



Town of Pepperell

Master Plan Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

Meeting Minutes-February 21, 2019

Committee Members Present:

Diane Cronin
Renee D'Argento
Deborah Fountain
Ken Hartlage
Paul J. Lonergan
Joyce Morrow
Kathryn Pries
Robert Rand
Sherrill Rosoff
Stephen Themelis
Chuck Walkovich
Stephen Witmer

Committee Members Absent:

Tracie Ezzio
Nancy Lebedzinski
Kenneth Morgan
Amanda Nichols
Carol Quinn
David Sears
Mark Vaspolli
Jack Visniewski

Others Present:

Jay Donovan, NMCOG
Paula Terrasi, Conservation Administrator
Susan McCarthy, Senior Center
Beverly Woods, NMCOG

1. Open Forum

Chuck Walkovich reminded Committee members to let him know whether they are interested in continuing to serve on the Master Plan Advisory Committee, noting that some folks have not responded to his email. He added that this information must be provided to the Town Administrator. If a Committee member does not respond, it will be assumed that he or she is no

longer interested in participating.

Chuck Walkovich stated that he reviewed the Master Plan schedule, and is concerned that it has taken nearly a year to get through one chapter. As a result, the format of future meetings will be changed, with the public forum section of the agenda being limited to one fifteen minute period promptly beginning at 8:15 pm and ending by 8:30 pm. He added that the Committee members must stay on topic and that each person should be offering new information, rather than repeating what has been said previously. He noted that the goal is to get a draft to the Planning Board by September, and added that the Planning Board is very concerned about the slow pace to date.

Deb Fountain stated that the Committee members have not been getting the consolidated comments in advance of the meeting. Chuck Walkovich replied that the Committee will get them in advance going forward. Beverly Woods noted that the many Committee members have not been providing their responses until the last minute, so the Committee will need to submit their comments by the agreed upon deadline. Chuck Walkovich stated that the package will go out even if comments are not submitted on time. He then expressed his appreciation for the commitment that the Committee members have made to the Town as volunteers.

2. Minutes of the January 10, 2019 meeting

Deb Fountain noted an error regarding Tony Beady's name. Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Joe Lonergan, the Committee approved the meeting minutes of January 10, 2019 as amended.

3. Action Item Status Review

Deb Fountain reviewed the action items, noting that Committee attendance has already been addressed and all the other items are in process.

4. Discuss Survey Results

Beverly Woods reviewed the results of the written survey, noting that a copying error occurred for this evening's packet, although the correct version was distributed last month. She will send an electronic version to Brynn, so that it can be emailed to those interested. She noted that there was not a lot of survey input from young adults. Joe Lonergan stated that he would interested in seeing how the response rate for each age group compares with the age cohorts for the town.

Beverly Woods stated that respondents indicated that the primarily choose to live in Pepperell for the rural character and the proximity to employment. In terms of income, the majority of respondents live in households that earn over \$100,000 annually. She added that most respondents rated town services as good to fair overall, with the library and public safety rated as excellent. The open space and recreation facilities and programs were rated as good to fair. The affordability and diversity of housing options was rated as good, although approximately half of the respondents were not familiar enough with the availability of senior housing to be able to respond to the question.

Traffic flow and speeding enforcement were rated as good, while pedestrian and bicycle facilities were rated as good to fair. Over 66% of the respondents were not familiar enough with senior transportation services to have an opinion.

Access to employment and the availability of goods and services were rated as good to fair. Protection of natural resources was rated as excellent or good overall, as was historic preservation, forestry, agricultural preservation, and cultural and community events.

Beverly Woods explained that respondents rated the following as the most critical issues facing Pepperell:

- Attracting and maintaining businesses/economic development
- 161 Nashua Road/toxic dirt
- Taxes/tax rate
- Overdevelopment
- Open space preservation/natural resource protection
- Traffic
- Schools/improving the quality of education
- Senior housing
- Affordable housing
- Maintaining rural character/small town feel.

