

City of Ellsworth
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 5:30 PM

Chair Brian Langley, Vice-Chair Jennifer Sala, and Members John DeLeo, Rick Lyles, Casey Hanson, Jon Stein, Nick Turner, Paul Markosian, Nancy Smith, Eric Marichal, and Levi Rogers were present. Member Erin Witham was absent.

Eleven members present

City Planner Matthew Williams and Assistant City Planner Elizabeth Littlefield attended the meeting.

Two staff members present

1.) Call to Order

Chair Langley called the meeting to order at 5:33PM.

Call to Order

2.) Committee Ground Rules

Chair Langley went through the ground rules for Steering Committee meetings. He also explained the benefit of having formal rules and procedures in place before the Committee gets too far into their work. Member Lyles asked about who would be running/facilitating the public meetings. Chair Langley said it would likely be the Steering Committee facilitating meetings. City Planner Williams mentioned that the consultants will be running some of the meetings, but the amount will depend on what the Steering Committee asks of the consultants.

Committee Ground Rules

Member Turner asked if it was allowed for members of the Steering Committee to have discussions with members of the public outside of public meetings. Chair Langley said that was not only allowed, but encouraged so as to keep the public engaged and informed as to the work the Committee is doing. City Planner Williams said that if the conversation turns into recommendations/concerns to encourage the member of the public to also attend some of the public meetings to give their thoughts to the whole Committee. Member Smith asked about emails between members of the Steering Committee. Chair Langley said that, to be safe, to filter all emails through City Planner Williams, and he will disseminate information to the Committee. Langley stated that this would avoid an unintentional creation of a meeting through email communications.

Member Smith asked Chair Langley to highlight the rule in which abstention from voting is allowed only when a member has a conflict of interest. Smith commented that the Committee should be ready to make some hard decisions which may not be received well by some members of the public. Member Lyles asked if there was any room for abstention due to the member being uncomfortable with the topic or needing more information. The group agreed that this should not be allowed. Member Markosian stated that Committee Members signed up for this job knowing that they would have to make the hard decisions, and they should be prepared to do that. City Planner Williams told Member Lyles that if he ever feels like he needs more information to be comfortable voting 'yes,' he should vote 'no' and ask for more information.

Member DeLeo asked Chair Langley if there are minutes being taken for these meetings and if they would be posted anywhere. Chair Langley said that Assistant Planner Littlefield is taking notes and writes the minutes for all meetings. Littlefield added that the minutes

City of Ellsworth
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 5:30 PM

are posted on the City of Ellsworth’s website in the section devoted to the update of the Comprehensive Plan.

Member Markosian moved to adopt the Rules for Committee Procedure. Member Hanson seconded the motion. **The vote to adopt the City of Ellsworth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Rules of Committee Procedure was unanimous (11-0).**

**Vote to adopt
Ground Rules
UNANIMOUS**

3.) Introductions and Housekeeping

Housekeeping

Chair Langley then went on to discuss the Recommended Guidelines for Conducting a Public Meeting Hearing and explained that it is important to have a uniform, streamlined process for public hearings, as they can get out of hand quickly. Langley asked City Planner Williams if he intended on putting a ‘sign-in sheet’ on the podium so that members of the public who speak can put their information down. Williams said that it was his intention to put a sheet on the podium which will ask some demographic questions so that the Committee can see which demographics they are reaching with their public outreach.

Member DeLeo asked about how the tables would be set up for the public hearings since there is not enough room at the Council table. The group discussed possible arrangements and agreed that a horseshoe shape would likely work best. DeLeo then asked if the Staff could provide more official looking nameplates. City Planner Williams said that Staff will work on that for the next meeting.

4.) Review of Interview Process for Consultants

**Review of
Interviews**

City Planner Williams began by explaining the interview process that himself, the Chair, the Vice Chair, and the Assistant Planner went through earlier in the week. The group interviewed all consultants and Williams calculated the scores from the rubrics that all Committee members sent in. The top two were BerryDunn at 413 and Weston & Sampson at 406. Williams asked the Chair and Vice-Chair to give their impressions of those two firms and any information gleaned from the interviews. Chair Langley asked Vice-Chair Sala to begin.

Vice-Chair Sala began by mentioning that Weston & Sampson seemed more personable and less dry than BerryDunn did. She also noted that BerryDunn’s proposal and presentation were far more technical and neutral than Weston & Sampson’s which focused a lot on sustainability and used a lot of “buzz words.” Member Smith asked how many people were present for the interviews. Sala said from 4-8 people came from each of the firms for the interview, some in person and some remotely through Zoom.

Vice-Chair Sala then said that BerryDunn is partnering with Woodard & Curran which is a plus since they already have a lot of Ellsworth’s information regarding infrastructure. Sala noted that this would save time, money, and energy in the long run since they already have access to all of that information. Sala then went on to say that BerryDunn’s price is a fixed price, while Weston & Sampson’s price was subject to additional fees. Chair Langley explained that BerryDunn is offering the City a discount on their hourly rates for their services. Vice-Chair Sala added that they were also offering 200+ more hours than Weston & Sampson for the same price.

