chairs function as the spokespersons for the TF. This would be supplemented with TF membership as appropriate. Periodic City Council reporting, for example, will be led by the chairs, with other members welcome to participate.

On an everyday, operational basis, TF members will be expected to engage in many individual conversations with stakeholders and to carry out research and other activities as tasked by subcommittees. Members should be vigilant to identify their opinions as such but are otherwise free to share established facts with the general public. The members discussed and agreed to be careful about characterizing matters of fact from matters of opinion when speaking about TF activities. Lorraine Pearsall emphasized that as no one is going to like everything that is expressed in TF meetings, members should try to modulate opinions to avoid making negative characterizations about the TF progress. Those are opinions and not matters of fact until the work is complete.

With respect to Council involvement with the TF, Andy Kelemen emphasized the value of keeping the Council well informed of the TF's ongoing progress and suggested identifying a Council "liaison" to the TF. Membership agreed with the general value put forward but generally felt that Council members preferred not to be significantly involved in the TF's work. Council members are free to engage themselves in neighborhood meetings as part of outreach efforts.

The discussion concluded with affirmation that high quality communications by TF members are desirable; this is not a jury or other sequestered activity. The feedback and information received during member conversations is very valuable and will contribute to delivering the highest quality report.

5. Near-term Junction Improvements

Discussion: This agenda item was skipped in the interest of time.

6. Task Force Work Plan

Discussion: A draft work plan with timeline was proposed by Seth Grimes, and the committee evaluated and adjusted the elements:

- September 30, 2011: Deliverable of the Written Report and Presentation to Council
- November 17, 2010: Appoint subcommittees.

-Subcommittees organize, meet, draft work plan

- December 8, 2010: Subcommittees present draft work plans for review and comment by TF
- December 21, 2010: Finalize work plans and map 2011 activities
- Jan – Feb 2011: Stakeholder outreach and research

-Fiscal year 2012 budgeting needs for Council & Manager

-Inform Council of work plan outline, invite input and support

- February 15, 2011: Interim subcommittee reports to full committee

-Assemble the subcommittee reports

- March 15, 2011: Council Work Session request: interim TF report to the Council

-Evaluate for omissions, political check

- May 15, 2011: Subcommittee work completed

- June – July, 2011: Validation and reality checks

- July 2011: Assembly, integrating, and smoothing of draft report

-Return to stakeholders, staff, and council

- September 2011: Presentation, Publication, and Revision

-Recommendations for re-engagement of TF

During discussion, the sense of the group seemed to be that June-July 2011 validation work would include effort to share emerging draft recommendations with stakeholders and seek comments.

TF members expressed reservations about the aggressiveness of the timeline, given the realities of what needs to be accomplished in the allotted timeframe. Roz Grigsby and others expressed preference for more time to identify problems and define questions prior to establishing work plans, with the concern that work plans might inadvertently front-load the process to favor certain answers over others. Billy Coulter shared the perspective that for consultants, discovery and gathering of requirements usually precede work plan formation. Lorig Charkoudian advised not getting too hung up on the term “work plan,” and along with others pointed out that TF and sub-committee

work plans themselves should include activities to identifying problems and defining questions. Megan Gallagher suggested additional conversation to help build consensus about the group's mission/vision. The consensus was to move immediately to establishing the subcommittees so that work can begin, with the understanding that the TF timeline and sub-committee work plans will be "living documents," subject to revision.

7. Subcommittees

Discussion: The TF discussed how to create the subcommittees. The importance of being focused on creating the content needed for the report was emphasized by the chairs. Members discussed various ways to engage with the subtopics, such as SWAT analysis, Statements of Work, Issue Ideation, Visioning, etc. Some members returned to the question of the overall timeline, with suggestions including a fact-finding/community engagement period prior to aligning sub-committees, or preliminary work to digest findings/recommendations from the past ten or fifteen years.

After further discussion, the chairs emphasized the impracticality of having substantive discussion of issues in a group of 20 before the subcommittee had an opportunity to address an issue; thus the creation of the subcommittees and some form of work plan is a matter of urgency.

It was agreed that methodology and approach could vary between the groups, and individuals could commit to more than one subcommittee if they were willing to be fully engaged in all the subcommittees selected.

The Committee decided to modify the subcommittee topics as proposed in the agenda into three subcommittees:

- 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).

Environmental and sustainability issues should be a factor in every subcommittee's work. It was again recognized that there is a high degree of overlap among sub-committees' topics. Seth Grimes emphasized that all

subcommittee output will be shared and discussed in full-TF meetings. Thus all members will be providing input on all aspects of the final report, even if they are not participating in each subcommittee's work. Suggestion was made that an alternating schedule of sub-committee and full-TF meetings could be conducive to a well-coordinated process.

The Committee agreed to self-identify by a show of hands interest in each of the three subcommittees described above. The distribution of member interest is as follows:

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

The members agreed to talk and meet individually and in smaller groups over the next few days, in order to confirm selection, interest, and commitment ability, as well as allow the other members not in attendance and opportunity to do the same. Members were also invited to share suggestions about sub-committee alignment via the listserv.

8. Urban Land Institute [time permitting]

Discussion: This agenda item was tabled in the interest of time. 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.

Next Topics

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

- Urban Land Institute
- Q1 2011 meeting schedule
- Near-term Junction improvements

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:17 pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Jeff Trunzo, Secretary

Roger Schlegel, Secretary