Minutes

December 20th, 2007 Steering Committee Meeting
10:00am-12:00am
Society of the Four Arts

- Introduction of John Paige – Town of Palm Beach Planning, Zoning, and Building Director
- Introduction of Tim Frank – Town of Palm Beach Planner & point person for the Royal Poinciana Charrette. All logistical questions are to be directed to him. His personal contact information: Phone: direct (561) 227-6414, cell # (561) 389-3869
- Introduction of Marcela Camblor – Urban Design Director TCRPC, project manager for Royal Poinciana Charrette.
- Description by Ms. Camblor of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC), its area of influence, role, and urban design services it has been providing for local governments over the past 25 years. More information on the TCRPC is available at http://www.tcrpc.org/about_council.html
- Binders with agenda, definition of charrette, description of the role of the Steering Committee, aerial photograph of study area, and event calendar, were distributed to Steering Committee Members.
- Introduction of Steering Committee members present:
  Alex Anylan, Ned Barnes, Jeff Cloninger, Beth Dowdle, Gerald Frank, Gerry Goldsmith, Ida Goldstein, Arnold Hoffman, Paul Leone, Yvelyne Marix, Kit Pannill, John Ripley, Jim Ryan, Amy Shaughnessy, Wendy Victor

Other Steering Committee Members - Not in Attendance
Page Lee Bell, Lesly Smith, Sidney Spiegel (sent representative), Rebecca Owen Williams

- Introduction of Public in Attendance
  Ann Bach, Jim Brindell (representing Sidney Spiegel), David Darton, Diane Dordy, Leslie Evans, William Guttman - Chair, Palm Beach Planning and Zoning Commission, Alan Holt, Richard Kleid, Susan Markin - Councilwoman, Town of Palm Beach, Robert Moore, Gene Panduca, Scott Rahl, Scott Reil, A. Settaer, Joe Sheerer, Tom Testa

- Presentation by Marcela Camblor on the Charrette Process and the role of the Steering Committee (presentation can be viewed online at http://www.tcrpc.org/departments/studio/palm_beach_town_of/palm_beach_home.htm)

- General Discussion (Council Staff, Steering Committee Members, & Members of the Public):
NOTE: Given that Committee Members and Members of the Public did not identify themselves before expressing their comments, these minutes reflect the content of the comments only. Identification will be required prior to comments in future meetings.

- **Committee Member**: commented on personal concern regarding appointment, expressing that as a committee member she is being asked to go beyond the scope of what she feels as a resident she would want to buy into. She expressed the scope of this project is to review what is there, not to drastically change the area. As Steering Committee member, people have commented to her that no one wants to change the area. She commented on the amount of money being spent by the Town for this process, and questioned if the process was what she and other residents bought into, and whether it was even necessary. She also commented on the fact that the bridge has already received input for its future design, since it has been landmarked.

- **Council Staff**: clarified the cost of the Charrette – first phase of this process - being $110,000.00, with a second phase (to be done only if the Town Council approves the conceptual master plan resulting from the Charrette) to make necessary zoning changes valued at $70,000.00. Staff also clarified that the Town has applied for monetary contributions from the Florida Department of Transportation, and the Palm Beach County Metropolitan Planning Organization in the amount of $50,000.00 ($25,000.00 from each agency) for the Charrette.

- **Council Staff** said a graphic “testing” of the area’s current regulations would be done to show the “Do Nothing Scenario” – essentially what could be done in the area under current regulations and entitlements.

- **Committee Member** asked if the plan resulting from this process would require building condemnation.

- **Council Staff** informed the Committee that Council has never recommended condemnation as an implementation tool, and additionally said that great towns don’t get built through eminent domain, towns get built because you have a plan that gets implemented over time. It takes great towns hundreds of years to build incrementally. This process will create guidance, direction, for the Royal Poinciana area over time.

- **Committee Member**: commented on developing “A Frame of Mind”. Said the Town has been a vacation area for people to come temporarily, but just like when everybody hears music they like what they hear, but there is team work behind an orchestra, it is important to develop a frame of mind for this process to see what people can do when they work together. It is time for Palm Beach to really think of itself as a frame of mind.

- **Committee Member**: Interior designer, worked in the community, has looked into renting space, very difficult to find. It is important to think about historic preservation, but also to think about the present and future, and keep the town viable. She is aware of the problems that occur with South Florida Building Code, changes to structures to renovate to meet code, things that are not visible. Keep into consideration these things, an
develop a plan that works, without destroying the spirit and personality of the Town.

