



# Town of Pepperell

## Master Plan Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

### Draft Meeting Minutes-April 18, 2019

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

Diane Cronin  
Tracie Ezzio  
Deborah Fountain  
Ken Hartlage  
Nancy Lebedzinski  
Paul J. Lonergan  
Kenneth Morgan  
Joyce Morrow  
Kathryn Pries  
Robert Rand  
Stephen Themelis  
Jack Visniewski  
Chuck Walkovich  
Stephen Witmer

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

Renee D'Argento  
Amanda Nichols  
Carol Quinn  
Sherrill Rosoff  
David Sears  
Mark Vasapolli

#### **Others Present:**

Beverly Woods, NMCOG

#### **1. Minutes of the March 21, 2019 meeting**

Prior to taking up the minutes, Chuck Walkovich informed the Committee that a request was received from Deb Fountain that discussion of the last four questions on the Natural and Cultural Resources Technical paper be postponed until feedback is received from the Agricultural Advisory Board. Deb Fountain explained the rationale behind her request, noting that Tony Beatty will be reaching out to other farmers to get input. Diane Cronin stated that she does not have enough knowledge to respond to the questions and would like to hear from those more knowledgeable. Joyce Morrow stated that she responded in a

positive fashion to three of the questions but was uncertain about the food policy plan as she does not believe this is something the town should take on given its finances. She added that the farmers could take this on. Rob Rand and Nancy Lebedzinski added that they support hearing from the farmers. Deb Fountain made a motion that the Committee hold off on addressing the last four questions until input is received from the Agricultural Advisory Board.

Beverly Woods reminded the Committee that the Land Use and Zoning, Natural and Cultural Resources, and Open Space and Recreation Chapters need to be delivered to the State by the end of June to meet the Town's contractual obligations. Joyce Morrow stated that given the time constraint she is in favor of moving forward. Steve Themelis concurred. Diane Cronin asked if the Committee could proceed and make revisions later based on input. Deb Fountain withdrew her motion, and made the following motion: "To ensure that the voices of those in town who are invested in some of the Master Plan elements have the opportunity to share their thoughts and vision, I make a motion that going forward, the Master Plan Committee identify stakeholders in advance for the remaining plan elements and that the committee ensure that those individuals or entities receive the applicable technical paper and discussion questions when the rest of the committee does". The motion was seconded by Diane Cronin. Discussion ensued.

Deb Fountain stated that there is a hole in the process as local technical experts are not being consulted. Steve Themelis noted that there is an opportunity for the experts to come to the Committee meetings and that the process should not be slowed down. Joyce Morrow concurred, noting that many of the stakeholders have chosen not to attend the input sessions. Deb Fountain replied that it is her expectation that the stakeholders must provide their input within the same timeframe provided to the Committee.

Diane Cronin noted that there are stakeholders that should be providing input on the Economic Development chapter. She added that she has been reaching out to stakeholders and has received very valuable feedback. Beverly Woods reminded the Committee that, at the beginning of the process, it was suggested that twenty minutes of the agenda be set aside every month to hear from stakeholders. She added that there was also discussion of hosting a Visioning Session for the business community prior to undertaking the Economic Development chapter.

Chuck Walkovich requested that the motion be amended to indicate that the Committee will make its best effort to identify stakeholders. The amendment was seconded by Nancy Lebedzinski. Joyce Morrow noted that stakeholders should identify themselves to the Committee. Diane Cronin noted that the stakeholders should be accountable for stepping forward. Deb Fountain offered to develop a list of stakeholders. At the conclusion of the discussion, the motion was unanimously approved as amended.

A motion to accept the minutes of March 21, 2019 was made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Ken Morgan. Diane Cronin requested an amendment to the second paragraph, second sentence, by deleting "reviewed and" and inserting "being read word for word". The minutes were then accepted as amended with one abstention.

## **2. Action Item Status Review**

Diane Cronin asked about the membership update for the Master Plan Advisory Committee, and suggested that the updated list be provided to the Pepperell Community Media, so that the introduction to the online tapes is accurate. Gerald Couper stated that he will make sure the update to the slide is made.

