

Town of Ovid Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting #1 Notes

May 5, 2016

Introductions – Committee members introduced themselves, including their background and interest in the process.

Diana Smith, MRB Group /EDR team co-leader, provided process introduction: the committee will be looking at quality of life for the Town of Ovid, strengths and weaknesses of the community, what the future might look like, and implementable steps to get there. MRB/EDR will provide experience, expertise and guidance, but the Comprehensive Plan is a community-driven creation and must be community-owned.

Confidentiality was discussed. Diana suggested that while engaging the public is important, there is risk of sharing preliminary discussions or unverified info. It may be more harmful if “info” is made public before it has been vetted by the committee. In addition, there is often more honesty and openness in internal discussions that won’t be misquoted. Bad information can be confusing to the public when there is conflicting information provided later.

The committee agreed it is better to have a representative / spokesperson who is responsible for media replies, etc. or provides reliable, consistent information.

Process: It was generally agreed by all that all meetings will be open and the public is invited and encouraged to attend – but public input or public feedback will not be taken at Steering Committee meetings. There will be several public feedback opportunities created to ensure full participation by residents.

MRB Group / EDR will be providing a webpage. This will serve as a vehicle for information, a 24/7 resource for communication where the public can offer comment and ask questions at their convenience. Feedback received will be shared with the committee at subsequent meetings.

Using a Gantt Chart, Diana explained the project process the committee will follow – not to be a hard/fast schedule, but a guide for process and sequence. A similar process outline will be shared on the website so that the public can follow the Committee’s progress.

Protocols were discussed. As a working group, honest interaction is needed. Disagreement must be welcome, and assists in getting to the root of an issue. Most important is maintaining respect and honoring everyone’s right to have differing opinions.

Chairperson / Point of Contact: Since the public is comfortable engaging with Town Board – as a point of access, it was suggested a Board liaison serve as the main point of contact, the primary role of the Chairperson. Joe Borst recommended John who was willing to take the position on. There were no objections.

Diana led a discussion about utilizing Focus Groups, with the suggestion that local perspectives be gathered as efficiently as possible. Where committee representation is weak, Focus Groups can fill the gap.

Jean commented that there is an organization called STEPS, sponsored by Greater Rochester Health, which could serve as a resource to the Committee. STEPS members assist in the “four town” community to identify problems and complete small projects that improve quality of life. Theresa Lar is the director and a great contact.

It was suggested the two main areas that could benefit from a focus group would be Agriculture and Lakefront Living. Connie suggested that Seniors be a focus group. John requested MRB Group/EDR prepare a list of possible focus groups to discuss at next meeting.

Carrie suggested that Ovid has a huge income disparity. People in the Village do not work nine to five and sometimes work multiple jobs for a living. It’s important to have participation/representation from less privileged, multi-job residents, who don’t necessarily have time to attend meetings.

Several public engagement methods were suggested, including utilizing groups and students to help disseminate information, perhaps hand-delivering where possible.

Joe Borst offered assistance as a Scout leader; Boy Scouts need to provide community service hours and could be helpful.

Several venues and avenues for distributing information were discussed: it was suggested the Strawberry Festival on June 18 might be a good venue to circulate a survey, but it was decided that’s too soon to allow time to prepare and educate residents. The Library was also suggested as a venue for communication, or an eventual survey drop off site. The School Superintendent / Principal are very community minded and supportive and can provide good communication distribution. The 4-Town community center’s communication network was suggested as a potential resource.

The website can be launched as soon as it is developed and will provide dates for future meetings, and meeting minutes.

TOWNOFOVIDCOMPREHENSIVEPLAN.org – was generally agreed to be the best name, since it required no recall of abbreviations. As soon as possible, a link will be provided at the town web page. John and Joe advised that the Town is getting close to updating TOWNOFOVID.org.

Connie will send everyone the link to the website once it is created and live.

Future meetings were established: It was generally agreed that the best date for meetings is the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6pm, in the Fire Hall from June – October. Alternate dates or postponement will be expected in November or December.

MRB Group/EDR posed a KICKOFF QUESTION / HOMEWORK: “What do you value most about living in Ovid? OR - What is it about the community that you value so much that you would not want to see it compromised -- nothing would convince you to give it up?”

Next meeting is scheduled for June 22nd at 6pm in the Fire Hall.