➢ **Committee Member:** This town is completely different from other towns. The people that came here, came here because it was a beautiful town. It has only been in the last few years that people have come here to make money, to invest, this is what is going to hurt the town. As long as we compare ourselves to other towns, we are going to get nowhere. Everyone she has spoken to does not want to change Royal Poinciana Way. She also mentioned that attendance from 7-9 pm for the Work in Progress presentation is not realistic for Palm Beachers, this is a very social place, time needs to change to accommodate the residents in order to get meaningful input.

➢ **Council staff:** Keep the design team honest: Council only works if the public is involved. The reason this process is so public and open is to ensure it is done in the community’s terms. Date of Charrette and meetings need to be discussed with Steering Committee members. This is your role as Steering Committee members, it is helping us tailor this process to your community’s way.

➢ **Committee Member:** As far as the history of Palm Beach, a plan for the area was done years ago by the Garden Club. What we have now is a very vague plan. What he hopes is we can have a plan that reflects a detail of the character of the town. This will not be a recipe of what other towns are doing, but a detail of the parts that already exist in the town to ensure preservation of the Town’s character.

➢ **Council staff:** A plan that makes sure that as development comes and is approved, it responds to the community’s character. The team relies on the Steering Committee to ensure all residents, property and business owners are heard.

➢ **Committee Member:** If our role is to be cheerleader - you rely on us to get people to a meeting - Who is going to guide you to ensure the plan preserves its character? I don’t see where you will get input with people writing on a board.

➢ **Council staff:** This process is not about writing on a board. You will help us bring the people to the meeting, and everyone at that meeting gives input. Being in the steering committee does not put you in a position where you start giving input about the area today. We are going to ask the Steering Committee to hold off on giving us input until the week of the Charrette. It is so that everyone in the town can give us input that we are asking you to help us bring everyone to the meetings, to the weeklong process, to the eight weeks that follow. Part of the reason we don’t take input before the public process is because we are not going into the process with a preconceived idea. It is only fair to give everyone in the Town a chance, the same chance to give input about what they feel about the area. The Steering Committee is not regulatory in nature, being a member does not constitute an advantage over other residents to have
more weight on an idea. This process is about making everyone understand that they have the same chance to give input.

Committee Member: Start process sooner, two months is too long to start. What we really need is for you to get the picture now that we don’t want change, but to get this input it will take a long process, and some people should not be allowed to weigh in.

Council staff: If the committee feels we can go faster, we will, we need two months to prepare. To set up for an effective process. A lot of work needs to be done.

Committee Member: Is there any point along the way that the charrette process can be stopped since hundreds of people have said that they don’t want change?

Committee Member: We have a plan that is so vague that even if people say they don’t want change, they don’t know what will happen.

Council staff: Only your Town Council can stop this process. We will prepare graphics to show a scenario with what happens if you do nothing. Doing nothing, not planning, does not mean there is not going to be change. We are not here to tell you that you have to embrace growth. There are many issues with the existing entitlement process that haven’t materialized, just saying you don’t want it, doesn’t make it go away.

Committee Member: No one is saying no change, there is always change. All I am asking if 90% of people said they didn’t want this project, when does it stop?

Council Staff: This is not “a project”. We will do a graphic that shows what the area would look like at build out. If the community is comfortable with the implications of the current zoning, then your Council can stop it. Some communities just need surgical interventions, not major changes. No one is talking about bringing towers into the area.

Committee Member: Somebody left us a great Town, we have an obligation to think about what we are leaving to the next generation. Give us some help, thought, guidance, and then we can decide if we want to embrace these ideas or not.

Council staff: The responsibility of leaving a worthy legacy is something we should all embrace. At the end of the process, the Council has the ability to adopt part, all, or none of the recommendations that stem from the charrette, but as a community you will have had the opportunity to analyze the current conditions with the help of experts for this part of your town.

Committee Member: the Steering Committee should keep an open mind and learn what works, what doesn’t, how we can keep the character of the Town, but nothing ever stays the same, so I would like to see if there is any change, what it is. You can’t leave a building to deteriorate because you don’t want change. So this will be a learning process for all of us, and I would hope that we all keep an open mind.