City of Ellsworth
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 5:30 PM

Chair Langley said that BerryDunn's Staff were local people who, the majority of them, went to the University of Maine in Orono and are very familiar with Ellsworth. He then said that the Weston & Sampson Staff were from away, meaning that they do not have as much local knowledge about Ellsworth. Langley went on to say that he believed that BerryDunn would give us an end product that was understandable and easy to read/implement. Vice-Chair Sala noted that BerryDunn was selected to work with a town in Texas that is very wealthy, showing that towns with unlimited budgets are still choosing them.

Member Lyles mentioned that he is concerned about outreach to underrepresented groups, like individuals who use Ellsworth as a commercial center but do not live here. He also expressed concern that both firms seem to be too over-reliant on technology. City Planner Williams said that the firms were a little vague when talking about the public outreach portion of their proposals. He said this was common in these cases since the public outreach programs are designed to fit the municipality and what the Committee believes will work best. Williams also noted that he is already thinking of ways that Staff can conduct public outreach on their own. Vice-Chair Sala said that there is potential for the consultants to come and facilitate the public meetings for the Committee. Sala also said that if the consultants were not going to be in person, they would provide the Committee with written materials for those meetings/events. Member Turner said that he believed it would be better if the Committee and Staff did a large portion of the community outreach, since they are the ones who are established in the community. He said that it could be off-putting for members of the public if the consultants were to try and engage with them.

Member Lyles asked if either of the firms were aware with some organizations and projects done in Ellsworth that can help with this process, giving the Green Plan and the Asset Mapping Study as examples. City Planner Williams said that they did know about those things. Member Hanson made the comment that some of those specific projects and organizations are mentioned in the proposal material. Vice-Chair Sala said that she did ask the consultants about some programs which they did not know about. City Planner Williams said that Weston & Sampson did send a follow up email where they included research about one of the specific programs that Sala mentioned in the interview.

Chair Langley brought up that he asked both consultants how many of their plans get accepted on the first submittal and how many need revisions. He said that BerryDunn has yet to submit a Comprehensive Plan to the State of Maine, however they are about to with Bangor. Weston & Sampson said that 'most' of their Plans are accepted the first time, however if there were any revisions needed, those may be subject to additional cost. Langley mentioned that BerryDunn would provide any revisions for no extra cost. Vice-Chair Sala said that BerryDunn is working on Bangor's Comprehensive Plan which would be a great transition to working on Ellsworth's plan.

Member Lyles asked if any of the consultants understood Ellsworth's role as a regional core and if they were planning on addressing any of that during this process. Vice-Chair Sala said that the consultants would address any issues or topics that the Committee asked

City of Ellsworth
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 5:30 PM

them to, but it was up to the Committee to tell the consultant what to focus on. Member Lyles asked if they seemed to understand the role Ellsworth plays in the region. Chair Langley said that they did, and elaborated that BerryDunn has some personal knowledge of Ellsworth and the region, furthering their understanding of the role Ellsworth plays. Member Lyles asked about how the Committee will reach out to people who only travel through Ellsworth and do not live or work here. City Planner Williams said that was all a part of the public engagement process and they are coming up with many varied kinds of engagement in order to reach the largest amount of people possible. Langley mentioned that he did talk with both consultants about Ellsworth being a ‘Sacrifice City’ in the way that they provide services for many surrounding municipalities and bear all of the cost for those services. He said that the consultants understood the dynamic between Ellsworth and other towns and would address that during this process.

Vice-Chair Sala brought up that Weston & Sampson brought in one of their sub-consultants from Hancock County Planning Commission, and was put off by how many questions the sub-consultant seemed to answer for the firm. She said it was hard to get a feel for the firm since most of the answers came through someone who was not actually a part of the firm. Member Lyles also brought up the amount of time this individual has been working in the area, noting that she does not have a lot of first-hand knowledge. City Planner Williams did say that HCPC has a lot of information as an organization, even though this employee does not have a lot of first-hand knowledge. Williams then said that BerryDunn is just starting to expand their consulting firm into Comprehensive Plans and are looking for a ‘resume builder’ Plan to work on. He said that Ellsworth’s plan would be a big get for them and that is why, he believes, they are so willing to offer us a discounted price.

5.) Discussion and Vote to Select Consultant for the Comprehensive Plan

Chair Langley then asked Committee Members to discuss their thoughts they had when scoring the proposals, as well as if their opinions have changed after listening to what happened in the interviews. Member Hanson said that the two most important aspects of the consultant’s role, in her opinion, were the capacity to hear from the community and the capacity to provide a document that is easy to understand and use. Hanson said that she believed the BerryDunn proposal was the easiest to read and the most engaging, which bodes well for the type of product they would produce at the end of the process. Chair Langley said that he did ask both of the consultants about providing a document that is ‘living’ and easily implementable. Vice-Chair Sala said that BerryDunn offered to provide pamphlets for each department head going over the portions of the Comprehensive Plan that impact their department.

