

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Thursday March 26, 2020 at 7:00 pm

On line via Zoom

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

Members Present: Cia Boynton, Mary Ciummo, Panny Gerken, Molly Myers, Bob Roemer, Mark Sprague, Ken Troup, Ed Sterling

Others Present: Erica Uriarte, Stacia Downey

After a motion by Panny Gerken and a second by Mark Sprague, the minutes of the February 27, 2020 meeting were approved without comment 9-0-0.

Status of task groups: Sharing his screen Bob Roemer reviewed the status of the task groups:

“Climate Change” is essentially ready for Master Planning Steering Committee (MPSC) review with a revised task statement.

“Cultural & Historical” has been revised by the group and is essentially ready for MPSC review.

“Natural Resources” is ok and ready for the MPSC to review

“Economic Development” is drafted but the group has not met, and plans to do so by Zoom or conference call in early April.

“Housing” group met and has task plan to distribute. Chris will distribute.

“Land Use” group is being reviewed and will then be sent to the MPSC for its review.

“Municipal Facilities” task plan has been drafted, but has not been sent to the MPSC as yet.

“Municipal Services” task plan has been drafted and will be sent to the MPSC.

“Open Space and Recreation” task plan has been drafted and is available for steering committee review. Ed noted that Parks and Recreation is currently following town guidelines until May 1, but there are sports group interested in using the athletic fields.

“Population” task plan is available for MPSC review.

“Outreach and Communication” task plan has been drafted with some comments from task group members, but school and town employees are tied up with COVID-19 response.

“School” task group is looking for school population data from Pam Powell. Joe Lynch is working with NRSD facilities people on a facilities assessment including the sewage treatment plant. The group is looking for drawings of buildings in the town.

“Survey” has been updated with questions MPSC members have provided. . General questions are more or less the same. The 3 strengths and 3 improvements questions have been changed to be – open-ended questions. The services questions have been moved so that they are separate from housing questions. Some changes were made to housing questions, including one related to the number of affordable housing units the town needs (173). Molly will send the survey out again to the MPSC members. Some changes were made by the committee as they talked with the survey on the screen. Multiple answers will be possible for the question about where you work. There will also be a No Preference selection on question 9. Molly will put the survey in Survey Monkey while the committee reviews.

“Town Finances” Brian has finished the task plan, which is ready for MPSV review.

“Transportation” With the task plan completed, Ken working on transportation services parts while Mary is reviewing other towns’ master plans for how they treated transportation. She has obtained 5 years of crash data collected from Chief Nelson.

“Water and Sewer” task plan has been drafted, but they still need to coordinate amongst the team members including Kevin O’Brien who has been unavailable.

Bob Roemer noted that as a summary of task status, reasonable progress is being made.

Communications Intern. . Bob explained that he’s been working with staff at Nashoba Regional HS to identify a communications intern to work with us on outreach and communications. The idea is to get someone who is a junior now who could continue into their senior year for continuity. A plus for the student is that they can include the internship in the student’s resume and college applications. Two Nashoba students are interested and both have internet capability and social media experience. Bob was to interview by phone the next day. Both students are part of the DECA organization at the school that is for students with entrepreneurial interests.

Taggart Land. Cia arrived about 8:00 pm from attendance at selectmen’s meeting. She reported that the town is going ahead with the article to purchase the 43 acre undeveloped land on Forbush Mill Road which abuts the town bard. Both the selectmen and advisory approved its inclusion on the warrant. The agreed upon price, still to be finalized, is half of either the owner’s appraised value or the town’s appraisal, still being sought. The amount is between \$1.3 and 2.0 million. Various municipal uses including open space are ok. Rebecca Longvall, the Conservation Administrator, told the selectmen about several possible reimbursable grants that are available to lower the cost to the town. In addition, the town will take \$31K from the Conservation Fund. The funding would require a debt exclusion override. Cia had walked the property earlier in the week and described it as a fascinating property. She expressed interest in land banking the property for potential municipal and conservation use. She noted the “one day railway” and trail near-by. Other MPSC members expressed interest in a community center or playing fields or whatever that could be developed there.

Prior to the selectmen's meeting, Bob Czekanski had expressed his desire to Cia for Master Planning input at the town meeting. In response to an MPSC request, Erica showed a topo with a subdivision on it that the steering committee will study. The committee will think about what can be said to support. While May 4 is probably too early for the MPSC to say very much, the postponement of the annual town meeting until June 22 makes it easier for the MPSC to study the property and render an opinion.

The International. The MPSC briefly discussed the sudden, and reportedly permanent, closing of The International, Bolton's largest taxpayer. In discussing the land, Erica had the list of parcels: 6 parcels with 4 recreational or agricultural, with the agricultural land under Chapter 61. MPSC participants noted that a 40B could overcome the Recreational Business Zone. Erica is going to put together a fact sheet about the parcels. Participants speculated that the general decline of golf pre-pandemic might mean the property would not just be sold for the same use but changed or redeveloped. Another participant mentioned hearing a rumor that day that the closing may not be permanent after all.

With no other business before the MPSC, Panny moved and Mark seconded that the meeting be adjourned. It was approved 10-0-0 and the meeting adjourned at 8:18 pm.