

Route 2 and 102 Stakeholder Visioning Process Stakeholder Group Draft Operating Procedures

Adopted September 6, 2012

I. Purpose, Objective and Scope of Group Activities

The North Kingstown Town Council has convened this Stakeholder Group to meet regularly to explore interests, increase understanding, highlight and refine options and seek agreement, if possible, on what should happen in the area by the western Rt. 2/102 intersection in North Kingstown, RI.

This Town Council has determined that this Stakeholder Group is needed to develop a shared vision because of the lack of a clear vision about what should happen in the future in this part of Town, specifically at this intersection. This Stakeholder Group provides the opportunity for deep involvement and joint problem solving of representatives of a range of interests, with plans for public workshop for broader public involvement partway through the process.

The goals of the Stakeholder Group are to (a) provide an arena for public information, input and transparent deliberation, and (b) seek agreement on concepts and language to be included in the comprehensive plan that can be adopted by the Town Council about:

- How growth should be managed at the Rt. 2/102 intersection
- The appropriate scale of development
- The appropriate intensity of development

Members of the Stakeholder Group serve as liaisons and ambassadors for their constituencies, provide detailed input, and help guide the development of a final recommendation. The Stakeholder Group's role is advisory only. The Town Council and Planning Commission will receive a recommendation report from the Group and will make the final decisions about the vision for the future of the Rt. 2/102 intersection area. However, if this group reaches consensus or broad-based support for a recommendation, the Town Council and the Planning Commission will take that under serious consideration.

II. Membership

- A. The Town Council, seeking to maintain a balance between the needs of immediate landowners (commercial and residential) as well as the needs of the Town and region more broadly, has appointed members who can represent:
- interests on the rural/residential quality of life of neighbors abutting the area (4 members)
 - interests in the business/development objectives for the intersection and community (4 members)
 - interests in conservation (2 member)
 - interests of the community more broadly (1 members)

Members may each have an alternate (whom they select themselves), or interest groups may have an alternate, to replace them should they need to miss a meeting. Or, members may instead designate an existing member as their proxy should they need to miss a meeting.

- B. Members of the North Kingstown and Exeter Planning Commissions and staff, plus a representative of North Kingstown Chamber of Commerce will serve as ex-officio members of the Group, meaning that they will participate actively but not participate in final decisionmaking regarding final recommendations.
- C. The Stakeholder Group will also receive advice and support from a landscape architect and planning consultant as needed.

III. Participation

- A. The Stakeholder Group consists of individuals representing interests and particular groups of people. Group members are responsible for expressing the views of their constituency rather than their personal views. Representatives should be authorized by their constituencies to speak on behalf of those communities to the greatest extent possible.
- B. Members and alternates are expected to attend all Stakeholder Group meetings and notify the facilitator if they cannot attend. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, his/her alternate may participate at the table instead. Both the member and alternate are expected to stay abreast of all Group proceedings. (In this document, operating procedures that apply to members also apply to alternates.)
- C. Any member of the Stakeholder Group may withdraw from the visioning process at any time by notifying the facilitator and the Town Council in writing. The appropriate appointing body will then seek to appoint a new representative, to the extent possible, to ensure representation of diverse interests on the Group. However, Stakeholder Group deliberations will continue during that process.

IV. Decision Making

- A. Final decision making is expected around a “package proposal” that incorporates a number of features to meet the interests of diverse group and achieve a number of objectives to be detailed by the Stakeholder Group. The group will not use Robert’s Rules of Order.
- B. The Group, to the extent possible, will operate by consensus, which the Group defines as unanimity if possible and at a minimum 8 of 11 of the voting members including two members from each of the largest stakeholder groups. Consent means that members can at least “accept/live with”, however reluctantly, the package agreement that emerges.
- C. Group members are intended to be present or have an alternate to represent them at key decision making moments.
- D. Members should not block or withhold consensus unless they have serious reservations with the approach or solution that is proposed for consensus. If members disagree with the approach or

solution proposed, they should make every effort to offer an alternative for consideration that will be satisfactory to all members.

- E. All agreements reached during negotiations are understood to be tentative until the Committee reaches formal consensus. Once consensus is achieved, Committee members may not thereafter withdraw their consensus.
- F. On issues where consensus is reached, Group members will refrain from opposing or commenting negatively on the consensus-based language and will encourage their constituents do the same.
- G. If the Group does not reach consensus on one or more recommendations, Group members will explore the reasons for disagreement. The Group will identify areas in which the Group reached agreement, where disagreement remained, the reasons behind that disagreement, a description of the interests that must be satisfied to reach an agreement, and if possible, ways to address the differences in the future.
- H. The Group's final report will indicate, for the final agreement: (a) areas of broad agreement (when the threshold in item B above is met), (b) where differences of opinion remained and why (when the threshold in item B above is not met), and (c) who agreed to the final package and who did not.