## **3. Natural and Cultural Resources Technical Paper**

Chuck Walkovich expressed his disappointment that only eight Committee members responded to the questions. Beverly Woods then summarized the Committee responses to each question. She noted that a question was posed as to whether the Historical Commission has a list of properties at risk of being lost to development or neglect. Diane Cronin responded that they do not have a list, but concurred with the properties that the Master Plan Committee identified.

In discussing whether the Master Plan should recommend additional historic district designations, most Committee members responded positively. The differences between a National Register District and a Local Historic District were discussed. Town Meeting approval for a local district has not been successful in the past. Diane Cronin noted that buildings in Railroad Square have been altered over time, thereby affecting integrity. She noted that Town Hall is the only property currently on the National Register and is subject to a preservation restriction.

Ken Hartlage asked whether there are studies that show the economic benefits of historic districts. Beverly Woods discussed the tourism benefits, citing Lowell, Lexington, Concord, and Newburyport as the most well-known examples.

In discussing Question 3, Diane Cronin noted that the town-owned properties are mostly well taken care of but there are some problems. She added that some of the gravestones in the Walton Cemetery need repair, and that the graves of revolutionary war soldiers do not have markers. Town Hall and Shattuck School have mold problems, and the Peter Fitzpatrick School needs to be addressed. The benefits of adopting CPA to create a funding source for such projects were then discussed.

In discussing Question 4 regarding the preservation of town records, Diane Cronin stated that the Historical Commission has determined that the most critical records, such as town meeting records and deeds, are safely stored. She added that there is live mold in the safe that houses irreplaceable detailed records. Many of these records were recently moved to a pod outside Town Hall. There is no money available currently to address document preservation. She noted that the Historical Commission receives no funding from the Town budget and that all work is performed by volunteers. Deb Fountain added that she was unable to find as-built plans for the Peter Fitzpatrick School, and that there is no index of records and no one can locate the plans.

Beverly Woods provided the Committee with information on Demolition Delay Bylaws. The difficulty of modifying the town's local wetland bylaw was also discussed. The Committee voted that the Master Plan recommend that the local wetland bylaw be strengthened.

The need for providing information and guidance to homeowners and landscaping firms on proper procedures for using and minimizing hazardous chemicals was discussed. Tony Beatty commented that, if people paid attention to soil health and organic enrichment for lawns and agricultural fields, less fertilizer and fewer pesticides would be needed.

Diane Cronin asked whether the report on BMPs that was adopted by the Town last October is available. Beverly Woods responded that the Town Engineer or Conservation Agent should be able to provide the information.

In reviewing the responses to Question 10, Beverly Woods noted that most of the Committee members responding were unaware that the Town has a Scenic Road Bylaw or were unable to locate the bylaw. She added that the bylaw is part of the Town Code, and noted that Dunstable and Pepperell are the only communities in the region where every roadway is considered scenic, except for state numbered routes. Most communities have specific criteria for designation, and actual designation requires Town Meeting approval. The Committee then discussed the requirements within the current bylaw and whether designating all roadways detracts from the importance of the regulation. The Committee concluded that the bylaw should be reevaluated and revised to better define what constitutes a scenic road, etc., and that additional public education is needed so that residents are aware of the bylaw.

During the Committee's discussion of Question 12, Ken Hartlage asked whether Chapter 61 lands can be acquired for purposes other than preservation. Beverly Woods stated that the use of the land is up to the town and offered an example of a limited development project. In a limited development project, a conservation group (usually a non-profit) or the Town purchases a property that they wish to conserve as open space. A portion of the property that is least important from a conservation perspective is carved out and sold for development. The proceeds from the sale are used to repay the funds borrowed for the land purchase and for future conservation efforts. Nancy Lebedzinski commented that this approach would be helpful in addressing the need for family housing. Rob Rand stated that Pepperell worked with the Trust for Public Lands on the purchase of the Pepperell Springs property.

Tony Beatty stated that he would like additional time to reach out to other farmers, adding that he intends to write a report on the feedback that they provide. Chuck Walkovich stated that the Committee has decided to continue with the process and will take the comments provided through the paper into consideration when preparing the final draft.

