

TOWN OF EXETER
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
TO IMPLEMENT RURAL VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT
PRE-BID CONFERENCE
MARCH 9, 2010

Legend:

SM = Scott Millar

DS = David Schweid

Q = Questions posed

DS Scott Millar will probably be able to answer some of your more specific questions. I'm going to open this meeting by giving you a three- or four-minute background on this project. This project started out as a Borderlands project. The Nature Conservancy, along with other partners, started four or five years ago talking about how land use could be done in a little different fashion and how the area that they define as the Borderlands along the Connecticut/Rhode Island border, an area that is typically relatively undeveloped, could be dealt with in a way that would allow for development to take place in towns where they wanted it and offer preservation of the undeveloped areas to proceed. This went on for a couple of years with discussions among 20 or so towns in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Eventually, the partners in the Borderlands process decided that what they wanted to do was to choose two towns to become pilot towns to develop projects that could be used for lessons learned to help other towns in the area and other towns in general. Those towns were Killingly in Connecticut, and Exeter in Rhode Island. The partners through the foundation primarily provided funding for those two towns to go through a Phase I Visioning Process. We have done that. Out of that process came the elements of today's RFP that are in the work plan; and most recently, the Town of Exeter applied for a Challenge Grant through the Department of Statewide Planning and received a \$98,500.00 grant, and it is that grant that we are going to use to fund the next steps of the process and be able to pay you folks to help us do that. So, that is kind of the background. Scott Millar is, as I said, the Chairman of the Borderlands team in Exeter, which is also called A Vision for Exeter. Scott.

SM Without any further adieu, this is really your meeting. Do you have any questions on the Scope of Work?

Q Scott, what was the length of time for Phase I project? And this looks like a very ambitious 12-month plus project time, which eats up budget very quickly. How do the two projects compare in terms of funding? How much funding was available for Phase I? I guess the question is What was the Phase I budget and the schedule?

SM We do not know, because that was paid for by the Orton Foundation. They were responsible for really hiring the consultants involved in that. The Town never really saw the final budget numbers on that.

DS I recall it was somewhere around \$120,000.00 for both towns, I think.

Q And how about the timeframe on that?

SM Phase I took about a year, a little over a year to complete.

Q Are you looking at a similar schedule? Did you pick the 12 to 15 months that is referred to in the RFP because of your experience with Phase I?

SM Because of the mandate from the grant.

DS Yeah. That was the grant.

SM Statewide Planning has given us 18 months from the time we signed the grant agreement with them to get this moving. That is why that timeframe is in this RFP. It is really to meet their requirement.

Q Do you think it could be done in less?

SM If we can do this in less time, absolutely, but there is a lot in here.

Q Right, I know.

SM So, it might be challenging to do that in less time.

Q Because, I guess, the Orton Foundation pretty much hired the consultants, is what was resulting from Phase I available?

SM There was a complete Phase I report that is available on the Borderlands website, and I am assuming any and all information available with that would be available.

Q And GIS and any of that kind?

SM Yes.

Q And who was the consultant on Phase I?

SM Phase I was Dodson & Associates, 4C Consultants, and the Consensus Building Institute.

Q A very specific question with respect to Task 6 on the village ordinance, Page 13, B, the sentence that refers to form based code, encourage maximum flexibility. Are you thinking in the technical sense, form based code, or are you using that more generically.

SM More generically. And we are already aware that form based codes may be challenging to do also within this timeframe and there could be even a better approach. So, we would be looking to your expertise to advise us on that.

Q You mentioned on Page 10, Item D, Task I, about public drinking water supply, Exeter is tied into the Scituate Reservoir?

SM No. Exeter has no public water.

Q No public water. Any long term goals for the Big River Reservoir occurring?

SM That would not probably be likely, to tap into Big River. The closest water supply would be closest to our aquifers and that is where you are going to find the greatest yield. The Queen River aquifer being in the eastern part of town, for example. There is certainly potential there to tap into water. But we are also becoming aware that there have been some substantial developments without being in a stratified drift aquifer. For example, our high school is in till. Till does not typically yield a lot of water, but we are running a high school, a junior high school, and two gynasiums. There is a lot of water use there. So, sometimes there is more water perhaps than we think. There is a development in town called Oak Harbour Village on Route 2. They are not in an aquifer, but they are generating a substantial yield to supply all their clients with water. And there is some residential use there, it is limited, but there some residential use as well. So, maybe we need to look out of the box a little bit on that.

