



Downtown Area Vision Plan Process Narrative

At the February 18, 2020 Township Committee meeting, Paul Phillips, Township Planner, and Deputy Mayor Prupis presented the idea of Downtown Area Vision Plan. It was unanimously agreed upon by the Township Committee at that time to create subcommittee to steer the Downtown Area Vision Plan process until such time as a recommendation could be made to the full Committee. This subcommittee consisted of; Deputy Mayor Prupis, Committeeman Wasserman, Alexander McDonald, Paul Phillips (Township Planner) and Joe Maraziti (Township Attorney).

The Township of Millburn subsequently issued a request for proposal (“RFP”), included as **ATTACHMENT A**, on February 25th, 2020 to engage planning firms that may be interested in working with the Township on the Downtown Area Vision Plan. The initial deadline had been extended, by addendum, to April 16, 2020. The Township received six (6) responses to the RFP. The respondents to the RFP were as follows;

- Heyer, Gruel and Associates
- Perkins Eastman - **ATTACHMENT B**
- Wallace Roberts Todd (WRT) – **ATTACHMENT C**
- HKS
- J. Caldwell & Associates, LLC
- Topology

On May 13, 2020 two (2) of the six (6) respondents were removed from contention by the subcommittee. The subcommittee wanted to get the number of firms to interview to a more manageable number and the two (2) firms that would not continue were clearly not on par with the quality, scope of work and expectations of the subcommittee. The choice to eliminate HKS and J. Caldwell & Associates, LLC was unanimous and both were issued letters to the same.

After making a determination of the four (4) firms that would be interviewed, questions were developed, with input from the subcommittee, by the Township Planner and are attached as **EXHIBIT D**. These questions consisted of five general questions for all firms and one or two specific questions to each firm. These questions were shared with each firm prior to the interviews taking place so that presentations could be developed around a firm’s answers to these questions.

An interview panel was established that consisted of three (3) members of the Planning Board in addition to established subcommittee. The planning board members that would assist in

conducting the interviews were Beth Zall, Planning Board Chair, Jorge Mastropietro and Dan Baer. On June 3, 2020 prior to interviews the next week, the interview panel met to discuss the format of the four (4) interviews. It was decided that each interview would consist of a 45 min presentation and 75 min of question and answer to keep each interview to 2 hours.

On June 9, 2020 the first two (2) interviews were held with WRT and Topology. A meeting was held the following day to discuss these interviews. On June 10, 2020 the final two (2) interviews were held with Perkins Eastman and Heyer, Gruel and Associates. Again, the following day a meeting was held with the interview panel to discuss the performance of the interviewees. After an appropriate discussion on each of the interviews the panel was able to concisely narrow the field down to two (2) finalists; Perkins Eastman and WRT.

On June 15, 2020 a meeting was held with the appointed subcommittee to discuss the next steps with Perkins Eastman and WRT. An email was sent by the Business Administrator to let both finalists know of their status. It was indicated in this email that a follow up meeting would be set up in early July. Topology and Heyer, Gruel and Associates were issued letters via email and regular mail that they were not chosen to continue as the subcommittee continued its efforts toward a recommendation for the full Township Committee. Neither Topology nor Heyer, Gruel and Associates performed up to their reputation and the top two firms were a clear consensus of the interview panel.

The second interview with Perkins Eastman was set for July 7th and WRT was set for July 8th. These interviews, after the reopening of Town Hall, were conducted in person. These interviews were attended by the principal of each firm, the project leader and retail sub consultant on their team. In attendance from the Township, were Deputy Mayor Prupis, Committeeman Wasserman and Business Administrator Alexander McDonald. The second interview consisted of approximately 1-hour to 1.5-hour discussion and a walking tour around the area of study.

At the Township's request each of the two finalist firms were asked to evaluate their scope of work and pricing for the project. These responses are attached as **ATTACHMENT E** (Perkins Eastman) and **ATTACHMENT F** (WRT). These negotiations resulted in a substantial reduction in the cost of Perkins Eastman and more realistic comparison between each firm's scope of work.

The subcommittee has been committed to a thorough process and a complete vetting of each of the finalist firms. Also included here is a timeline of events from the onset of this project.