Committee Member: Someone needs to tell us what exists out there know, I don’t thing any of us know that.
Committee Member: Our Steering Committee needs to understand what is out there know.
Council staff: We will do this early on, can’t promise this for the next meeting, but we will do this early on. The Steering Committee needs to understand this to inform neighbors and residents
Committee Member: This committee operates under Sunshine Law. Does Sunshine Law mean members can’t talk to each other?
A discussion about this topic was held among several members. An explanation on Sunshine Law governing this committee will be held during the next Steering Committe meeting.
Committee Member: We owe it to our Town Council to give them some guidance. The only way they can get guidance, because there are a lot of opinions out there, they’ve the heard people say we should do nothing, they’ve heard people say we should do certain things only, and others say the Poinciana Plaza is a shams. There are a lot of opinions out there and the Council has asked for guidance. If when this is finished the guidance gives them direction, then this is what this is all about, and the direction might be do nothing. But until that happens I think we can’t say stay out of this situation when nobody knows what to do, because the Council is being pushed in all directions. I think it is important that we should continue with this, and it may end up that we do very little, or we do nothing, or we are going to have some major change, but this program needs to continue in order to get the guidance and find out ourselves what is happening here.
Member of the Public: I am concerned about the Town. When people say no change, that is not acceptable. The do nothing scenario. I remember coming here when there where mom & pops. Because of changes with your zoning codes, you have nothing but majors there, you don’t have the mom and pops. It has changed into something new. Now you go to the Gardens Mall, and you see 11 or 12 of the same stores. You are going to loose the few mom and pops that are left there, because they can’t afford taxes, because of parking problems and other issues that were not addressed 15, 16, 17 years ago. I have a building in 18,000sf near Brazilian in South County without one parking space, and it is difficult for us to keep tenants, and Royal Poinciana has some similar problems, but they need to be addressed. If you want to loose the character of Royal Poinciana, then do nothing, don’t listen to this, cancel the Charrette, and you are going to have all the vacancies here, you are not going to have any mom and pops And not only that, this season has been one of the worst for most of the stores in Worth Avenue and Royal Poinciana in the last 30 years, and one of the reasons is it has lost its panache. We are not talking about a 30 story building, but certainly things have changed. I respect the Garden Club, but when they were redoing Royal Poinciana I was in the merchants committee, they were talking about benches and gazebos, and improvement for buildings, (inaudible). If we have good growth, planned growth, we can keep the mom and pops. I think we should look at this. I
think everyone should be open-minded, we should keep the character, and business people are not bad people. Keep the character, but you have to look at things, buildings, that look like garbage, by the way, this town has not always been perfect. There is change that sometimes is good. Let’s be open. Let’s not just sit here and argue about how we can end this before it has even started. That is closed minded.

- **Committee Member:** It is not appropriate for the steering committee to abandon the process. If a member doesn’t believe in the process, they shouldn’t try to undermine it, they should resign to the committee.

- **Council Staff:** The great thing going on here is that we have room full of people that care. At the risk of upsetting some, I will tell you that this is the first meeting to get to the actual public Charrette, and the public input, what you think, whether there should or should not be change, whether it should be minor or major, happens that week, and we will listen to all of you, but I can’t emphasize enough how much this team is going to be open minded and unbiased, and we will get to that day, and that will be the first day we listen to everybody’s input, because we need to hear from all, and that it the only way everyone gets a fair chance. And at the risk of upsetting other Committee Members, this is not a committee that entitles you to a stronger opinion, it is a committee that will help us guide the process, educate the community about the process, educate us about the Town, and have the most successful seven day public process possible.

- **Member of the Public:** Is this process happening because the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is involved?

- **Council Staff:** There were several transportation issues when the Town called us about the Charrette, but these issues had nothing to do with the Charrette. But because the FDOT is coming to visit you with the construction of the new bridge, we discussed with Town staff the possibility to work with the FDOT to include their program into this process, probably get some funding from them, they are great at the engineering end, and we can provide nationally recognized architects to assist the FDOT and the Town with the architectural aspect of the bridge.

- **Member of the Public:** Inaudible

- **Council staff:** Nantucket, Charleston, even those places that seem complete, have gone through processes just like these. 

- **Member of the public:** (First part inaudible) there is an 800 pound gorilla sitting in the room, the playhouse. Someone with experience in the cultural aspect needs to be involved (inaudible).

- **Committee Member:** Would like to have detailed information – Zoning maps, etc, of what can be done in the area

- **Council Staff:** All information will be available to Committee Members, all information will be available online.

- **Council staff:** Next meeting, we will be asking you to elect Steering Committee Officers

- **General discussion regarding Charrette date:** The charrette has been scheduled for the week of February 16-22. This is president’s day
weekend. The Committee needs to decide if the Charrette moves one week up. This will be addressed at the next meeting.

- **Committee Member:** A whole week is too much time to ask the community to participate.
- **Council Staff:** Public is only asked to participate two days (first and last). The rest of the week the team is there, doors are open for those who couldn’t come during the weekend. It is not mandatory to attend during the week, no special meetings happen during that time.

Adjourn

Next Meeting: January 9, 2008, 10:00am – 12:00pm – Society of the Four Arts