Q What is the status of the ULI project? Are they definitely on board, and when would that happen, and do you know who is going to be involved?

SM Good question. To be honest, I have not had any communication with them since we submitted this proposal. We did get a commitment from Wayne Franklin. Pam Cheryl was also involved in those discussions as a member of ULI. But we have not heard any discussions of late. To be fair, I think their dollar amount that they were offering was about \$12,000.00 for that particular task. So, that will give you some sense of their level of effort for that. But specifically who they were going to bring down, at this point in time I cannot say.

Q It might be an opportune time for you to get back in contact with Evan Matthews. Wayne has relocated out of the area.

Q Would that \$12,000.00 be deducted from the \$98,000.00?

SM No. That was actually used as match.

Q And that is a typical ULI panel? They are going to sort of lead the charge as far as some of the conceptual designs?

SM Yes.

Q Then the consultant would be involved with that process?

SM Absolutely.

Q And then we would take it from there as far as transmitting that into PDRs, and the zoning regulations, and that sort of stuff?

SM And then the following task. I mean, ULI is going to be doing some kind of a design charret. They try to get people on the same page with what do we mean by a village in the Town of Exeter. We really need to define that, because if we went around the room I am sure we all have a different opinion of what a village might be and I am sure a lot of people in town would as well. So, the purpose of this is to begin to get people on the same page so they can see what one might look like in town. We can get a lot of feedback from them. And then, we would be looking to the consultants to sort of take that to the next level, really refine that. Based on lessons learned from that ULI design charret, how are we going to define it in the Town of Exeter moving forward?

Q And I believe the ULI would just look at one site. It would not look at six sites.

SM Yes. So, we would probably be looking at the consultants to perhaps use community bids or some other means of illustrating what it might look like on a real site in town.

Q But the one site, would that be – if there are six potential sites, would that be something that would be decided amongst the consultant and the community?

SM And the Town. Yeah.

Q Which one we want, we advise to follow upon?

SM Yes.

Q So, since we possibly have ULI on board, would they also be involved with marketing or marketability of a village? Is that intended to be sort of a market analysis of the real potential of these village centers or is that to create some sort of commercial material?

SM Not promotional material. It is sort of a reality check for the Town. We do not want to zone something and go through all these steps and realize it is not economically feasible for anyone to ever build it for reasons we do not understand. None of us are in the development business. We do have a local developer who I think might be willing to participate in this process. I think that would be very helpful. That is the Marcello brothers. They are the ones that have been involved with Oak Harbour Village for the last six years, David?

DS At least.

SM So, I think they can probably give us a really good understanding of what it has been like to try to market something like that, at least the retail end. They have had some real challenges because of the lack of housing around, you know, the lack of population to support some of the businesses that they wanted to bring in. So, we need to hear from their story and their lessons learned. Because they do not technically live in town, they just own property, we are trying to get them appointed at least as non-voting members of this group so that they can be at the table and help us out.

Q In terms of the Steering Committee, are you thinking of expanding it using the same focus as before?

SM Yeah. The original Steering Committee had about 18 people and, as you can probably guess, about nine of them dropped out along the way. There is about a core group of about nine that have been meeting on a regular basis since. The Town Council has just put out the word to try to boost that committee. So far, they have not set a limit, but it is not likely we are going to get probably more than 20 people certainly.

Q But it would be the core, the same group of people?

SM It would be pretty much the same group of people, maybe adding a few additional folks.

Q The Vision for Exeter group?

SM Yes.

Q And that is the group you were considering inviting the developers?

SM The Marcello brothers.

Q Just to be clear.

SM Yes.

Q In terms of the impact analysis, you pointed to the Barnstable study that was done by Tischler, which is a big national firm and would probably eat up a good chunk of the budget.

SM Right.

Q Are you hoping to get somebody like that to look at this or would a Rhode Island planner with some experience be able to do it?