Sherrill Rosoff stated that she views these responses in groups, and links together the issues of overdevelopment, open space preservation and maintaining rural character. Renee D'Argento stated that clean water is also linked to these items, adding in her mind this is not a priority list, and stated that if the relationships were linked the priorities might come out differently. Sherrill Rosoff added that economic development, housing and the schools are standalone items.

In terms of responses to Question 8, adopting additional energy efficiency initiatives and renewable energy, attracting additional small scale businesses, protecting agricultural land, improving utilities, historic preservation, and addressing climate change were identified by over half of the respondents as being very important or extremely important. Diane Cronin stated that she created a rank order by weighting the responses, which changed the dynamic of the list. She provided the list to the Committee members to view at their leisure.

In terms of Question 9, respondents were asked to identify which three projects or initiatives they would fund if every resident were given \$100 in town funds. Enhancing public safety, improving town roads, supporting new businesses, and enhancing the school budget were among the top responses.

5. Results of the Visioning Session for Seniors

Jay Donovan reviewed the results of the Senior Visioning Session held on January 11th. He noted that the session was attended by nine residents, and several Master Plan Committee members were present. The Senior Center and the town's volunteers were identified as strengths, while the fact that the town is outgrowing the current Senior Center was identified as a weakness, along with the need for a pool, a lack of senior housing, and the need for a walking

track. In terms of opportunities, a heated pool, an expanded Senior Center, public transportation, becoming an age/dementia friendly community, and reuse of the paper mill site were identified. Threats included 161 Nashua Road, taxes/wasteful spending, overpopulation/too much growth, pollution, and the cost of energy.

6. Results of the Visioning Session on Natural and Cultural Resources, and Open Space and Recreation

Beverly Woods reviewed the results of the Visioning Session held on February 7th that was attended by approximately 30 residents. In terms of the strengths of the town's recreation and open space assets and programs, participants identified the trails, the Conservation Administrator, the diversity of habitat, the Pepperell Springs property, the scenic and rural nature of the community, the serenity and beauty of the town cemeteries, and the volunteers. Overuse of the playing fields, the need for agricultural preservation, and the lack of access to the trail behind the library were identified as issues that need to be addressed. It was suggested that Pepperell leverage its open space and recreation assets as a means of becoming a destination for out-of-towners. Participants also appreciated the online trail maps that are now available through the town's website. The town's equestrian facilities were noted as an asset, as was the designation of the Nashua and Nissitissit Rivers as Wild and Scenic Rivers, the Heald Street Orchard, and the Farmer's Market.

In terms of weaknesses and vulnerabilities, participants identified the need to protect the water supply, the need to encourage more people to enjoy the town's open spaces, the need to assist farmers so that farming remains viable, the need to expand recreational facilities, promoting locally sourced food, establishing a year-round indoor farmer's market, over-reliance on fossil fuels, invasive species, the need to update the OSRD bylaw, and the need for more recreational programs for school-age children. The lack of lodging or tourist amenities was also pointed out, as was the need to better market the town. The soil reclamation project and the need to expand the playgrounds, construct a pool, add a skating rink, as well as a town museum, a picnic area and an activity center was cited. Trash collection and recycling, littering and the need to address pet waste was also identified. The need to adopt the Community Preservation Act as a means of financing open space and recreation activities was discussed.

To address the needs of the town's aging population, participants noted the need for people to have more places to congregate, the fact that pocket parks with benches in the downtown would make it more walkable, the need to have more ADA compliant trails, and for better transportation options for seniors, as well as the need for better lighting, were also discussed. The desire to transition farmland and woodlots from one generation to another was identified as an issue that needs to be addressed in the future.

Participants identified the water supply, climate impacts to playing fields and farmland, loss of habitat to development, and the need to continue with forest management as resource issues that need to be addressed. The need to maintain dark skies, address polluted stormwater runoff, and the need to encourage developers to use native plant materials were also mentioned.

