

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday November 9, 2021 at 7:00 pm

On line via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

Members Present: Brian Boyle, Panny Gerken, Sharon Shepela, Stacia Downey, Cia Boynton, Ken Troup, Mary Ciummo, Mark Sprague

Others Present: Valerie Oorthuys, Lynn Dischler

On a motion by Panny and a second by Stacia, the minutes of the September 23, 2021 meeting were approved as amended 8-0-0.

Public Forum 1. The Committee discussed the successful public forum on October 17 at Florence Sawyer School cafeteria. Valerie was impressed with the size of the crowd (estimated at 45 public members), its interest, and how people were engaged. She noted that there were obvious connections amongst the task groups and interactive stations. For example, open space was frequently mentioned in the context of housing. Mary monitored the aspirations station and noted that #2 about natural resources and #6 about preserving agriculture and open space sparked the most interest. She said #1 about traditions was confusing to many people. Valerie created images of all the public feedback and organized those on dropbox under the title Feedback from Forum 1.

Stacia noted that there were differing opinions expressed at the Forum and that we need to present options or potential solutions at a future town meeting. A key takeaway from the Forum was the interest in connections and community. A community center had a lot of interest at the Forum including the importance of involving all ages. The public input called for exploring smaller unit more dense housing while preserving open space. Cia noted that while people were most concerned about traffic on 117 and other roads, the visuals were more related to trails and sidewalks and less about the transportation needs of the town. That said, there was a clear interest in sidewalks in town.

Last week, Brian, Bob, and Valerie met with Ralph Wilmer from MAPC. He thought the Forum validated the work we've done so far and where we are headed. Ralph urged us to continue to engage with the public even before the next forum. Brian said he was in talks with the High School about making a Master Plan presentation there. Attendees discussed writing frequent articles for the papers to document what we learned from the forum and to remind residents that we are still working on the Master Plan. Wilmer had recommended reaching out to town hall staff about potential Master Plan recommendations. Panny noted that she has already had a number of discussions with town hall staff (prior to Valerie's coming to Bolton). Panny and Valerie will sit down and discuss what Panny learned and formulate the best approach to engaging town staff.

There was a brief discussion of sustainability and activities underway in surrounding towns to deal with climate action. Sharon said the question is how to engage the community in that

climate action. Cia noted that there is no longer an Energy Committee. Stow has a sustainability committee as does Harvard. Both started as volunteer groups that eventually became town committees. Sharon said that Tony Jagodnik is already talking with and working with the group in Stow. All agreed it would be good to learn more about what the Stow and Harvard groups have done.

Several new grants or projects were mentioned. The town has been awarded a Massworks grant for a rotary or round about at the Green-Forbush Mill-Main Street intersection by the High School. The town also received a grant for a consultant to do background work on the business inventory. It was also mentioned that the mixed use proposed for the corner at that intersection would require a zoning change, which is being requested by the developer. The warehouse-housing proposal for the Kane property by 495 and Hudson Road is also seeking a zoning change. This raises the question of what the town really wants in economic development and whether there should be a broader look at town zoning rather than responding to project by project zoning requests.

Brian led a discussion of future forums, suggesting climate as a topic to coincide with Earth Day next April and perhaps include 1 or 2 additional but potentially related topics, such as transportation and recreation. Stacia suggested a forum related to housing and economic development. Attendees stressed the importance of interaction with the public and talked about different days or nights of the week, different formats, and timings. The idea of a weekday evening Zoom meeting with the potential of participant voting and perhaps breakout rooms was discussed. Brian noted that MAPC has significant experience with complicated Zoom meetings and also has the version that allows more than 100 participants which would be important. Brian said he would reach out to MAPC about Zoom since we still have resources remaining in the assistance grant we have from MAPC. The group agreed we need more discussion of the elements to include in forums, when they might be, and how they would be conducted. An idea mentioned was to allow vendors or organizations that deal with energy conservation or sustainability to set up booths at the climate-related forum.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held Thursday December 9 with particular focus on future forums.

Without additional business, and based on a motion by Panny and second by Mark, the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 pm.