In the discussion on Question 13, Tony Beatty noted that some farmers are looking at solar arrays as a possible revenue source. Such arrays could be constructed on the edges of agricultural fields without impacting production. However, the tax assessor has stated that solar energy production is not considered agriculture and that Chapter 61A status would

be rescinded. He added that Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) allows farmers to construct solar projects that meet 200% of the farm's needs, in order to accommodate future growth. Tony also suggested that the establishment of a Food Hub at the Peter Fitzpatrick School would provide a commercial kitchen where farmers could produce value-added products. Requiring the schools to use local food would also assist in maintaining the viability of local farms. Joyce Morrow suggested a partnership with local businesses, such as retail grocers, to sell local produce and meat products. Tony Beatty replied that local farmers could not meet the volume needed by local supermarkets. He suggested that farm education be brought into the schools so that children are aware of where food comes from.

In discussing Question 16, Tony Beatty noted that MDAR is a great resource on how to help local farmers. He noted that farms are a resource for sequestering carbon. He also suggested establishing a composting program in Pepperell. Ken Hartlage asked whether Pepperell is eligible for the Food Ventures Program. Beverly Woods responded that she was not certain, but will research the issue before the next meeting.

Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Kathryn Pries, the Committee voted to move forward with development of the draft chapter on Natural and Cultural Resources.

Beverly Woods reviewed feedback received from a local archaeologist, as well as technical corrections provided by a Historical Commission member. Diane Cronin asked whether some information about the turbine that was invented by the Blake family can be incorporated into the technical paper. She also noted that it is rumored that the Liberty Pole was relocated from the Common to another location and will research this issue. Comments and corrections that were provided by a Committee member were reviewed, and there was discussion as to how to best incorporate the requested revisions.

Nancy Lebedzinski asked that Committee members be allowed to make comments and edits in track changes. Beverly Woods stated that she will look into setting up a drop box, where Committee members can access the files.

#### **4. Climate Change and Sustainability Work Group Update**

This agenda item was deferred due to time constraints.

#### **5. Proposed Housing Chapter Revisions**

Beverly Woods reviewed the Climate and Sustainability Work Group comments. She provided a table outlining how the comments could be addressed and reviewed them with the Committee members. The Committee agreed to add the following recommendation to the Housing Section: *Encourage the production of multi-family rental units, as a means of making progress toward DHCD's 10% affordability goal, thereby allowing Pepperell to attain "safe harbor" status.*

Beverly Woods stated that several of the comments were previously addressed in the Land Use and Zoning chapter. She added that it was agreed that the minimum lot sizes for the residential zoning districts will be revisited at the end of the process. Beverly also noted that the rewrite of the OSRD bylaw is already called for in the Land Use chapter.

The competitive nature of the CDBG program was discussed, noting that Pepperell would have to apply as a non-entitlement community and would find it difficult to compete based on demographics. The state's Home Modification Loan program was also discussed. Information was provided to the Committee on services offered through the Council on Aging, including fuel assistance and LIHEAP.

Beverly Woods provided a copy of the state's model form-based code bylaw. It was noted that Ayer has not adopted form-based code at this time. Beverly stated that if the Master Plan Committee wants to recommend form-based code, the recommendation should go into the Land Use chapter. She added that the form-based code bylaw itself is not excessively long, but the regulating code that accompanies the bylaw is very complex and involved.

Beverly Woods provided information on the Town of Palmer's Redevelopment Authority, which she believes is what the Climate and Sustainability Committee was referring to at last month's meeting. Ken Hartlage stated that he believes the Committee was trying to create one committee that would address affordable housing production and rehab work. It was agreed that a Redevelopment Authority is not appropriate for Pepperell.

It was agreed that the last recommendation provided by the Climate and Sustainability Committee will be added to the Natural and Cultural Resources Chapter as a goal.

Based on a motion made by Rob Rand and seconded by Steve Themelis, the Committee voted to finalize the Housing Chapter as outlined.

## **10. Open Forum**

No comments were received.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 pm.