



CITY OF EASTHAMPTON

Master Plan Committee c/o Planning Department

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Community Planning Days

Focus Group Discussions

WHAT CAN GROUPS ACCOMPLISH?

In preparing for the Focus Group discussions on April 28th, it is important to understand what groups can and cannot do. We all know how difficult it is to write as a group, or to research basic facts. Even summarizing a discussion is best left to an individual or 2-3 person team. For group discussions to be productive, there must be adequate preparation of material, so the group is able to do what it does best:

- ARTICULATE QUESTIONS
- RECOMMEND ALTERNATIVES
- ESTABLISH PRIORITIES
- RATIFY DECISIONS
- ASSIGN RESPONSIBILITY
- OFFER RESOURCES OR CONNECTIONS
- ESTABLISH MEASURES

GOALS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

Each subcommittee will have prepared a working paper, outlining issues, opportunities, goals and strategies for their respective topic. At the very least, you should prepare a brief outline of the key issues to be addressed in the Master Plan. You may also have prepared a working draft of an overall vision statement for your topic(s). At the Community Planning Day, a facilitated discussion on Saturday morning would then ratify and/or amend this statement, and generate a prioritized list of strategies and/or key actions to be undertaken to realize that vision. From this list, two or three are to be selected as highest priority – either because the need is urgent, or a unique opportunity exists, or the action is something that can be done immediately and for very little money. These priorities, along with the draft vision, are then brought before the full “town meeting,” to be integrated in a larger vision statement for the City.

FACILITATION AND TRAINING

The most successful break-out groups have fewer than 25 participants. If we generate sufficient interest in the Community Planning Days, it is likely we could have as many as 250 people in attendance. With two facilitators per break-out group, this means we need 20 people willing to take on this role – either as facilitators or as “scribes,” documenting, summarizing, and reporting back to the larger group.

Consultant contacts:

Jessica Allan, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Walter Cudnohufsky, Mollie Babize, Walter Cudnohufsky Associates, Inc.

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It is essential that the facilitators are perceived as neutral on the issues, and able to solicit a broad range of opinions without bias. Each subcommittee needs to find willing and able volunteers to take on this role.

WCA will offer a brief training for facilitators on **Wednesday evening, April 25th**. The training will include methods of keeping the discussion on task, engaging all participants, handling unruly speakers (if any!), finding consensus, etc. WCA will also provide materials to help you refine a vision statement for your focus topic.

Please have the chair of your subcommittee bring the names of confirmed facilitators to the March 28th Executive Committee meeting.

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