



# Town of Pepperell

## Master Plan Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

### Meeting Minutes-March 1, 2018

#### **Committee Members Present:**

Diane Cronin  
Tracie Ezzio  
Nancy Lebenzinski  
Kenneth Morgan  
Joyce Morrow  
Roland Nutter  
Robert Rand  
David Sears  
Stephen Themelis  
Jack Visniewski  
Charles Walkovich  
Pastor Stephen Witmer

#### **Committee Members Absent:**

Tracie Ezzio  
Paul Lonergan  
Mark Vasapolli

#### **Others Present:**

Mark Andrews, Town Administrator  
Jay Donovan, NMCOG  
Steve Parker, Town Planner  
Beverly Woods, NMCOG

#### **1. Introductions**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm. Town Administrator Mark Andrews introduced the Committee members and provided an overview on the funding that will be utilized to develop the Master Plan. He noted that the town received a \$20,000 grant through the Community Compact program, while \$25,000 in services was accessed through the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments. He added that the Master Plan will outline the vision for the Town and will address issues that impact the quality of life for residents. He noted the contributions of Representative Sheila Harrington in helping with the Community Compact grant and securing

DLTA funds for the project.

The Committee members introduced themselves and noted the areas of interest and expertise that they bring to the Committee.

## **2. Overview of the Master Plan Process and Scope of Work**

Beverly Woods, Executive Director of NMCOG, provided an overview of the master plan process. She stated that typically the first meeting is organizational in nature, and noted that NMCOG always recommends that the Master Plan Advisory Committee appoint co-chairs, so that there is someone to run the meeting, in case a member is unavailable. NMCOG suggested that the Committee co-chairs consist of representatives from the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen. Roland Nutter and Chuck Walkovich were nominated and unanimously voted in as co-chairs.

Chuck Walkovich then took over as chair of the meeting. He informed the Committee that Pepperell currently has a Master Plan, although it is dated as it was prepared over a decade ago. He added that the new and updated Master Plan will serve as the foundation for other town policy documents in the future. He noted that NMCOG has prepared a number of Master Plans in other communities, and that they are in the process of completing Dunstable's Master Plan.

Beverly Woods then outlined the legislative requirements relative to community Master Plans, provided an overview of the content of the document, and described the process for developing the document, as outlined in the scope of services in NMCOG's agreement with the Town. Future opportunities for public input were also discussed. Beverly Woods noted that Town Planner Steve Parker will be the primary contact for the Master Plan, and that residents should feel free to contact him with any questions, comments or concerns.

Chuck Walkovich stated that once the Committee has completed the Draft, the Planning Board will hold additional public hearings to get additional input from residents. The Planning Board will then finalize the draft and submitted it to the Board of Selectmen for their review. Once the Selectmen make their recommendation it will go to Town Meeting.

Steve Themelis asked how long the process generally takes. Beverly Woods responded that 18 months is a typical timeframe.

Roland Nutter noted that all of the department heads are assets for the Committee and that their input will be sought at key points throughout the process, given the knowledge and expertise that they provide to the Town.

Beverly Woods suggested that a Master Plan page be created within the town's website where materials can be posted for public viewing. Steve Parker stated that town staff is working with the IT Department to set up the Master Plan page.

Roland Nutter asked how long the data collection activities will take. Beverly Woods responded that its generally an ongoing task, as specific data is required for each chapter. She suggested

that a date for the Visioning Session be established and NMCOG will work from that date and provide a schedule for the project at the next Master Plan Committee meeting.

Chuck Walkovich noted that Pepperell participated in Northeastern University's EDSAT program which might provide some useful data. Jay Donovan noted that NMCOG has that report and would be happy to provide copies to the Master Plan Advisory Committee. NMCOG will build upon that effort in formulating the Economic Development chapter. Beverly Woods added that the Committee may want to consider hosting a separate Visioning Session for the business community as their perspective tends to be a bit different than the perspective of the residents. The Committee chairs will reach out to the Business Association to determine an appropriate date for a business Visioning Session.

In addition, a separate input session for older residents who do not like to attend meetings during the evening was discussed.