To address historic preservation, participants cited the need for security around historic sites to prevent vandalism. They noted that underutilized buildings need to be reused, dark skies need to be maintained, town hall needs to be renovated, and the police station needs a new roof. Participants felt that the Town should list all historic buildings on its website and create/distribute publications on town history. One participant noted that there should be a focus on Native American and women's history. It was suggested that an annual fair focused on town history would elevate awareness, and that the Town should start planning for its 250th anniversary in 2025. Beverly Woods then reviewed the results of the breakout exercise using the maps.

7. Revised Land Use and Zoning Chapter

Beverly Woods summarized the edits to the Land Use and Zoning Chapter. A new section was added on pages 9 and 10 discussing the relationship between land use and GHG emissions. Information on the survey results was added to page 32. Text was added to page 37 on the Sewer District, as discussed at the January meeting. On page 42, a paragraph was added regarding new lighting technologies. On page 43, recommendation 8 was modified to address the Climate Change and Sustainability Working Group's recommendation regarding the sewer district. Sherrill Rosoff stated that the word "reassess" should be changed to "reaffirm" to accurately reflect the working group's recommendation. On page 44, the words "preserving its historic resources" was added to recommendation 11. Two new recommendations (17 and 18) were added based on the recommendations of the Climate Change and Sustainability Working Group's recommendations regarding lighting and green infrastructure.

Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Joyce Morrow the Committee voted to accept the Land Use and Zoning Chapter with the edits presented.

8. Draft Housing Chapter

Jay Donovan reviewed the draft Housing Chapter, noting that much of the data has been updated since the technical paper was provided. Renee D'Argento asked about the population projections compared with existing ACS data. Beverly Woods and Jay Donovan explained the State's projection process, which is performed by the UMass Boston Donahue Institute under contract with MassDOT. Renee D'Argento asked about the town's Annual Census. Beverly Woods responded that the numbers are not used for planning purposes given that the response rate can be relatively low, and students and those in group quarters are counted differently than in the federal census.

Jay Donovan explained that the Housing Goals and Strategies were derived from the Housing Production Plan, which will be updated by August. He then explained the role of the Affordable Housing Committee, and noted that the Town has not added any affordable units over the past five years. He added that the number of year round housing units in Pepperell will increase with the 2020 Census, therefore, the Town will lose ground in attaining the State's 10% goal. Sherrill Rosoff stated that some towns have an Affordable Housing Trust that is funded through CPA. Beverly Woods and Jay Donovan explained the different roles of the Affordable Housing Committee and the Housing Trust.

Jay Donovan reviewed the Issues and Opportunities section. He noted that many of the issues will be addressed in the upcoming Housing Production Plan. The State's Housing Choice designation process was then discussed. Tools for Housing Production were discussed, such as Chapter 40R. It was noted that working with non-profit housing developers would also benefit the community.

Beverly Woods described the State's initiatives to encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy in affordable housing. Renee D'Argento asked if NMCOG has worked with communities on municipal energy aggregation. Beverly Woods replied that the NMCOG has assisted several of its communities by providing guidance on the process and helping them find a consultant.

Jay Donovan discussed the potential development sites outlined in the Housing Production Plan, noting that the list needs to be updated. Discussion ensued as to whether this information needs to be incorporated into the Master Plan. Paula Terrasi noted that many of these properties have since been developed.

Jay Donovan requested that the Committee come prepared with comments on the housing chapter at the next meeting. Sherrill asked whether the Climate Change and Resiliency Group should send its comments ahead of time. Jay requested that the comments be sent a week before the meeting.

Rob Rand asked if there is any data on racial and ethnic diversity in Pepperell. Beverly Woods responded that she will make the information available to the Committee.

9. Update from the Climate Change and Resiliency Working Group

Rob Rand reported that the Working Group is working on housing and has begun to also focus on open space.

10. Open Forum

Rob Rand asked whether it would be possible to establish a town run transportation cooperative to provide transportation for Pepperell residents. Renee D'Argento asked about the NMCOG Regional Transportation Plan Update. Beverly Woods explained that the Plan looks at the transportation needs of the region over the next 20 years. The Plan will contain a list of projects that could go forward during that timeframe. The lack of public transportation from Pepperell to commuter rail was then discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.