



City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

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RENEA VINCENT, AICP
DIRECTOR

MEETING MINUTES

PROJECT: Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group
DATE/TIME: December 8, 2009 @ 6:30 p.m.
LOCATION: Multi-purpose Room, Tarpon Springs Public Library
SUBJECT: Special Area Plan (SAP) for the Sponge Docks

PRESENT:

Michael Billiris	George Billiris	David Banther	Joyce Pappas
Ted Frantzis	Joe Muzio	Marleen Gravitz	Steve Lindhorst
Eleni Christopalcs-Lakkas	Beverly Kurpinski	John Tsavaris	Theo Malamoutsis
Randall Currelly	Eudaldo del Valle	Kathy Peters	Dawn Cox
Gerald Goen	Fanitsa Meehan	Mark LeCouris	Cindy Wilson
Sue Thomas	Tina Bucuvalas	Robert Walker	Francis King
Susan Hutton	Beverley Billiris	Siobhan Nehin	Peter Dalacos

At the December 8, 2009 meeting, the Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group (PRDFG) and other attendees discussed the following:

Special Area Plan (SAP) for the Sponge Docks - The meeting started with Renea Vincent explaining what a SAP is and how it can help in the City's redevelopment efforts. The intent is to use the SAP as the basis for a future land use amendment to change the designation within the Sponge Docks area to Planned Redevelopment - Mixed Use (PRD-MU). This change in future land use will allow development rights that are more consistent with the current and future development patterns of the area. She then introduced the consultant team who conducted the evening's exercises. The introductions were Scott Swearngen, Shilpa Mehta, and Clarence Eng with Renaissance Planning Group.

Scott began the presentation about the SAP for the Sponge Docks. He further explained how the SAP is a requirement of the Pinellas Countywide Plan Rules which is a document that lays out the framework for the plan components (i.e. water, sewer, stormwater, transportation, transit, schools, recreation, etc.). He then explained that this meeting will begin to form the vision for the future of the Sponge Docks through a planning exercise with visual examples, objective and strategy formulation, and small group discussion. Scott further explained the different types of layers within the City. The layers include the Historic District, Multimodal Transportation District (MMTD), the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), and the Anclote River. He also explained the type of analysis of the transportation system that is required and how that interfaces with environmental analysis and existing land uses. The last area of analysis will be an urban design evaluation of the City's districts, destinations, travel paths, gateways, and development patterns.

Shilpa then led a discussion on “What the Sponge Docks area is...”. She discussed her impressions of the Sponge Docks including the Greek Village (Hope/Athens Greek Community), the Working Waterfront, the waterfront promenade, tourist-oriented retail and lodging, and its connection to downtown. She then asked the participants to talk about their impression of the area. Several participants discussed their impressions of the Sponge Docks area and offered varied opinions. Shilpa moved on to explain the exercise and how the implementation strategies relate to the SAP. The discussion of implementation strategies included ranking the following: development scale, sense of place, amenities, building orientation, street-network connectivity, mix of land uses, housing mix, retail development, public space, and parking.

The participants then divided themselves into 3 small groups with a consultant acting as facilitator for each group and began to rank the preferred plan objectives and implementation strategies. After about an hour of discussion of the plan objectives and strategies, each table selected a person to “report out” to the whole group. The following is a list of objectives and strategies that were discussed by each table:

- Create a waterfront promenade as a signature amenity
- Preserve the tourist-oriented nature of the Sponge Docks
- Provide financial assistance to rehabilitate existing buildings
- Develop uses that complement the traditional working waterfront
- Maximum allowable building height needs to be further explored
- Create a Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) and Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district for the Sponge Docks to fund desired projects
- Maintain and enhance the sense of place
- Keep the current housing mix
- Encourage more uses that are oriented towards local residents, “stay local”
- Need to diversify land uses to complement existing retail
- Need to include the area on the north bank of the Anclote River in the SAP process
- Need to better connect the western end of the Sponge Docks
- Need to provide development incentives
- Need to keep tourism and expand it
- Reorganize parking in appropriate location
- Improve landscaping
- Improve signage
- Find ways to make tourists stay longer (overnight)
- Reinforce Greek character
- Develop a tag line for the area
- Need to reinvent the Sponge Docks
- Need better public bathrooms
- Need to relax the zoning regulations (height)

The meeting concluded at the end of the report out at 9:06 p.m. The next meeting will be held on January 19, 2010 @ 6:30 p.m. at the Tarpon Springs Public Library. The subject of the meeting will be the SAP for the Community Redevelopment Area (CRA).