### **3. Scheduling of Visioning Session**

Beverly Woods provided an overview of the Visioning Session process, noting that the entire community is encouraged to participate in the Visioning Session. NMCOG uses a SWOT format where participants are asked to identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats relative to Pepperell. She added that this is an interactive process, and discussion is open to all aspects of the town, and not limited to any topical areas. Input is recorded on flip charts and participants are asked to prioritize the input that was received using color coding dots. Ms. Woods stated that the input is used to help the Committee formulate a Vision Statement. She noted that, while the Vision Statement is created at the beginning of the process, the Committee will want to review the statement at the end of the process. The Committee may find that they want to make modifications to the statement, given what was learned over the course of plan development.

### **4. Master Plan Survey**

Beverly Woods stated that a written survey will be widely distributed to receive input from town residents. The survey can be submitted online through SurveyMonkey. She noted that hardcopies will also be made available at Town Hall, the Library and the Senior Center. The survey will take about five to seven minutes to complete.

Steve Themelis asked how the survey will be distributed. Beverly Woods responded that the Town Administrator will be speaking with the Town Clerk to determine if there is an opportunity to include an insert with the survey link in a town-wide mailing, such as the property tax bills. Alternatively, a postcard could be sent to each household. She suggested that the Committee review and finalize the draft survey at its next meeting.

Following discussion about the timing of the Visioning Session relative to development of the survey, Beverly Woods offered to develop the survey in draft form and distribute it to the Committee for review and comment. She cautioned the Committee that their comments must be sent individually by email, as using "reply all" would constitute a violation of the Open Meeting

Law. A draft survey will be sent to the Committee next week and comments should be provided by the Committee members by April 5<sup>th</sup>.

## **5. Future Meeting Schedule**

The Committee discussed the future meeting schedule and decided on the second Thursday of each month as the regular meeting schedule. Meetings will begin at 6:30 pm and end by 8:00 pm.

Chuck Walkovich stated that the Committee is a working group and asked whether public input should be solicited at the beginning of the meeting or the end of the meeting. He noted that it is important to limit public comments to a specific time on the agenda so that the Committee can get its work done. Beverly Woods noted that many communities have an Open Forum agenda item at the beginning of the meeting for this purpose. In addition, the website can be set up to allow residents to submit a question or comment to the Master Plan Advisory Committee.

The Committee agreed to establish a Public Forum item on the monthly agenda, and that 20 minutes of the agenda be devoted to interviewing department heads.

## **6. Other Business**

Questions and comments were received from the audience. Renee Dargento expressed concern about the gender balance of the Committee. She asked if the public will have input on the development of the survey questions. Beverly Woods stated that NMCOC has not been involved in any project where the public is involved in the development of the survey instrument. Generally, the Committee formulates the survey and there may be some input from town staff. Ms. Dargento stated that climate change and sustainability are important issues that need to be addressed. Beverly Woods responded that the structure of the Master Plan will follow what is outlined in state statute, but some communities choose to add a sustainability chapter. She added the town's Hazard Mitigation Plan also addresses many climate and sustainability issues.

Sherrill Rosoff stated that a speaker from MIT's Center for Global Climate gave a presentation last year and indicated that the climate in Pepperell will be akin to that of today's South Carolina by the turn of the century, if nothing is done to curb CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and address climate change. She added that this will have real impacts for farmers and others.

Bridget Morris asked if a copy of the last Master Plan is available. Chuck Walkovich stated that the document can be found on the Pepperell website. Roland Nutter suggested that the Committee members also read the previous Plan with an eye toward identifying those actions that worked and those that were unsuccessful. Beverly Woods added that many new state programs and initiatives have been put in place since the last plan was completed, and the state is in the process of updating its climate action plan. In addition, UMass Amherst has done a lot of climate modeling for Massachusetts that shows a continuing warming climate. The implications of the new state plan can be considered in the development of the Master Plan.

Chuck Walkovich noted that Pepperell has been very proactive in the area of renewable energy and energy efficiency and is a state-designated Green Community. Beverly Woods added the Pepperell is also receiving a Bronze designation from the U.S, Department of Energy, through its SolSmart program, for measures that the town has taken to facility solar energy within the community.

Lindsey Boslough (?), representing Friends of Pepperell, requested that the Friends organization be included in the Visioning process, and that information be provided on the steps that need to be taken to get a project approved. She asked that information also be provided on how the Master Plan interfaces with the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Diane Cronin asked that a list of Master Plan Committee members be sent to those on the Committee. Steve Parker stated that he would distribute the list via email and that the information would also be posted on the website.

## **7. Adjournment**

The Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:21 pm.