



Town of Pepperell

Master Plan Advisory Committee

1 Main Street, Pepperell, Massachusetts 01463-1644

Draft Meeting Minutes-May 10, 2018

Committee Members Present:

Diane Cronin
Nancy Lebenzinski
Kenneth Morgan
Joyce Morrow
Roland Nutter
Robert Rand
Stephen Themelis
Mark Vasapolli

Committee Members Absent:

Tracie Ezzio
Paul Lonergan
David Sears
Jack Visniewski
Charles Walkovich
Pastor Stephen Witmer

1. Open Forum

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm by Co-Chair Roland Nutter. Bruce Wetherbee asked whether the audience will be allowed to ask questions relative to the make-up of the Committee. Mr. Nutter responded that the issue could be discussed as part of the open forum and the Committee will then take up the issue as part of its working agenda. Sharon Ofenstein (Pepperell Horse Owners Association) noted that farms, trails and open land are important to the equestrian community. Bob Newton, president of the Pepperell Seniors, stated that the Master Plan Committee should address step-down housing for Pepperell seniors. He noted that seniors need housing on one level and that there is none available in Pepperell.

Roland Nutter encouraged residents to attend the future public input sessions. April Healey proposed that six women be added to the Committee, and provided a list of names for the Committee's consideration. Billy Dean(?) questioned whether there is bias on the Committee given the lack of gender balance. Lisa Ferolito asked whether the survey will be reviewed and approved this evening, and if so, what that means for the new members who will be added to the Committee. Roland Nutter responded that the survey was produced by NMCOG and has been under review by the Committee for the past two months. He noted that the intent is to get the

survey out to residents, in order to start the process of collecting input. Ms. Ferolito requested that survey approval be deferred until next month. Roland responded that the decision is up to the Committee.

Martha Scarsdale requested that the Committee expand its membership to include those who expressed an interest in participating from the beginning. She then stated that she feels that the process for putting the Committee together is flawed, which affects the confidence of the community in the work being performed by the Committee. Caroline Ahdab noted that additional members of the Master Plan Committee could be viewed as alternate members, similar to other municipal boards and committees.

Renee Dargento expressed her concern about the process and noted that she has done some research on other master plans, specifically Groton's process that was used in 2011. She added that allowing public comment only during open forum is very limiting, and added that other towns have created subcommittees for each subject area, with one or two members of the Master Plan Committee sitting on each subcommittee along with other stakeholders. She added that having NMCOG develop the survey is not valid for Pepperell. Although she has not seen the survey, she is concerned that the Committee may not get the answers that they want, and that residents should have input on the content of the survey.

Steve Fordman (?) asked about the recent SWOT analysis and inquired as to whether it would be used to embellish the survey. Roland Nutter responded that the survey was developed prior to the Visioning Session and that NMCOG has used similar surveys in other communities where they have undertaken similar work. Mr. Ford noted that he saw several participants at the session with extra sheets of dots during the prioritization exercise, which skews the data. He suggested that a count of participants who signed in be compared with the number of red dots. Roland Nutter stated that the Committee will talk with NMCOG to better understand how the data is used. Deb Fountain also expressed concern about the SWOT analysis and asked why the Visioning Session isn't included in the survey. Constance Burnhardt asked that the Open Forum be continued for as long as possible. Roland Nutter responded that it is the responsibility of the Committee to address the items on the agenda, and that while input from the public is appreciated, the Committee must have time to complete its work.

Paula Terrasi stated that it is important that department heads are made aware of the Committee meetings. She asked how department heads will know when the Committee will be addressing their area of interest. Roland Nutter responded that department heads will be invited to come in for sessions that are relevant to their area of expertise. Paula asked whether it will be up to Mark Andrews or Steve Parker to notify staff at department head meetings or leadership meetings. Roland Nutter responded that the department heads will be added to the Master Plan email distribution list.

Sherrill Rosoff asked for information on the duration of the contract with NMCOG and asked about the topics that will be addressed. She also asked what the Committee expects of NMCOG, and requested information on the timeframe for the project. Roland Nutter responded that there is a handout available with the schedule and list of tasks, indicating a completion date of August 2019. He noted that the Town has already used six months to form the Committee. Bruce

Wetherbee asked how much the contract is for, and Roland Nutter responded that he does not have that information available this evening. Mr. Wetherbee noted that only eight committee members are present at the meeting and that the Planning Director was absent. Roland Nutter indicated that the Planning Director is on vacation. Mr. Wetherbee replied that either the Planning Director's vacation schedule or the meeting date should have been adjusted. Mr. Wetherbee asked whether the contract for the Master Plan could be extended. Mr. Nutter explained that NMCOG is not at tonight's meeting because the Committee must decide for itself which direction it wants to take going forward. He added that he would check on the possibility of extending the contract.