SM I think the latter. I mean, obviously, we cannot spend the whole budget on that kind of an analysis, and I know that was very expensive. If we can build on lessons learned from studies that have been done at least in New England, close by, and if they are germane to what we would expect those trends to be in Exeter, we could certainly build on that. But the key here is that -- to be honest, what we were trying to do is that -- we know there are going to be some naysayers when we start talking about -- when we start really getting down to the nitty gritty of promoting the village, there are going to be people that are going to say bad idea. So, we think one of the issues that is going to sell this is the economics. Is this going to be better for the town economically than what we are doing right now? We think the answer to that question is yes, but we need some data to back that up. It cannot be just personal opinions, or it worked in this town, so we think it is going to work here. So, the more we can have to back that up, the better.

DS I would add that we are looking also for an environmental impact analysis and we want both of those to show whether this is going to be an improved way to go or not.

SM Right. And there is other criteria that we are looking for too that is specified.

Q Just a technical question. How many copies of the proposal would you like?

SM We are asking for 15, because there are members of advisory committee, there is the State that wants to see this, there is the Orton Family Foundation, there is the Nature Conservancy. That is why we have asked for so many copies, and we do not have a great capacity here to make copies.

Q A question on the public outreach, working with students. Do you have specific groups that you have contacted or would it be through the high school or the middle school?

SM One of the members of our committee works at Roger Williams University. We have had several discussions with trying to engage some college students in this project.

Q So, possibly RW, URI?

SM But Roger Williams looks like it has the greatest potential, so there is an opportunity. We have not done much with that. We are waiting to see what happens here. We thought perhaps some of those students might be able to – it might be a good learning experience for them to work closely with whoever is hired so that they could get sort of a real world knowledge of how to do something like this. They do have a planning school. They have a legal school. There are architects there. It might be an opportunity for them to have a meaningful contribution to this project. We tried to engage high school students with limited success. And to be honest with you, we just do not have the time, and we do not expect the consultant to do that either. It would just suck up a lot of your time. But we might try to get some of our advisory committee members to try that one more time.

Q It says you are working directly with the advisor about what contacts have been made.

SM Yeah. By the time we get that going, for the high school students, it is probably going to be getting late in the year, and that is probably not going to work.

Q Is the Orton Foundation providing any additional funds to or is that your total budget?

SM Right now, the \$98,500.00 is the budget we are working with. There might be a possibility for some additional funds there. And as you saw, we have a task in there so we do not have to go out to bid. In the event we get some more money and we see some additional work that needs to get done, we want to try to cover that in your proposals. So, you would be giving us your hours, so we do not have to go out to bid for any new work.

Q Are you asking the consultant to go through the committee and taking it to the town meeting and getting it approved or is that beyond the scope of what we are doing here?

SM Good question, because, obviously, that process could take a long time. I guess we will look at your proposals and see how far you can take that. No. I understand that could be a very lengthy process, especially TDR.

Q What was the response to Phase I? Was it well received by the community?

SM It was. In a town like Exeter, it is very difficult to estimate. So, probably the most people we ever had at any one meeting might have been 50, but we had a website. We tried to engage people in a lot of different ways. And we are in the process now of actually reaching out to people through a Power Point presentation, getting around to different groups in town just to make them aware of what we have done so far and what we are proposing to do. To be honest, we do not want to go through this process and have some group come out and say there is no way we are ever going to support a village. So, I have been out meeting with people, and so far, the response has been very, very positive. It makes sense to people. The devil is going to be in the details certainly. But they clearly understand why we are doing this and they support the concept and so does our Town Council. They are really on board.

Q Would the existing project website be utilized for Phase II or would there be a new website on the Town's website or is that part of this?

SM The Town does not always have the capacity to update their website as quickly as we would like. So, we can probably continue to use the existing Borderlands website. We could probably rename if need be, because I should warn everybody, the term Borderlands confuses people in town. They really do not know what that is. It is just jargon to them. That is why we have been calling it this Exeter Vision project. They can connect with that a lot more readily.

Q Will the Borderlands project still be continuing during this?