V. Group Meetings

- A. All meetings of the full Stakeholder Group will be announced prior to the meeting and will be open to the public.
- B. The deliberations are meant primarily for the members of the Group, with the public invited and encouraged to observe. A period will be provided during each meeting for public comment.
- C. Brief summaries of Group meetings will be prepared by the facilitators and, after review and approval by the Group, will be made available to the public. The summaries are not intended to be transcripts or detailed meeting minutes, but summaries of key points, issues, and ideas.
- D. The facilitator will be responsible for developing agendas for all meetings of the Group, with input from Group members. Draft agendas will be made available ahead of time to the Stakeholder Group and will be considered draft until approved at the beginning of each Stakeholder Group meeting.
- E. Group members will have their names and affiliations provided on a Stakeholder Group contact sheet, along with some contact information at the discretion of the member for Stakeholder Group business only.
- F. Group members may meet together between meetings, but in order to comply with Rhode Island Open Meeting Law, if the group will include 6 or more Stakeholder Group members it must be open to the public.

VI. Member Roles and Responsibilities

- A. All members on the Stakeholder Group agree to the following:
- Keep their constituencies informed about the Group's deliberations and to actively seek their input
 - Represent the interests and concerns of their constituents as accurately and thoroughly as possible, and work to ensure that any recommendation developed by the Group is acceptable to their communities
 - Strive throughout the process to bridge gaps in understanding, to seek resolution of differences, and to pursue the goal of achieving consensus on the content under discussion
 - Make a good faith effort to participate in all scheduled meetings or activities.
- B. Members commit to the principles of decency, civility, and tolerance. Members accept that there are different views, and the different stakeholders each have a legitimate interest and right to be part of expressing views and determining solutions. In order to facilitate an open and collaborative discussion, the participants agree to abide by the following rules:
- Only one person will speak at a time and no one will interrupt when another person is speaking
 - Each person will express his or her own views, his or her organization's and constituent views, rather than speaking for other Group participants or on behalf of the Group as a whole
 - Each person will refrain from making personal attacks, calling names, and other such negative behavior
 - Each person will make every effort to stay on track with the agenda and avoid grandstanding and digressions in order to move the conversation forward.

VII. Facilitator Roles and Responsibilities

- A. The facilitator will serve at the discretion of the full Group. The facilitator's job is to manage the process, including meetings. No officers or chair are needed, and the facilitator will consult with the Group throughout about process. The facilitator will be responsible for helping to ensure that the process runs smoothly, developing meeting agendas, facilitating meetings, preparing and distributing draft and final meeting summaries, generating draft agreements, and helping the parties resolve their differences and achieve consensus on the issues to be addressed by the Group.
- B. The facilitator will be available to consult confidentially with Group participants during or between meetings. The facilitator, if asked, is required to hold confidences even if that means withholding information that the facilitator prefers would be made available to the whole group.
- C. The facilitator has no decision-making authority and cannot impose any solution, settlement, or agreement among any or all of the parties.
- D. The facilitator will abide by the Ethical Standards of the Association for Conflict Resolution. In part, these standards require that: "The neutral must maintain impartiality toward all parties. Impartiality means freedom from favoritism or bias either by word or by action and a commitment to serve all parties as opposed to a single party."

VIII. Media and Public Communications

- A. Individuals are free to speak to the media (print, web, radio, T.V.) and in their own communications about the process in general and their particular interests, concerns, and ideas. However, Group members agree not to represent or characterize the views of others in the media or any public communications (newsletters, websites, etc.). Members also agree not to speak on behalf of the Group as a whole. In short, people are free to speak for themselves, but agree not to speak for others or on behalf of the Group.
- B. The Group may select a press spokesperson, if they wish, to communicate agreed-upon messages or views of the Group as a whole.
- C. Regarding the media's participation in Stakeholder Group meetings:
- Meetings are open to the public and the media to ensure public, transparent information sharing and deliberation.
 - The facilitator will designate a section of each meeting space, as needed, for television cameras, prominent recording devices, or other equipment.
 - Disruptions to Stakeholder Group meetings or individual Group members during meetings will not be tolerated. The facilitator will stop the proceedings, as needed, to bring order.
- D. The Group respectfully asks media representatives to:
- Keep their cameras, recording devices, and any other equipment within the designated area. Roaming equipment (microphones, cameras, etc.) will not be permitted during Stakeholder Group meetings.
 - Be respectful of Stakeholder Group members and recognize this is a deliberative meeting for Group members.
 - Allow members of the public to make comments during any public comment period without interference.
 - Seek quotes and information from members before meetings, at breaks, or after meetings so as not to disrupt the dialogue.

IX. Communication Between Meetings

- A. Members are welcome to communicate with other members of the Group between meetings, but if they want to send a message to the entire Stakeholder Group, they should send their comments to the facilitator, who will compile, reframe as necessary, and send out to the group, *with* attribution.
- B. If members would like to ask questions or share information with the technical advisors, such communication should go through the facilitator and be shared with the group as a whole.