

Meeting Minutes, Boulder Town Planning Commission

December 9, 2014

Commissioners present: Tabor Dahl, Donna Jean Wilson, Loch Wade, Caroline Gaudy (after Tabor's presentation), and Alyssa Thompson. Member of the public present: Mark Nelson. Planning secretary Peg Smith was absent; Town Clerk Judi Davis was present and recorded the meeting. These minutes are derived from that recording by Peg Smith.

Loch called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with Donna Jean and Alyssa present as a quorum. Donna Jean moved to approve the November meeting minutes. Alyssa seconded the motion. Donna Jean, Loch and Alyssa approved. (Tabor and Caroline had not yet arrived.)

Training Session: Vision Planning/Envisioning

Tabor researched the topic of "envisioning" for his training session. He'd thought about the rezoning discussion at last month's meeting discussion, and realized that he has his own ideas of what the community should end up with, but also realizing your neighbor may have a whole different idea of the ideal. He believes each landowner should get to do what he wants with his own property. But sometime, it's not just a matter of personal aesthetics, because there could be choices that affect the community overall, particularly as to health and safety.

He looked at several websites, including the Utah APA site and the state's EnvisionUtah site and found some good ideas. In 2050, the population of Utah is expected to double, and state has initiated its own future envisioning process. Tabor encouraged each of the commissioners to participate in the Utah Envisioning site.

On the APA site, surveys and questionnaires were described, as well as collecting actual field data (such as information on water tables, septic requirements, etc.) An important step, besides the survey, would be a "translation step" that involves convening the whole town to discuss the results and maybe explain responses in more depth. The meeting would have to be really well-run, because otherwise sides end up being drawn.

The web addresses: <http://envisionutah.org/?atid=50>

<http://anelessen.com/our-vision-planning-process>

Loch asked about the sites: Tabor said the envisionutah site is just to sign up to participate in the state planning process. The other site included some good discussion and tools.

Discussion on a Town Envisioning Process

Loch said that after looking back on the last town survey and on the experience with the "surprising" pushback on the discussion about the dark sky issues, he wondered if the survey was accurately addressing the issues of the town. The survey did seem to indicate broad support for the idea, but the dark skies discussion revealed that wasn't necessarily the case. Maybe it would be a good idea if we do another survey to hire someone and actually talk to everyone in town. Caroline said she didn't think the pushback was representative of everyone in town. If you're

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opposed to something, you're motivated to show up to object. Tabor wondered if maybe many people never turned in their surveys. We need to stress to everyone that their opinion matters. Caroline thought a better approach than just another wide open survey would be to actually propose some ideas the commission is considering and asking for their specific attitudes toward that. Or maybe there's a way to funnel down the discussion by hosting a variety of small group discussions and focus groups. Alyssa said if we're going to tackle a visioning process, we should enlist the aid of people who've done it before and not just try to do it piece by piece ourselves. There's a link called "community toolbox" in the envisionutah site that is a step-by-step process and pdf download that we could use to educate ourselves. However we do need a facilitator who is trained in this. There are options with nonprofits or companies who use students who do these studies for free.

Tabor asked if there are a lot of people in town who want to change the vision? Do we feel there is a need? Loch mentioned the last town council meeting where a couple presented the idea of building a distillery in town. That would be an example of needing to have an understanding of what the town would think about that. These things are starting to pop up on the horizon. Subdividing on less than 5 acres? Our General Plan is so vague that you could say a distillery fits in the agricultural model or that it doesn't. It isn't really a strong guide. Then everyone gets to argue about it for awhile until nothing happens, or an uninformed decision gets made.

Donna Jean said it's hard to keep your own personalities and interests out of the decisions. Caroline said we could actually use those two examples to ask about: the 2.5 acre subdivision, the distillery, or Gibbs' idea of a travel trailer hotel, or the barrow pit, etc. and use those to ask the town what they want for Boulder development.

Tabor said he was fascinated at the questions that had been asked at the meet-the-candidates night for town council last year. Different perceptions were obvious, with some asking "what are you going to do to help the town grow" and the next person asking "how are you going to keep the town from growing?" If Boulder is going to grow, some type of subdividing and development is going to have to happen. To do it right, it'll have to be well planned out and with particular conditions, covering all the bases. You can't say "anything goes." A zoning overlay shows a plan. Caroline agreed with the overlay idea, but also recognizes the development potential of many large chunks of land and owners' rights to sell their property.