SM Yes. From the Orton Family Foundation's perspective, this is still the Borderlands project, because they need to go back to the people that they get funding from and hopefully they can show the initial effort that they started has led to this success. So, they will be talking about this nationally, if this continues to move forward.

Q Are they continuing to look at other initiatives in different communities?

SM I believe that they are. I know they are still involved in some degree in Killingly and they are working around the country. So, the consultant involved in this will get some national recognition, and, if nothing else, through the efforts of Norton because they are really going to be promoting this.

Q Will they be part of the advisory committee?

SM They will be part of the selection committee and they will weigh in from time to time.

Q Would you expect any changes in the zoning or whatever to be in a legal format or will that be up to the Town to translate it to the proper legal language?

SM We would want the zoning language ready to be incorporated into our existing ordinances. So, it would have to be written in a format where that could happen. But the advertising, and the massaging of the language, getting the finer details, simply could be handled by the Town.

Q And that would be the Town Solicitor or whoever?

SM Yes, as well as the Planner. But it could not be broad language that we would then have to translate into specific zoning or subdivision regulations.

Q What are the main issues of zoning and subdivision regulations? Is it generating a lot of strip development or large lots?

SM Well, yeah, the problem is that the way the town is zoned right now is at buildout we are going to be primarily large lot zoning, single family houses. We do have about a mile of a strip commercial zone on Route 2. So, a lot of the features that the people said are important to protect as we went through the visioning process will be irreversibly altered under the current zoning pattern.

Q Is there a lot of development activity or do you anticipate a lot in the future.

SM Not right now.

Q Are you trying to get ahead of the curve?

SM We are trying to get ahead of the curve. It is just a matter of time before we are going to see some growth pressure again and we are trying to get ready for that pressure. Now is the perfect time to do it.

Q At the peak before the economic depression, how many residential building permits would you say were being pulled?

DS We have a mandatory cap, although certain things are obviously exempt to the cap. The cap has been set at, I think, 23 per year, and it has been a couple of

years since there has been any cue as a result of the cap. So, we have been under that cap for the last few years. Previous to that, we had a slight cue. At its longest, I think it was eight months. But now, much, much less, obviously.

SM Keep in mind, those of you who might not be from Rhode Island, there is going to be a train station developed about a mile from the Exeter border that already has been documented that has tremendous potential to stimulate secondary growth impacts in Exeter. I mean, that is going to take time, obviously, and, certainly, the economy does not support that growth now, but that certainly can happen in the future.

Q That is tied into MBTA?

DS MBTA.

SM I think a copy of that study is on the Borderlands webpage. If it is not, we can get it up there.

Q It is also on the Statewide Planning website, the DOT study.

Q In the discussion of the TDRs, it includes necessarily what is occurring in your neighboring North Kingstown. What is Exeter's relationship with North Kingstown? Does it look like the sharing of TDRs would be something politically might be positive?

SM Yes. As a matter of fact, both councils have been talking about that in earnest. Right now, the enabling legislation is not in place to allow that to happen. So, it is my understanding, a bill is going to go into session to try to open the door to allow that. We have a landowner who is very interested in transferring his development to North Kingstown. I think it is fair to say that the Town is looking upon that favorably. So is the Town of North Kingstown.

Q The Town has no public water or sewer system. So, are there any local or community water systems or tax free plans that the Council or the community would be familiar with so we could use those as potential solution when looking at those services?

SM Again, our high school, is not necessarily a modern example, because it was built about 20 years ago. There is a pretty large waste water load into that system. The University of Rhode Island, about seven or eight years ago, did an analysis of potential village sites and how they could be accommodated by package waste water treatment facilities fairly easily. They more or less chose sites at random. So, we are not really concerned about the waste waters. As long as we choose the

site carefully and the soils are reasonably good, I am not real concerned about the waste water. I think the bigger issue is going to the drinking water supply.

Q You said URI did that study?

SM Yeah.

Q Is that also available?

SM It should be available from URI.

Q And that was Lorraine Jupert?

SM Lorraine Jupert was involved in that, as well as, I believe, Dodson and Associates.

Q So, that was the item sited, the URI Manage Model.

SM That is something different. The Manage Model was a means to try to estimate bacterial and nitrate loadings to ground water.

Q That is URI Cooperative Extension?

