



Town of Orleans

Finance Committee

Tel (508) 240-3700
Fax (508) 240-3388

19 School Road, Orleans MA 02653, Massachusetts 02653-3699

Marilyn Bruneau, Chairman
Nicholas Athanassiou, Vice-Chairman
Elaine Baird
Louis Ciavarra
Timothy Counihan
Christopher Kanaga
Constance Kremer
Edmund Mahoney
Peter O'Meara

Memorandum

To: George D. Meservey, Director of Planning and Community Development

CC: Members of the Planning Board
Members of the Select Board
John Kelly, Town Administrator

Date: May 5, 2022

At this week's Finance Committee (Fin Comm) meeting, we voted unanimously in support of a Fin Comm letter addressed to you as the Town's Director of Planning and Community Development, with email copies of our letter sent to the members of the Planning Board, the Select Board, and the Town Administrator because of the importance of Economic Development to all of us - in the near term as well as longer term - as a critical component of all of our responsibilities in serving this Town.

At the end of the "Streetsense" presentation of their "Economic Development Plan" at last week's Planning Board meeting, I raised my hand as a Zoom participant and noted that there were at least 3 members of the Finance Committee participating in the meeting via Zoom - and said that we would get together to develop a list of comments/suggestions regarding the report before your stated deadline of May 6. We later learned that another Fin Comm colleague attended the Planning Board meeting in person in the Nauset Room - thus there were four of us who collaborated on creating the draft document for Fin Comm approval.

Our bottom line - which essentially echoes a comment made by Planning Board member John Ostman at the end of last week's "Streetsense" presentation - the report provides a very good beginning, with lots of material to leverage. But now it is up to the Planning Department and Town leadership to get organized, to set some priorities, to develop detailed implementation plans (including funding strategies and a timeline), and then get to work. And above all, establish effective communication strategies to let taxpayers, residents, businesses, investors and visitors know what is going on - and what is planned. And get their involvement when appropriate. And their buy-in.

Recommendations:

1. Before the May 11 meeting with the Select Board, Planning Director/Planning Board should agree upon key messages for that meeting - what to say, what to suggest as next steps, what to ask for (if anything).
2. Planning Director/Planning Board should follow through with getting the report to a broader audience (eg, Chamber of Commerce, key Town Committees and Boards such as Shellfish & Waterways, other influencers).
3. Planning Director/Planning Board should review the "Streetsense" report in depth/detail (maybe with other

- players?) to evaluate practicality of recommendations; to identify “low-hanging fruit” to link with easy opportunities; and begin to prioritize other recommendations and right-size funding and funding strategies.
4. Planning Director/Select Board representatives should participate actively in the end phases of all other studies currently underway - especially in the review of draft reports - to help ensure good fit of their results and recommendations with “Streetsense” report/recommendations.
 5. Planning Director/Select Board representatives should ensure that other studies currently underway include funding strategies in their final reports.
 6. Planning Director/Select Board/Town Administrator should begin to work on a communication strategy for including taxpayers, residents, businesses, investors and visitors in this process as it moves forward - providing input if/when appropriate - and otherwise, standing by for “buy-in”. Note the last 10 pages of the Eastham Warrant for their May 2, 2022 Town Meeting - 10 pages, in color, that provide an update on their “2021 Strategic Plan Accomplishments”. Appendix D of the Eastham Warrant provides two charts that include “Elements of Infrastructure, Route 6 and Economic Development” - examples of community communications.
 7. The “Streetsense” report recommends “Creat(ing) a role for a full-time Town economic development and tourism director & marketing staff”. The FY23 Budget (Article 13 in the Warrant for our May 9 Town Meeting) includes funding for an Assistant Town Planner - certainly a step in the right direction - though it could be some time before the Town would consider funding a “marketing staff”. The role/responsibilities of the Assistant Town Planner should be very clearly defined - to manage expectations on all sides.
 8. The report also recommends the formation of an “economic development board/commission”. An earlier draft of the report (dated March 9) suggested that such a group would “include volunteer members who represent a breadth of industries/sectors in the Town (as well as) key leaders of local business organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce.” A new Assistant Town Planner won’t be on board until on or after July 1 - but if an Economic Development Board is going to help make things happen going forward - why not begin to consider who might help? Who are those leaders in Town? Why wait another 6-8 weeks for the new Assistant Planner to get here? Why not start thinking now? The reporting relationship between this group and the Town/Town Planner must also be clearly understood.

In getting ready to talk about last week’s meeting - to come back to you with some thoughtful thoughts - we re-read our own Finance Committee Letters to the Town Meeting Warrants for 2020 and 2021 and 2022 as well as our recent letter in the Annual Town Report for 2021 - focusing on what we had to say about economic development and economic vitality and long-term planning. In our May 2022 letter - several thoughts common to what we’ve said above:

“We strongly recommend confirming and clarifying the roles and responsibilities for coordinating and leading the overall planning effort to support unified town-wide planning and manage likely-overlapping or even competing priorities, and maximize the value of the time and energy spent by various consultants, Town employees and countless Committee and Board members. This could also help to provide more effective communication with Town residents, businesses and visitors to ensure that all voices are heard and that all are aware of outcomes and impacts.”

As noted above, Fin Comm believes that the “Streetsense” report provides a very good beginning - a good foundation for the Town’s Economic Development. Right now, we’re focused on leveraging - responding to - a number of development opportunities - including the advent of sewers in the Downtown and Meetinghouse Pond areas, the Town’s purchase of the Gov. Prence properties, and the Pennrose/Cape Cod 5 and Underground Mall housing projects. Going forward - the role of these people/this process should include stimulating opportunities - making sure that the Town welcomes opportunities and will help to enable opportunities. We can’t simply wait for opportunities to happen.

Please call or write if you have any questions. We would like to ensure the success of this effort going forward.

On behalf of the Finance Committee,

Lynn Bruneau / Finance Committee Chairman