



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

Date: 3/06/2019

Time: 1:30 - 3:30

Location: History Room, Lawrence Library

Meeting was called to order at 1:40 pm

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

Not attending: Paula Terrasi

### **Work Session:**

The purpose of this work session was to comment upon recommendations and language of the Housing memo which Ken Cartilage is drafting for submission to NMCOG Friday, 3/7/19. Renee provided information regarding rentals in Pepperell using Zillow; she stated that many rental units are advertised through Craig's List. Committee determined that the rental segment is transient, often looking regionally for affordable rentals rather than in one specific town; that rental advertising is not done through local realtors but most often by word of mouth, local publications, and the internet; and that the rental market in Pepperell is small.

The group believes that we need to plan for increasing affordable housing opportunities - whether units for sale or rent. While we are unclear about the rental market, an affordable housing market price range would be under \$210,000.

So the issue is how to incentivize builders to build smaller houses on smaller lots and within an area of town where infrastructure costs are the lowest - we need to move toward cluster housing using OSRD as a tool to do so; that way, we do not give up green open spaces.

Meeting adjourned at 3:20 pm

## Final Housing Memo submitted to NMCOG 3/7/19.

### Climate Change and Sustainability Working Group Housing Element Summary Findings and Recommendations

#### Background

The Working Group undertook an analysis of housing needs using NMCOG data, housing sales data from the Town of Pepperell Assessor's department, the Board of Realtors' Multiple Listing Service and demographic data from the American Community Survey. Our analysis focuses on two key data points: (1) Population and demographic trends and (2) Housing costs and economic burden. We examined this data in the context of current zoning and land use bylaws for insight into both issues and opportunities the Master Planning Committee should consider for incorporation into the Master Plan.

#### Findings

In addition to the subsidized housing issues raised by NMCOG we find that:

- There is insufficient workforce single/multi-family housing and rental stock to meet the needs of households at or near the median regional income;
- 28% of owner-occupied households and 34% of renter-occupied households are economically burdened i.e. spend more than 30% of gross income on household expenses;
- Our current zoning is a barrier to the accommodation of more workforce and subsidized affordable housing and rental units;
- Our current zoning encourages and perpetuates the building of large homes on large lots which not only puts them out of reach of a significant portion of the population but also detracts from our remaining open space.

#### Implications

- The shortage of affordable and workforce housing represents a barrier to entry to our community, particularly for young singles and families, who are critical to Pepperell's future;
- The shortage of affordable and workforce housing imposes a hardship on seniors and disabled people who want to live and age in place;
- The housing economic burden placed on approximately one third of Pepperell's current residents adversely impacts overall community well-being;
- Unless we address the shortage of *subsidized* affordable housing the Town cedes control over the location and characteristics of 40B developments, thus putting Pepperell's rural character at risk;
- Without zoning changes permitting smaller lot sizes in the Urban and Suburban Residence Zones, and promoting cluster development, we cannot meet the workforce and affordable housing needs referenced above.

#### Recommendations

To create more affordable subsidized and market-rate housing while preserving Pepperell's rural character and the ensuring the sustainable use of our natural resources, we submit the following recommendations:

- 1. Create a subsidized affordable housing and zoning plan that focuses development within the Commercial and Urban Main Street corridor**
  - a. Emphasize the development of multi-unit rental complexes that will enable Pepperell to achieve "safe harbor" status quickly while working toward the 10% target
  - b. Create age and family friendly village style developments that facilitate pedestrian access to businesses, municipal and outdoor amenities. Incorporate protective land-scaping and heat-island reduction strategies, using shade trees, benches etc.
- 2. Create a work-force housing and zoning plan that conserves open space**
  - a. Re-zone the Suburban and Urban Residential zones to one-half acre lots;

- b. Extend the OSRD requirements to the Suburban and Urban Residential zone to encourage more cluster development.
- 3. Conduct a housing needs analysis to address people with disabilities and seniors wishing to age in place**
  - a. Pursue community housing grants to develop and implement a home repair program for older and disabled adults, focusing on repairs and improvements to major home systems, and safety and barrier elimination;
  - b. Expand education and application assistance to eligible homeowners and renters to access state resources and programs, such as LIHEAP, to live more economically and sustainably;
  - c. Provide information to homeowners about accessibility options to facilitate independence and aging in place.
- 4. Incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) standards into the town's "Design Guidelines" for new construction and rehabilitation of existing buildings.**
  - a. Adopt Form Based Codes to encourage a more architecturally harmonious look to our Main Street while preserving historic buildings,
  - b. Promote certification to LEED design and energy conservation standards for multi-use buildings of a minimum size.
- 5. Establish a Housing and Community Development Board** to meet the housing and service needs of low and moderate income residents, build and repair infrastructure vital to the health and safety of the residents and support business development and retention. This Board can pursue all sources of funding including community development block grants, downtown revitalization funding programs, neighborhood rehabilitation funding programs, municipal incentive grants, development of a community land trust, home improvement loan programs, micro-enterprise loans, etc.
- 6. Consider exploring options for working collaboratively with adjacent towns on a regional affordable housing and transportation plan.**
- 7. Ensure all development is sensitive to Pepperell's rural and historic character and to the sustainable use of our natural resources.**