

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Thursday January 27, 2022 at 7:00 pm

Online via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm.

Members Present: Bob Roemer, Brian Boyle (after selectmen's meeting), Panny Gerken, Stacia Downey, Cia Boynton, Mary Ciummo, Ed Sterling, Mark Sprague, Kenneth Troup,

Others Present: Valerie Oorthuys

On a motion by Panny and a second by Mark, the minutes of the December 9, 2021 meeting were approved as amended 8-0-0.

Business District Assessment Grant. Valerie discussed the scope of work for the Business District Assessment and Market Analysis to be conducted by FinePoint Associates through grant funding from the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative. The consultant is the same person who did a similar, well received study for Stow. A similar type of report is expected; members of the MPSC had been provided with a copy of the Stow report. Part of the consultant's work will be a survey of businesses as well as receiving inputs from townspeople. Survey question will be reviewed by MPSC and the Economic Development Task Group. Bob shared on the screen a map of the area with business zone boundaries noted. The study should be completed in June and include suggested next steps as well as existing business conditions. Valerie noted that the timing will be good for incorporation into the Master Plan. Bob noted that the focus of the business requirements should be on residents' needs. He mentioned that Highland Commons meets many Bolton resident needs and wants (but not restaurants), which could affect the outcomes of the surveys and the study. Cia asked about the power line easement that goes through the study area. The easement could affect future uses of the properties over which it passes. There was a brief discussion about parcels in the area with split zoning, something that the Planning Board has been investigating and making zoning change recommendations.

Presentation to Planning Board. At the Planning Board's request, Bob gave a presentation on January 12 to that board on the objectives, status, and schedule for the Master Plan. Bob said the presentation was well received, although some members were critical of the timing of the October 17 Forum (a Sunday afternoon) and stated that the MPSC was not addressing concerns of working people in Bolton. Valerie has detailed minutes from the meeting that MPSC members can review.

Public Outreach. The comments about the October forum led to the agenda item on public outreach. Members noted that Stacia's article about the forum was printed in this week's Item and Independent. Valerie mentioned a useful recent MAPC presentation about developing a community engagement plan to help reach under-represented groups. She spoke with the speaker, Raul Hernandez, who might be able to review our outreach plans and a community engagement plan. Mary suggested that MPSC follow the process used by the Conservation Trust in its public charrettes for the Town Common. Bob and Panny noted that the groups contacted for the Common were the starting point for the Public Forum. There was some discussion about

using Facebook postings as a means to obtain citizen input about the best times for Forums. After a conversation between Bob and Joel Bates at Florence Sawyer School, Joel will be distributing Master Plan information in the FFS Newsletter to parents.

With regard to the planning for the next forum, Bob asked that the MPSC not discuss it at present because there are too many other things going on that will affect the timing and content of the spring forums.

Scope for Expert Assistance. The MPSC then discussed the possibility of hiring expert assistance to help not only with outreach but to work with several of the key task groups to pull together their information and pull it together in a consistence way into the Master Plan. Valerie has talked with Stow as well as the person who did the Master Plan support work in Boxborough and Sudbury, and is putting together a scope of services with multiple tasks on which potential consultants could bid. The consulting assistance could include synthesizing the existing conditions and implementation matrix and help assure alignment of recommendations across the various task groups.

There is a \$30K line item in the Planning Department budget for the Master Plan expert assistance and the possibility of additional state grants. Panny wondered if it might make sense to increase the budget line item with the understanding that if state grants came through, the MPSC would not spend all of the money. Cia favored the consulting assistance, noting that it could help insulate the town from criticism. Ken noted wryly that 30-40 years ago townspeople did not trust consultants and preferred citizen efforts.

Land Use Evaluation Process – SW quadrant of 117-495. Bob noted that the land use task group met on January 18 and discussed the extensive mapping resources that Rebecca Longvall and Valerie use and can provide for the Master Plan. The task group discussed various land uses and owners in the SW quadrant area and agreed that an analysis of highest and best use and risks associated with future development would be helpful with emphasis in this case on municipal uses. Such an analysis could lead to an evaluation process that could be recommended in the Master Plan and applied to other areas of town. The land use task group is meeting next on February 15 and Rebecca and Valerie are creating a map of the area that will be useful in deciding next steps. There was some discussion of uses currently proposed for parts of the SW quadrant including a proposed solar field, Zone 1 areas for existing and planned public water supply wells, walking, informal soccer practices, and potential traffic flow around the school. The MPSC agreed to have more outreach about the proposed evaluation process after the task group meeting on February 15.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held Thursday February 24, 2022.

Without additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:41 pm