



Town of Pepperell

Master Plan Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

Draft Meeting Minutes-May 9, 2019

Committee Members Present:

Diane Cronin
Renee D'Argento
Deborah Fountain
Nancy Lebedzinski
Paul J. Lonergan
Kenneth Morgan
Joyce Morrow
Kathryn Pries
Robert Rand
Sherrill Rosoff
Stephen Themelis
Jack Visniewski
Chuck Walkovich

Committee Members Absent:

Tracie Ezzio
Ken Hartlage
Amanda Nichols
Carol Quinn
David Sears
Mark Vasapolli
Stephen Witmer

Others Present:

Jay Donovan, NMCOG
Beverly Woods, NMCOG
Paula Terrasi, Conservation Agent

1. Minutes of the April 18, 2019 meeting

Diane Cronin requested a correction to page 3, paragraph 5, clarifying that the modern and older sections of the Peter Fitzpatrick School are in reasonably good shape. Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Ken Morgan, the minutes were unanimously approved as amended.

2. Action Item Status Review

Deb Fountain asked whether a drop box has been set up for posting files. Beverly Woods replied that the drop box will not be necessary for the Open Space and Recreation chapter, as the file size is manageable and the Word document can be sent via email.

3. Review of Stakeholders List

The Committee reviewed the stakeholders list and discussed whether there is a new contact for the fire department, given that the chief is retiring. Paula Terrasi noted that interviews are underway and that a new chief should be selected soon.

Renee D'Argento suggested adding the Nashoba Conservation Trust, Nashua River Watershed Association and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation Recreation to the list of stakeholders. Chuck Walkovich asked if the Conservation Agent could represent the interests of these organizations. Paula Terrasi stated that she could as long as the meetings continue to be held on the second Thursday of each month.

Deb Fountain asked whether Scouts and youth sports groups should remain on the list, as she has no means of contacting these groups. Chuck Walkovich stated that including the sports groups is challenging as they often have competing interests. The Committee decided to remove these entities from the list.

Beverly Woods asked how the stakeholders will submit their comments. Renee D'Argento suggested that the comments be emailed to Brynn Montesanti. Deb Fountain volunteered to accept the comments if Brynn is unable to take on the task. Beverly Woods noted that the comments need to be maintained by the Town as a public record, no matter who is sending or receiving the material. Chuck Walkovich stated that he will check with Brynn on her availability for this task.

The Committee then discussed whether the Board of Selectmen should be copied on all remaining sections. Sherrill Rosoff stated that they should be included in all of the areas listed. Chuck Walkovich stated that he has mixed feelings and does not want to overburden the Committee with an unmanageable number of comments. Deb Fountain stated that if materials are not directly distributed to stakeholders, they should be posted on the website. Steve Themelis noted that posting on the website would be the most efficient means of making the material available to anyone who is interested. Beverly Woods reminded the Committee that this approach was discussed early on in the process but a town staff person was not available to handle the postings. Deb Fountain stated that she is willing to assist Brynn with posting material, if she needs help. Chuck Walkovich agreed to contact Brynn on the issue.

Diane Cronin informed the Committee that the Economic Advisory Committee appointments have expired and new members have not been appointed. She suggested that the Town Administrator be listed as the contact for the Committee until such time as appointments are made.

4. Input from Agricultural Stakeholders

Tony Beatty provided the Committee with a report from agriculture stakeholders. He stated that the farmers are interested in including agriculture in the schools, and added that students often visit the farms and express an interest in learning more about farming. He noted that other towns have community farms that are either owned by the town or are financially supported by the town. Town-operated farms generally have at least one town employee to manage the day-to-day operation. These farms are made available to school groups.

He suggested the establishment of a community garden for those interested in having a plot of land for growing vegetables and other plants. He added that hosting an annual farm fair would also get the public more involved, and noted that Pepperell once have a highly successful farm fair. Kathryn Pries stated that one of the challenges in organizing such a fair is the lack of a fairground. The airport might be a good location for such an event.

Tony Beatty pointed out the need to address soil quality, and discussed the benefits of biomass and composting to enrich the organic content in the soils. He added that the soils generally contain 1%-2% organic material while 6% is the target. Various composting techniques were discussed. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources permit composting operations. He noted that commercial composting involves accepting commercial waste, such as food waste or other organic material. Sherrill Rosoff asked whether the farm community has reached out to the equestrian community in terms of meeting the compost needs. Tony noted that George Hayes accepts a lot of horse manure for composting, and that some landscaping business accept manure as well. Kathryn Pries added that composting is not allowed in the water protection zone unless it is inside a building.

Tony stated that Dragonfly Farm had difficulty in getting water to their high tunnels and had to purchase water from the Town. He added that the farm requested a reduced rate given the volume of water that they were using, but the Water Department would not grant their request. As farms move more towards farming under a roof, water supply needs will become more critical. Currently most farms in Pepperell use pond water or river water to meet their irrigation needs.

Tony described the process of gasification of biomass as means of producing electricity. Pine Tree Power Plant in Fitchburg was cited as an example of a facility that may be converted to a gasification plant for the production of biodiesel. Farms could produce fiber to burn in this type of energy producing process.

Tony suggested that the school district include local foods in their nutrition programs, and noted that a local Food Hub would benefit area farmers by providing access to a commercial kitchen for value added products, and it would also enhance the distribution system.

