

City of Tarpon Springs, Florida

Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group

Role, Purpose, Responsibilities and Operating Procedures

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Role

Focus Group Members will:

- Learn and understand the framework of previous and future planning initiatives
- Be prepared for the meetings
- Value everyone's opinion
- Be genuinely interested in the initiatives and be an advocate for broad support for the outcomes being pursued in the project
- Listen to each other
- Seek creative ways to meet multiple needs based on sound information
- Work collaboratively towards mutual goals and objectives
- Build consensus and community support
- Help balance conflicting priorities and resources
- Take ownership of the planning initiatives as they are developed and responsibility for building community consensus among other stakeholder groups

Purpose

The purpose of the Planning & Redevelopment Focus Group is to function as a team that will help guide, promote and ensure that upcoming planning projects within the City of Tarpon Springs have meaningful and inclusive community involvement. The Focus Group is to be a communication link between City staff, the consultant team, elected officials and the general public to make certain that the interests and values of all community stakeholders are represented during this critical juncture in the City's history.

It is intended that the Focus Group utilize their experiences, expertise and insight to assist in shaping important planning initiatives. Members must also commit to conducting themselves with a high degree of professionalism. Focus Group members are not directly responsible for managing project activities, but provide support and guidance for those who do.

The Focus Group will serve as a sounding board for City staff and the consultant team by reviewing and providing input on major work products including but not limited to the Special Areas Plans for the CRA and Sponge Docks area, SmartCode[®] calibration for the CRA, Lemon Street and North Safford Avenue Streetscape projects, and the signage and way-finding identity plan. The Focus Group will also be charged with encouraging community involvement in these projects they are helping to shape.

Duties and Expectations

Focus Group members are expected to prepare for, attend and participate in every meeting. Informational materials will be provided to the Focus Group at least five (5) working days prior to each meeting. These materials will be the subject of discussion so it is imperative that each Focus Group

member read the materials and come to the meeting prepared to discuss the information. Other requirements include:

- Willingness to place the community needs as a whole above one's personal self-interests
- Willingness to make an 18-month commitment
- Willingness to help organize/attend public involvement meetings
- Agree to follow meeting ground rules as developed
- Agree to the Focus Group's Roles and Responsibilities

Meetings

The Focus Group will meet every other month or as required to keep track of issues and the progress of the plan/project creation and implementation. There will be at least ten (10) Focus Group meetings. It is anticipated that the Focus Group will complete its assigned duties by Spring 2011. The tentative schedule is to hold meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of the month from approximately 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Meetings may also be scheduled on an as-needed basis, though meeting times and dates may change depending on circumstances. The location of the meetings may be changed based on individual meeting requirements. The actual location will be established through the agenda and notice published for each meeting. City staff will strive to schedule meetings at least one month in advance so that Focus Group members have adequate time to plan to attend. All meetings will be open to the general public.

Meeting Structure

Renaissance Planning Group, the City's General Planning Consultant will assist in the facilitation of Focus Group meetings. Meetings will typically begin with an informational presentation, followed by questions and answers and a public comment period. The majority of time at most meetings will be devoted to Focus Group discussion and decision-making.

Decisions

The Focus Group will operate in the spirit of consensus. Consensus is defined as "each member present can 'live with' the guidance provided by the group." Consensus does not connote 100 percent agreement on every issue, but rather, support for the recommendations taken as a whole. Where no consensus emerges, varying points of view will be conveyed to the Board of Commissioners at a public meeting for resolution.

Group Composition

Below is a suggested list of community stakeholders that should be invited to participate in this initiative. This list is not meant to be all inclusive. Other groups may be included at the discretion of the Board of Commissioners. Additional key person interviews, surveys and community meetings will be conducted over

the course of these initiatives to engage broader members from the community. Citizens / Interest Groups will be asked to nominate a primary member and an alternate member in accordance with the list below.

The Board of Commissioners will be responsible for selecting individuals to fill the five (5) At-Large Citizen members. At-Large members should be selected last to insure broad and diverse representation is achieved. The City will solicit letters of interest to fill the At-Large positions. Focus Group members must be a resident, property owner or local business owner.

Citizens / Interest Groups

- City Commissioner (1)
- Planning and Zoning Board member (1)
- Heritage Preservation Board member (1)
- Tarpon Springs Historical Society member (1)
- The Garden Club of Tarpon Springs, The Gro Group of Tarpon Springs, or Garden Fairies (1)
- Tarpon Springs Business Alliance (1)
- Sponge Docks Merchants Association (1)
- Tarpon Springs Chamber of Commerce (1)
- Union Academy / CAP Center Board (1)
- Tarpon Springs Housing Authority Board (1)
- Public Art Committee (1)
- Property Owner from Community Redevelopment Area (1)
- Property Owner from Sponge Docks Area (1)
- At-Large Citizens (5)

City Staff

- Planning Division staff (2)
- Tarpon Springs Fire Rescue (1)
- Public Services staff (1)

Each representative shall have an alternate to attend meetings in case the primary member cannot. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments.

Public Input

Citizens are encouraged to attend Focus Group meetings and communicate their interests, ideas and concerns. It is anticipated that citizen participation will occur in two distinct forms:

- During small-group workshop/breakout sessions to obtain structured input for specific projects.

- During designated public comment periods. A time limit will be imposed on each speaker during the public comment period to insure that everyone has an equal opportunity to express opinions, comments and concerns.

Relationship to Staff and Consultants

With the exception of Focus Group meetings, City staff will serve as the liaison to the Group. All Focus Group member questions, comments and other correspondence should be directed to City staff. Correspondence from Focus Group members requiring consultant response will be forwarded to the consultant through City staff.

Government-in-the-Sunshine Law

The meetings of the Focus Group are subject to the requirements of the Sunshine Law. This law is intended to ensure that public bodies hold open meetings that are accessible to the public. Details on the requirements of the Sunshine Law will be provided at the first Focus Group meeting.