



Master Plan Advisory Committee's Climate Change Resiliency and Sustainability Work Group Meeting Minutes

Date: 3/05/2019

Time: 1:30 - 3:30

Location: History Room, Lawrence Library

Meeting was called to order at 1:45 pm

Attending: Ken Hartlage, Jack Visnewski, Renee D'Argento, Rob Rand, Sherrill Rosoff

Not attending: Paula Terrasi

Work Session:

The purpose of the meeting was to review the work done by Renee D'Argento and Sherrill Rosoff regarding the draft of our Climate Change Work Group for the housing. The discussion focused on two issues: what key conclusions does the group wish to present in this chapter, with supporting citations, and what recommendations ensue. The latter requires a review of the NMCOG Housing paper's recommendations so that we do not overlap with that report.

Renee and Sherrill had reached out to Linn Clark, a certified Board realtor in town, to ask for relevant housing sales data from the Multiple Listing Service for our town. This information is different from the median data NMCOG compiles which allows NMCOG to compare housing prices among member towns. Using Pepperell specific data we were able to note pricing trends in house sales and new construction. We do not have comparable rental housing information which would be useful but perhaps more difficult to collect.

Ken noted he had contacted Jay (NMCOG) regarding what formula HUD uses regarding housing burden but has not yet received a call back.

Discussion focused on the creation of subsidized housing through the State's Chapter 40B; Jack Visnewski provided information about the State's affordable housing law and several observations were drawn from that information. First, that the State requires towns to have a Housing Production Plan. NMCOG has discussed this need in our meetings. Normally the Affordable Housing Committee would be in charge of this task and NMCOG would work with them but this committee is moribund having not met for quite some time. Secondly, it appears that the town could address its affordable housing production most easily by building rental apartments that would serve both senior and workforce cohort housing needs. (The committee decided to identify the 0-34 age cohort as a workforce cohort and talk about workforce housing.) Third, the committee reviewed Safe Harbor status which the State grants to towns if they can meet certain requirements: an up-to-date Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI); a Housing Production Plan; and probably a permitted LIP rental project (in which all units count toward the SHI) of a substantial enough size that it increases its affordable units by .75%

over one year or 1.5% over two years. By gaining Safe Harbor status the town avoids hostile 40B projects that allow builders to override Zoning Board of Appeals restrictions or conditions the builder deems unfavorable.

The conversation moved toward how we calculate the income threshold for being economically burdened by owning or rental housing and what percentage of Pepperell households could be described as being “burdened”. Thirty percent or more of gross annual household income is the standard definition of being “house burdened”. Our estimates of the number of households economically burdened (mostly, we assume, baby-boomers/seniors and young workforce) ranged from 25 - 39%. Clearly we need to confirm an estimate for our report.

The committee reviewed the recommendations. The following edits are required:

Delete: #2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Combine #1 and #3. Add a recommendation for a Housing and Community Development Board. Add Form Based Codes to review of LIP recommendation.

A previous recommendation that was in an earlier draft was inadvertently dropped:

Provide information to all homeowners of available tax deferral and circuit breaker credit programs (Renee to investigate) to reduce foreclosures, tax title takeovers, and the dangers associated with arrearages.

The committee concluded that there are five key conclusions that our Memo to the MCAP and our Housing element chapter will present:

1. that there is a demand for affordable housing in Pepperell
2. that the town needs to attain Safe Harbor status asap and that building rental units is the most effective way of gaining that status and addressing affordable housing targets. The town needs to avoid hostile 40B in favor of friendly LIPs.
3. that we must concentrate on the Main street corridor where existing zoning and potential modifications to existing zoning make it easier for more dense development
4. that sustainability and resiliency principles can be more easily applied to development of Main Street and within the commercial/suburban/urban zones;
5. that we should begin the conversation about the carrying capacity of the town’s natural resources.

Regarding the last conclusion it was agreed that we should approach the DPW to find out what, if any, state guidelines exist that help towns determine current and projected water capacity needs.

The meeting adjourned at 3:46 PM.