Member Turner said that he scored both firms very closely, but after hearing what happened in the interviews and the insight given from those who attended, he has decided on BerryDunn as a front-runner. Member Lyles said that he felt similarly, having decided on BerryDunn given their ability to consult their global network of consultants and experts for no additional charge.

**Selection of
Consultant**

City of Ellsworth
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 5:30 PM

Member Marichal asked for clarification on whether or not BerryDunn proposed any extra deliverables. City Planner Williams said that there was no mention of that, however they will be providing recommendations throughout the process on different implementation strategies. Marichal noted that Weston & Sampson did propose some extra deliverables, however they would be for an additional fee of \$30,000. Marichal then said that most of the members of the Committee scored BerryDunn higher than Weston & Sampson initially. Member Markosian said that it appeared that only 4 members scored Weston & Sampson higher than BerryDunn, 2 of which were by very close margins. Member Turner said that he was one of the members who had Weston & Sampson scored slightly higher, but he has now changed his mind based on the information presented at this meeting.

Member Smith said that she rated the firms closely, but is now leaning towards BerryDunn. She said that she liked the use of modern technology in the proposal, making note of the Social Pinpoint webpage that they had set up for the Bangor Comprehensive Plan. Smith said that she was confused and skeptical when she saw the information about the discounted price, however the explanation given at the interviews, as discussed above, made sense. She also commented that she liked the diversity of the team involved from BerryDunn.

Chair Langley brought up that BerryDunn had a 16-month timeline which the group agreed was a good thing, since it is their hope that they can produce a product in an efficient manner. There was also concern regarding the 24-month timeline and how information will be outdated before the plan is even completed. Member Rogers said that he scored both firms closely, noting that he likes Weston & Sampson's philosophy regarding public engagement and visioning. He also said that BerryDunn seemed to put some boundaries around when the public engagement will take place. City Planner Williams said that he did ask them about the timeline and they clarified that a lot of the public engagement will be overlapping into other phases, however the phase where the public engagement is located on the proposal is when their primary focus will be public engagement. Vice-Chair Sala reiterated that BerryDunn said they would be providing implementation recommendations throughout the entire process.

Member Stein said the BerryDunn seemed to be less specific regarding how many meetings they will actually attend, while Weston & Sampson specified the number of meetings. Vice-Chair Sala noted that BerryDunn did say in their interview that they would be present for as many meetings as the Committee wanted them to be present for. Chair Langley said that the Weston & Sampson schedule seems daunting and BerryDunn is more focused on what the Committee wants them to do rather than telling the Committee what they will do.

Member Turner then made a motion to recommend to City Council that the City contract with BerryDunn for consulting work on the Ellsworth Comprehensive Plan. Member Lyles seconded the motion. Chair Langley asked if there was any more discussion before the vote.

Motion to contract with BerryDunn.

Member DeLeo said that he was one of the members who scored BerryDunn lower than Weston & Sampson citing the dryness of their proposal and the number of typos in their

City of Ellsworth
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 8, 2023 5:30 PM

proposal, however he is comfortable selecting BerryDunn based on the information provided by the members who attended the interviews. DeLeo also mentioned that Weston & Sampson seemed to be more engaging with the Planning Board, which he appreciated. Member Stein mentioned that it is important for the consultant to understand how the plan will be approved, first going to Planning Board and then to the City Council. Member DeLeo also brought up the fact that BerryDunn is using Woodard & Curran as their engineering consultant, which could have positives and negatives to it. Vice-Chair Sala said that the engineer from Woodard & Curran said that she was willing to revise old plans or plans that she is currently working on if they are warranted by the changes made during this process. Chair Langley said that he felt like the Committee would be in control if BerryDunn was selected, they were very willing to work with what the Committee wanted and what the Committee feels are the most important things to focus on. He also reiterated how knowledgeable they were with the City of Ellsworth. City Planner Williams mentioned that it would be a benefit to having Woodard & Curran on the project since they are the ones with a lot of the information about Ellsworth's infrastructure, so the Committee would be reaching out to them for information anyway. Member Markosian said that BerryDunn was his choice after listening to all of the information presented.

Chair Langley called for a vote on the previous motion. **The vote to recommend to City Council that the City contract with BerryDunn for consulting work on the Ellsworth Comprehensive Plan was unanimous (11-0).** *note: there were no members of the public in attendance, therefore the public hearing was opened and closed without comment.

6.) Public Comments

There were no members of the public present.

7.) Staff Comments

City Planner Williams went through the process from this point. He will be presenting the recommendation to City Council on March 20th, and the next meeting for the Steering Committee is March 27th. At that meeting, they will meet with the consultant and start to discuss how to begin work on the project. Chair Langley asked if there was a list of organizations that the Committee would like to get information from. Williams said there is not one yet, but they will be coming up with one in a future meeting.

8.) Adjournment

Chair Langley adjourned the meeting at 7:01PM.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Littlefield, Assistant City Planner.

**Vote to recommend
BerryDunn to City
Council
UNANIMOUS**

Public Comment

Staff Comments

**Meeting adjourned
at 7:01PM**

*Agendas and minutes
posted on the City of
Ellsworth's website:
ellsworthmaine.gov*