Recommendation and Next Steps:

Perkins Eastman and WRT were commensurate professionals, presented great teams, original ideas and a strong working knowledge of Millburn. The subcommittee took each of the firms under careful consideration and have confirmed recommendation of: **PERKINS EASTMAN**. Perkins Eastman is being recommended for the following reasons (not an exhaustive list);

- Provided an excellent presentation with succinct and thorough answers to the interview panel's questions. This included relevant work experience in other communities; some substantially similar to Millburn
- Thoughtful consideration of the current global health crisis in presenting a public engagement plan

- The synergy and experience of their team members was apparent. Furthermore, each of the team members are involved in land use boards in their respective communities. This is an added benefit to their understanding of the challenges that municipalities face in all types of land use issues.
- Were clear that they want to produce a plan that results in actionable items
- A strong willingness to negotiate and work with the Township on scope of work and pricing. Perkins Eastman reduced their cost for the vision plan by 31% to \$199,690.

The Downtown Area Vision Plan subcommittee would like to present their recommended firm at the September 1, 2020 Township Committee. Perkins Eastman would be asked to make a brief presentation to the Committee and answer any questions that the full Committee may have of them.

With consensus from the Committee to finalize the process and engage Perkins Eastman, then at the September 15, 2020 Township Committee meeting the following resolutions would be presented for approval;

1. Approval of funding for the project through capital surplus that can be utilized for preliminary planning expenses
2. Engagement in a contract with the firm
3. Formation of a steering committee for the project

Project Steering Committee

The steering committee for the Downtown Area Vision Plan would be tasked with monitoring the firm's progress through meetings as set in the project schedule, promoting and participating in public engagement, supporting the project's efforts as a liaison to the community and ensuring that there is the necessary input from various important stakeholder groups in the Township. The objective of the steering committee is to ensure that the Township of Millburn receives a plan that aligns with the outlined scope of work and provides meaningful and actionable items for the future of the downtown area through thoughtful collaboration.

The steering committee would be proposed as follows;

Beth Zall – Planning Board Chair

Priya Patel – Environmental Commission Chair

Gaston Hauptert – PTOC Safety Chair and Pedestrian Safety Advisory Board Member

Alex Zaltsman

Amy Lawrence

Committeewoman Prupis – Township Committee Member

Committeeman Wasserman – Township Committee Member

Alex McDonald – Township Business Administrator

Downtown Area Vision Plan – Timeline

February:

2/18/2020 – Initial discussion with Township Committee under “New Business”

2/25/2020 – Request for Proposals was advertised

March:

No timeline items

April:

4/16/2020 – Submission deadline of RFPs for Downtown Area Vision Plan. There were six (6) total respondents.

4/21/2020 – Subcommittee meeting to discuss respondents and further discussion at Township Committee meeting under “Old Business”

May:

5/13/2020 – Subcommittee meeting. Two (2) of the six (6) respondents were removed from the process. A letter was sent indicating their removal. Interview dates for remaining four (4) respondents were discussed and set. Questions for each of the interviewees were written for review by the interview panel and distributed to the respondents.

5/27/2020 – proposals were sent to additional members of the interview panel for their review.

June:

6/3/2020 – pre interview discussion with interview panel. Format and questions were discussed.

6/9/2020 – Interviews conducted via ZOOM with WRT and Topology.

6/10/2020 – Post interview discussion conducted on previous day’s interviews

6/11/2020 – Interviews conducted via ZOOM with Perkins Eastman and Heyer, Gruel and Associates.

6/12/2020 – Post interview discussion on previous day’s interviews. Further discussion of all candidates also took place. The group unanimously voted to proceed with two (2) final candidates. Perkins Eastman and WRT.

6/15/2020 – Subcommittee meeting to discuss next steps for the final two (2) respondents. It was decided that an attempt to perform in person meetings with these firms would take place in early July with limited numbers. Deputy Mayor Prupis, Committeeman Wasserman and Alexander McDonald would participate in these meetings.

July:

7/7/2020 – Second meeting (in person) with Perkins Eastman. This meeting was attended by Deputy Mayor Prupis, Committeeman Wasserman and Alexander McDonald.

7/8/2020 – Second meeting (in person) with WRT. This meeting was attended by Deputy Mayor Prupis, Committeeman Wasserman and Alexander McDonald.

7/22/2020 – Followed up with Heyer, Gruel and Associates to discuss why they were not chosen as a finalist

7/23/2020 – Followed up with Topology, at their request, to discuss why they were not chosen as a finalist

7/29/2020 – Meeting between Deputy Mayor Prupis, Committeeman Wasserman and Alexander McDonald to discuss recommended firm and next steps.