The potential development of solar as part of an agricultural operation was discussed, and it was pointed out the farmers must forfeit Chapter 61A status for the portion of the farm where solar panels are located, if more power is produced than is needed to meet existing and future

operation of the farm. Tony noted that pasture can be created under the solar panels. Rob Rand added that small-scale solar projects would have great benefit in terms of energy security. The challenges with the net metering program were then discussed.

5. Final Housing Chapter

Jay Donovan reviewed the edits to the final Housing Chapter, which included input from the Climate Change and Sustainability Work Group. Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Jack Visniewski, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the housing chapter as presented.

6. Natural and Cultural Resources Draft Chapter

Beverly Woods reviewed the revised Natural and Cultural Resources chapter. She noted that the revisions reflect the discussion at the April meeting, as well as comments provided by several Committee members. The following goal was added based on input from the Climate Change and Resiliency Work Group: *Ensure all development is sensitive to Pepperell's rural and historic character and to the sustainable use of natural resources.* Information was added on the Wild and Scenic River designation for the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers. Renee D'Argento asked about the composition of the Stewardship Council. Paula Terrasi indicated that each of the eleven communities will appoint two representatives to the Council.

Additional information on the Zone II wellhead protection area was provided. On page 13, narrative was added on the status of hydro dam and powerhouse. On page 17, information was added on the Fill Importation Bylaw that was approved last October. Additional information on the definition of farmland of unique importance and farmland of statewide importation was added to page 19. Paula Terrasi noted that the Agricultural Preservation Program now requires that a certain percentage of the land be comprised on prime soils in order to be eligible for protection. On page 23, the list of invasive species was expanded and information on the hemlock wooly adelgid was added. On pages 25 and 26, the list of species classified as endangered, threatened or of special concern was updated, and information on the Squannassit ACEC was added.

Beverly Woods stated that there is additional information on the Indian Head superfund site provided, but the most recent information available goes back to 1996. On page 32, information was added on actions that homeowners can take to improve stormwater. Diane Cronin stated that she followed up with town staff on their best management practices plan and learned that the Town has adopted EPA's six minimum control measures, and will expand on this work over the upcoming years. Paula Terrasi noted that the Town participates in a regional stormwater collaborative through NMCOG.

The comments on the historical section provided by Ron Karr were incorporated on pages 34, 35 and 38. Information was also added on the Blake Brothers turbine. On page 50, the list of historic structures was updated to remove the Covered Bridge and Prescott Bridge. Diane Cronin said that she could not prove that portions of the Liberty Flagpole were

moved. The mission statement of the Agricultural Advisory Board was added to page 53.

The Issues and Opportunities section was then reviewed. Paula Terrasi noted that the Town needs to adopt CPA in order to have a source of funding for acquiring Chapter 61 parcels. She added that when a parcel is of interest for preservation, the Town, the land trusts, Department of Fish and Wildlife, and DCR reach out to the property owner on an annual basis, and that these organizations work in partnership on such initiatives. She also explained that the State has special grants available for projects on located on properties that are under an APR agreement.

Diane Cronin informed the Committee that there is information on the Historical Commission website on structures with the Town Center Historic District. There are also images showing what the Center looked like in the past.

In discussing the need to update the Town's development regulations, Renee D'Argento suggested adding the protection of forested habitat to the objectives within the regulation updates. She also stated that climate change will bring about more drought in coming years. Nancy Lebedzinski suggested rewording the first sentence in the last paragraph on page 63 to indicate that there will be extreme weather events.

In discussion on invasive species, Deb Fountain pointed out that the New England Wildflower Society recently changed its name to the Native Plant Trust. She added that some communities are using CPA funds to remove invasive plants. Paula Terrasi stated that she would be interested in receiving information on how such a projects fit into the CPA program from an eligibility perspective.

The recommendations section was reviewed. Deb Fountain suggested adding homeowners to the list of audiences for educational brochures on the best practices for reducing the use of fertilizers, pesticides and deicing chemicals. Sherrill Rosoff asked about regulating the use of plastics. Beverly Woods suggested that the issues related to solid waste and recycling should be addressed in the Facilities and Services chapter.

Sherrill Rosoff stated that Natural Resources chapter does not address agriculture from the perspective of food security. Beverly Woods responded that food security is generally defined as the availability of food and one's access it-- family is considered food secure when it does not live in hunger. Sherrill Rosoff then discussed the shifting agricultural patterns within the United States that may result from climate change. Beverly Woods suggested that Sherrill draft text that she feels should be added to the chapter relative to this issue within Pepperell.

The Committee agreed to review the report provided by the agricultural stakeholders before the next meeting in oder to determine which items should be incorporated into the chapter.

Diane Cronin stated that she did not see anything in this chapter about form-based code. Beverly Woods replied that any discussion on form-based code would go into the land use

chapter, assuming that the Committee feels that it is appropriate for Pepperell.

7. Climate Change and Sustainability Work Group Update

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred until the next meeting.

8. Open Space and Recreation Technical Paper

The Open Space and Recreation Technical Paper was distributed for Committee review. Rob Rand provided an overview of the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan. He will distribute a summary of the Plan to the Committee. Chuck Walkovich requested that the Committee provide its responses to the Open Space and Recreation discussion questions one week before the next meeting. He added that he will be providing the Planning Board with a summary of the plan's recommendations and requested that the Committee consider the major findings of the Plan that should be incorporated into the summary.

9. Open Forum

No comments were received. The next meeting was scheduled for June 13, 2019.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.