SM That is URI Cooperative Extension. The same person, Lorraine Jupert, was involved.

Q So, Lorraine worked on that.

SM And she actually did an analysis. Some years ago, you may recall that the State wanted to build a 3000-person office park in the Ladd Center in Exeter. Around that time, we asked Lorraine if she could come in with a manage model to try to project what would the nutrient loadings be to the underlying Queen River aquifer, and they were substantial from a development of that scale at that location. Then we said what if we took that same amount of development and moved it out on to Route 2 just outside of the Queen's River aquifer. I'm testing my memory now because this was done about six, seven years ago, at least. But according to that model, the impacts would be significantly reduced. In other words, it would be very doable to do something like that. Coincidentally, that is one of the sites we are thinking about.

Q Scott, the Washington County Sustainable Economy for the Washington County Regional Planning Council, is that available?

SM I do not know if that is on our Borderlands website or not, but Grow Smart actually funded that. It is probably available on their website. That is some pretty good baseline information.

Q And was that Kevin _____?

SM No. It was Rick Teeter. Again, that is six or seven years old, but it is good data for its time. Things probably have not changed a whole lot.

Q That was probably a good time, because then it went up. Back in a stable time.

SM Right. But there is good information there. You can see where Exeter is relative to some of the other South County towns as far as their tax base and what some of his recommendations were for expanding the tax base.

Q Are you going to entertain further questions after today via email?

DS No. We said we would not.

SM And again, to avoid anybody from getting any kind of competitive advantage, please do not contact David or I to ask any additional questions. We are not talking after today.

DS We really did try to put a lot into the RFP to make it fairly transparent what we are looking for.

Q Do you have a timeframe for your selection and when notice to proceed would happen because that could affect your public outreach and summer vacation?

SM Right. Obviously, the proposals are due April 1. We have a committee meeting the third Monday in April when we are going to try to make a decision, at least a short list; and then, we are thinking we will probably interview the people we narrowed down, two or three, whatever that number is, in May. We will give a recommendation probably by the end of May to the Town Council, who will make the final decision probably at their June meeting. Unfortunately, it is hard to speed that process up.

DS It is conceivable that the committee could make a decision and interview in April and make a recommendation for the May meeting, but it is not likely.

Q Is Town Council once a month?

SM They can meet more frequently, but as you get past the budget season, it might be harder for them to make a decision like this outside of their monthly meeting.

DS They tend to make these types of decisions at their monthly meeting, which is the first Monday of every month.

SM So, that is the timeframe right now. If we can speed that up, we will; but it might be challenging. But, you are right, it is going to start, unfortunately, during the summer months. There is no way to really avoid that.

Q Okay. That is helpful for us as we put together our proposal.

SM Sure. And of course that reduces the timeframe even further now because the clock is still ticking. That provides about a year.

Q When did you sign your memorandum with the State?

SM In February.

Q So, you are taking three months off of that just to go through the process.

SM Just to go through this process. I mean we are hopeful, and if we are close and we are making good progress, perhaps we will get some extra time; but we have been told, right now, do not ask for it. Because the funding that they receive from the Feds has been pretty tight.

Q The RFP suggests 15 months from the date the contract is signed. Is that your contract with the State?

SM No, our contract. But I think I put a date in there of June, 2011. That is really what we are shooting for.

Q So, I guess you were right on track then.

SM So, you're going to have about a year to get it done.

Q That might be good when you talk to ULI, to let them know how that timing would go.

SM Yeah, absolutely.

SM Other questions? Comments? It is going to be a great project; right? But it is not going to be easy though. But just think how good it will make you look for subsequent jobs if you can pull this off; right? There has not been a new mixed-use village built in Rhode Island, what, since the 1800s. So, this could be the first.

Q Which one was that?

SM I'm just guessing. There has not been, I'm saying.

Q I know you have not been around that long, Scott.

DS Sorry question period is over.

Q Really, the 1700s. The Village at South County Commons.

SM It is sort of mixed use.

Q It's a hybrid.

SM It's a hybrid. But you are right, it has all the elements certainly.

SM If there are no further questions, I appreciate your interest and thanks for coming down.

DS Thank you all.