



Town of Pepperell

Master Plan Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

Meeting Minutes-February 13, 2020

Committee Members Present:

Renee D'Argento
Diane Cronin
Deborah Fountain
Ken Hartlage
Nancy Lebedzinski
Joyce Morrow
Kathryn Pries
Robert Rand
Stephen Themelis
Jack Visniewski
Chuck Walkovich

Committee Members Absent:

Paul J. Lonergan
Kenneth Morgan
Amanda Nichols
Sherrill Rosoff
David Sears
Stephen Witmer

Others Present:

Jay Donovan, NMCOG
Beverly Woods, NMCOG

1. Minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting

Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Ken Hartlage, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the January 9, 2019 meeting.

2. Action Item Status Review

There were no action items addressed at the meeting.

3. Review of the Revised Facilities and Services Technical Paper

Beverly Woods stated that she received extensive comments from town staff and board members that have been incorporated into the revised version of the document. The Capital Programming Committee was removed from this section. Although the Committee is described in the Charter it does not currently exist. The Finance Committee currently handles capital planning issues.

Information on the highway garage was added to page 7, detailing the many improvements that are needed at that facility. The Water Division building is in much better condition than the highway garage, although additional storage space is needed. Administrative staff for the Water Division has been relocated to the wastewater facility at Lomar Park. There is no potential for expanding the Water Division building given restrictions that were put in place when the town acquired the Pepperell Springs property. At some point, the DPW director would like to consolidate all of the DPW operations into one facility.

Additional information on the Police Station building was provided by the Town Administrator and added to page 9. Air quality testing has been performed at this location and the Town is waiting for a report outlining the results. Short-term roof repairs were performed on the building but additional work on portions of the roof is still needed.

Comments from the COA director were added to page 14 relative to the need to replace the air conditioning system at the Senior Center. The Emergency Manager also commented that the installation of a shower at the Senior Center would allow the Town to use the building as an overnight emergency shelter, rather than using the Varnum School.

The Personnel Board discussion on page 17 was updated to reflect comments received from the Town Administrator. A typo was noted in the total on the Police Activity table on page 18. On page 20, a section on Emergency Management was added describing the role of the department.

Information on energy savings resulting from Green Community activities was added on page 30. A section on Pepperell Community Media was added on page 33. Comments were received from the Library Director updating the circulation and resource statistics. The section has been updated based on her comments.

Diane Cronin requested that information on the Lock-up in Railroad Square be added to page 14. She noted that the Sign and Safety Committee is not mentioned. On page 37, she requested a revision noting that the Historical Commission recommends procedures to the Town.

Comments received from the Town Administrator were discussed relative to the condition of the Peter Fitzpatrick School, the energy section of the technical paper, narrative on the Northeast Direct pipeline project and on telecommunications, solid waste and recycling.

4. Climate Change and Sustainability Work Group

There is no update at this time.

5. Review of Facilities and Services Discussion Questions

In response to Question 1, there was unanimous consensus that the Town needs a facilities management plan. Beverly Woods noted that the Town Administrator commented that there is a capital request in the 2021 budget for a facilities assessment that will be used to inform the capital planning process. A Building Committee has also been formed to focus on replacing the Police Department building and possibly upgrading or replacing the fire stations.

The responses to Question 2 were generally supportive of creating a facilities manager position. The Town Administrator has requested funding for such a position and is exploring the possibility of sharing this person with a neighboring community, the schools, and the Pepperell Housing Authority. Discussion ensued as to the role of that individual and on current maintenance practices for town properties.

Question 3 asked the Committee member to identify measure that could be undertaken to improve telecommunication and utility services in Pepperell. Better cell phone coverage and additional options for selecting a cable provider were the most popular responses. Improvements to the electric grid to accommodate future solar installations was also identified as a need. Restrictions on outdoor watering to the early morning and evening hours was also mentioned, as was holding cable companies accountable for the quality of service, and promoting the installation of solar. The Town Administrator suggested working with Pepperell Telemedia to create a local wired service center, which could improve service for the town's residents and create a revenue stream to help sustain local cable.

In response to Question 4 it was determined that the Town has adequate cemetery space to accommodate its future needs.

In responding to Question 5, Committee members indicated that regional partnerships could be explored for emergency dispatch, public transportation, marketing, open space and recreation, agriculture, historic and cultural events and activities, climate change and sustainability planning, electric aggregation, recycling, renewable energy programs, workforce training, natural resource protection, personnel sharing and equipment sharing. The Town Administrator noted that the regional dispatch center may open in 2021, and that facilities experts could be regional. The Town is already using contract planning and health services. The Town Administrator also noted that the Council on Aging, regional transportation, and library services could be further regionalized.

Under Question 6, the respondents unanimously agreed that the Pepperell should have more community and cultural events. Under Question 7, the Town Administrator indicated that communication between the town and the school district is fine currently.

Under Question 8, there was consensus that the existing Senior Center is undersized and understaffed. The Town Administrator noted that there are other buildings that could be used as satellite locations for certain senior activities. Discussion ensued regarding transportation and logistical obstacles that would make it difficult for seniors to travel from building to building for their activities.

Under Question 9, the Committee felt that the Town should pursue electric aggregation. The Town Administrator commented that the concept is worthy of future consideration, although the program would principally benefit residents rather than the Town.

In responding to Question 10, the Committee indicated that the Town could promote renewable energy by taking advantage of available grants, pursuing “green” electric aggregation, participating in Solarize Mass, encouraging solar installations on municipal properties, updating the zoning bylaw, promoting solar-ready building construction, providing homeowner education on green energy alternatives, providing incentives to homeowners and businesses, distributing information to farms, participating in the PACE program, holding renewable energy lectures at the library, and soliciting ideas from residents who are knowledgeable of renewable energy options. The Town Administrator commented that the Town does not control the energy marketplace and that residents should be free to purchase whatever form of energy they prefer. The Conservation Administrator suggested that the construction of municipal buildings include roofs that are solar-ready. She also noted that the new solar bylaw should encourage the use of solar, and added that the Town should work to make renewable energy cost-effective for residents.

Under Question 11, the majority of Committee members indicated that the Town should participate in the Solarize Mass and PACE programs. The Town Administrator indicated that the recommendation should be more broadly worded rather than focusing on specific programs. He suggested that the statement be structured so that it encourages strategies focused energy conservation and efficiency, renewables and reducing greenhouse gases.

Renee D’Argento asked about the profitability of the transfer station. Beverly Woods responded that the service is provided through an enterprise fund. Ken Hartlage noted that the Conservation Administrator is completing a grant application for additional equipment at the transfer station.

Rob Rand asked whether the Master Plan should discuss town government transparency. Chuck Walkovich stated that this is not a Master Plan issue. Discussion about the process for developing the budget ensued.

The Master Plan “Top Ten” Major Themes were discussed based on input provided previously by the Committee. A handout was provided to the Committee members. Item 4 was modified to read: “Focus on village-style development and maintain the town’s rural character.” Item 7 was revised as follows: “Encourage reinvestment and mixed-use development in Railroad Square and along the Main Street corridor that respects the historic character of the area.” Item 9 was reworked to read: “Build upon the town’s

natural and historic assets to attract tourism, recreation-based businesses, and agricultural enterprises.”

6. Draft Introductory Chapter

This agenda item was deferred until the March meeting.

7. Open Forum

There were no comments from the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 pm.