Loch: So we need to have a plan. What sorts of business and industry do we want to attract? Are we proactive or reactive? Caroline suggested that other towns are dealing with issues that we haven't even thought of yet. What don't we know, what questions are we not asking?

Mark: You need to decide what type of town you want to be. You don't just become Moab or Park City. You make small decisions that end you up there.

Loch repeated: How do we move forward on the visioning process? We need to look at these websites, do our homework.

Alyssa said we should do our research and decide among ourselves how long of a process we want to take on. Rockville did theirs in three months. Ours would be more like year, year and a half. We ought to consider a timeline. Tabor agreed, and said we shouldn't reinvent the wheel. Bring in people who do this for a living. Or do a workday together and come up with some ideas? Loch suggested looking at all the web resources, consider likely timelines, understand more of what an envisioning process looks like, then come back together and decide. "We need to know more to

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even come up with a first step. We're in a nice position right now, issues-wise, so this would be a good time."

Donna Jean asked what the difference is between doing this and having a planner come in who writes the ordinances. Loch said we're really talking about a community-wide effort where everyone gets to have a say of what they want to see in 10 years.

Mark: there needs to be some discussion first about what Boulder is right now. I think the whole Planning Commission needs to read some books about towns who didn't see their growth coming. Loch said there are people looking for some type of managed growth or opportunities with younger people wanting to move in and settle. There has to be some philosophy behind what you do. Mark: We can't be all things to all people.

Loch: So in the envisioning process we need to develop that philosophical checklist that guides us in deciding when issues come up.

Tabor: With that, to get it right, I think our current ordinances will be a huge guide. Most people in the community agree on most of those things. I get the feeling there's almost a fear of anything new, that almost any new idea gets shut down as if it's safer to say "no." If you have a really clear vision, you know whether new ideas fit in that or not. I think we need to pick a firm to help us and set a deadline to pick them?

Loch: Our schedule changes next month—we'll be meeting on the second Thursday of the month at 6 p.m.

Caroline: I'd like to set a deadline, but give us a few meetings to do this. We should build in some type of process in how often we look at or fine-tune the vision/planning process. Alyssa agreed, and that part of the process should include a way to look at issues between periods of General Plan update, more frequently than just every five years, as needed.

Loch: Are we interested in the vision process? He took a poll of the commissioners:

Tabor: I would love to bury my head in the sand, but I think we need to be proactive. Alyssa: I want to go forward with the vision process. There are tools we haven't utilized, understanding we need to have to educate ourselves. Donna Jean: I don't know. I can't see too much sense in overlays. I don't see how they can create that many more jobs here. I don't think a vision process will help. Alyssa: a vision process may help us protect what we have.

Loch: We may find out what we already know, but we need to find that out. I think we should move forward with the vision process. By March, we should have a good idea of what we would need to do. We can make a recommendation to the Town Council on step by step what we want to do. We lay all that out maybe by May. The detailed plan would include the timeline, how much money would be needed, whatever we're doing. Between now and then, we hammer out the action steps. Alyssa: Between now and then, we can decide if we're NOT hiring an outside group, and how to do it ourselves. All the commissioners agreed to move forward with Loch's plan.

Alyssa asked if this is on the agenda everyone month: yes. Tabor: We could all, informally, talk to our neighbors about what they see for Boulder. Loch: The good thing is that this isn't controversial. All we really need right now is to define the plan for the vision process, not the vision itself. We can figure out that process by May to present to the town.

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Caroline asked about the Temporary Use Permit and what happened. Judi said the town held its public hearing and approved the TUP wording as recommended by the Planning Commission. Now the town attorney needs to write it up as an ordinance.

Agenda Items

The following items were listed for discussion at the January 8, 6 p.m. meeting:

- Individual study, then each commissioner give a brief, individual presentation or handout on key things each discovers related to envisioning, the process, the steps, the resources.
- New business.

Donna Jean moved to adjourn, Caroline seconded, and Loch adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Peg Smith, Planning Commission Clerk

Date