

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Thursday December 9, 2021 at 7:00 pm

On line via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 pm.

Members Present: Bob Roemer, Brian Boyle, Panny Gerken, Stacia Downey, Cia Boynton, Mary Ciummo, Ed Sterling

Others Present:

On a motion by Brian and a second by Panny, the minutes of the November 9, 2021 meeting were approved as amended 7-0-0.

Florence Sawyer School Robotics Team. Members of the school's Robotics Team, Connor, Ethanael Finn, Ilasia, Matthew, and Oliver, attended the meeting made a presentation of work they had done to investigate possible alternative entry and exit roadways to access the school and reduce traffic congestion in the morning and afternoon. They had looked at several different approaches to the school. They had presented the same ideas to the Zoning Board of Appeals as part of the ZBA consideration of the 580 Main Street project. They had also suggested a traffic signal at Mechanic Street, but noted that that would require state approval because of 117. Mary noted that the state does not own 117, so it would be possible. One of the alternate routes was from the back of the parking land across private property to Berlin Road. Another would go across the Derby Field, again across private land, to South Bolton Road. There are two possible paths that could be pursued with Trinity Church, one being an existing gated path that was used informally in the past. The third idea the Robotics Team offer was to use the existing roadway and bridge to go onto the sheep field and down to the driveway that feeds Bolton Country Manor and Bolton Office Park. The Robotics team members ended their presentation by asking that the MPSC include the ideas in the Master Plan because they believe improving access to the school would be in the best interests of the town.

Committee members praised the initiative and work of the Robotics' members. In response to a question about downsides of ideas, the Robotics Team noted that they are not anticipating reductions in traffic, simply moving some of the traffic to different routes to improve access to the school. They said they did not have a favorite approach, that they thought all were good and would work. Ed noted some problems with one of the Trinity alternatives that could encroach on the veterans' building and a large tree nearby, but said he favored the Derby route and that they should continue to work with Trinity on viable routes. The presenters admitted they had not talked with the Conservation Commission or the Police, but had talked about their ideas with the DPW director. Bob noted that Mary might have some traffic flow data that was useful. Mary agreed and also noted the experience to date with the light at Wattaquaddock Hill Road has been somewhat helpful, but that there are sometimes backups at the light that can affect the school intersection. The Committee praised the work of the Robotics Team and thanks them for their presentation.

Public Forum Planning.

Much of the rest of the meeting was an open discussion of the planning that is needed for the next set of public forums. Bob noted that is important to keep up momentum from the first forum by planning the next ones. He noted that the town had just received an economic development grant and is using a consultant that did an excellent job. Bob proffered that a forum might be an excellent way to share results with the public. He said perhaps the next forum could be housing-economic development-culture.

Mary asked what about land use and this led to an animated discussion of land use. Ed mentioned the importance of dealing with long term planning related to the existing farms and other large vacant parcels. Cia agreed with a broader view of land use. Brian and Panny said land use is normally a part of other chapters in a Master Plan and that land use is integrated with everything else. Bob emphasized the importance of overall planning and a big picture perspective. We need to address all of the different elements, but bring them together to show how they should be integrated. Cia advocated prioritizing land use actions. Bob suggested and all agreed that listening to a knowledgeable land use person was important; his experience with the Harvard School of Design is that they have such people. Related to such a broad view, Stacia and Ed asked whether Bolton was a developing suburb as some planning studies have indicated or a rural agricultural community? Do we want to be like Carlisle, Sudbury, or what? Brian pointed out that while we need outside assistance, at present we only have potential grants and MAPC available and no in house budget. Cia thought perhaps MAPC could assist with grant preparation. Bob said he will talk with Valerie about a comparable scope of work from another town. Brian suggested finding such a person to be a guest for the January meeting to discuss the overall land use approach. Everyone liked that idea.

Public Outreach

Brian suggested that several articles related to the October forum written to publish in the newspapers would be useful outreach; he recommended focused articles of 500 words or less on several forum-related subjects. Brian recommended a general overview article about the October forum. Stacia volunteered to draft that article. Another one could be a more detailed view of some of the comments and tensions or contradicting views expressed by the public at the forum. Brian and Cia volunteered to draft that one. Brian also suggested a more detailed article on either housing or economic development as precursors to future forums. There was no specific volunteer among attendees.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held Thursday January 27, 2022.

Without additional business, and based on a motion by Brian and second by Ed, the meeting was adjourned at 8:12 pm