2. Approval of the March 1, 2018 meeting minutes

Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Diane Cronin, the minutes of the March 1, 2018 meeting were approved on a vote of 7-1, with Rob Rand voting in opposition as he had not read the minutes. Mr. Nutter noted that the minutes were distributed to the Committee on May 3rd, but Mr. Rand did not receive them for an unknown reason.

3. Composition of the Master Plan Committee

Rob Rand stated that there has not been a discussion regarding how the meetings will be conducted, and added that he does not believe that holding the Open Forum at the start of the meeting makes sense. He noted that committees usually discuss an issue, and then entertain questions from the floor once the Committee's questions have been answered. He asked who made up the rules of the Committee, and asked whether the rules have been published so that the public can see them. He also asked about the quorum for the meeting. Mr. Nutter responded that a quorum is comprised of 50% of the committee membership, in accordance with Roberts Rules, and that the agenda structure was outlined at the first meeting, based on NMCOG's recommendation. Rob Rand made a motion to change the structure of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Diane Cronin. Nancy Lebenzinski suggested that the public be given an opportunity to comment at the end of each agenda item. Rob Rand suggested that the meetings be longer than 90 minutes. Options for receiving public input were then discussed further by the Committee. Steve Themelis amended the motion on the floor so that the opportunity for public comment would be provided at the end of the agenda. The motion was seconded by Diane Cronin, who added that, in her opinion, an opportunity for public comment should be provided at the beginning and the end of the meeting. The Committee voted 4-3 to amend the motion. Mark Vasapolli requested to amend the motion to provide an opportunity for public comment at the beginning and the end of the meeting, which was seconded by Steve Themelis. The amended motion was approved by the Committee on a 6-2 vote. Therefore, an open forum will be held at the beginning and end of the meeting.

Roland Nutter stated that a request was received to add six more women to the Committee in order to create gender balance. A letter from Co-Chair Chuck Walkovich was then read and discussed. Diane Cronin stated that she agrees that adding more women to the Committee would better represent the demographics of the community. Joyce Morrow stated that she believes subcommittees would be appropriate, given that no one person has expertise in all areas. She added that changing the Committee composition may not be necessary, as long as subcommittees

are added. Mark Vasapolli stated that he is also in favor of adding more women to the Committee. He added that the public can also speak with Committee members outside of the meeting to provide input, and noted that a larger committee could result in 4- or 5-hour committee meetings. Steve Themelis stated that he supports the concept of having alternate members. Rob Rand stated that he supports adding more people to the Committee, and that women should be prioritized. It was noted that eleven people applied to be on the Committee but were not selected, and that about half of those applicants were female. Nancy Lebenzinski made a motion to add seven people to the Committee, with females to be given priority. The motion was seconded by Rob Rand. Roland Nutter noted that the Board of Selectmen must make the appointments. Nancy Lebenzinski then amended her original motion to include priority for those who previously submitted an application for the Committee, which was seconded by Steve Themelis. The amendment passed unanimously. The Committee then voted to approve the amended motion unanimously.

The Committee discussed the option of establishing subcommittees. Mark Vasapolli asked how the subcommittees would work with the larger Committee. Roland Nutter responded that the subcommittees would be part of the Committee, but would focus on specific subject areas, therefore not every member of the larger Committee would be involved in every aspect of the Plan. The subcommittees would report their findings to the larger group. Nancy Lebenzinski spoke in favor of the concept because many committee members have certain interests. Roland Nutter stated that he worries about subcommittee members with in-depth knowledge on a specific topic developing part of the Plan without adequate input. Mark Vasapolli stated that it may be overwhelming for the Committee members to have to attend so many additional meetings. He added that it would be possible for four or five members of the Committee to get together outside of the meeting, in order to gather information that would be presented to the larger Committee, or a group of people could get together with individuals who are interested in certain topic and the information could be brought back to the larger Master Plan Committee. Roland Nutter noted that such a group would be a public interest group and not a subcommittee. Ken Morgan noted that the Committee is comprised of volunteers and that the subcommittee work would have to be planned ahead of time and incorporated into the agenda and the process. Mark Vasapolli added that having multiple formal subcommittees would have a significant impact on the project schedule. Roland Nutter asked whether the Committee wants to follow the approach outlined by NMCOG or whether they want to change the approach. Rob Rand stated that there will be more people on the Committee at the next meeting who may want to weigh in on this issue.

4. Review of the Draft Survey

Rob Rand noted that a fairly recent survey is available from the update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. He offered to take responsibility for pulling the results of that survey together as a subcommittee, and then present it at the next meeting. He noted the draft survey is fine and covers a lot of ground, but he would like to be able to add information from the Open Space survey to the results of the Master Plan survey. Roland Nutter noted that other surveys have also been conducted by the Town that should also be incorporated into the process.

Diane Cronin suggested that possible responses to Question 6 be changed from favor/oppose to a scale of 1 through 5 with degrees of favor/oppose. Rob Rand concurred with her suggestion. Mark Vasapolli suggested that residents be allowed to choose three projects/initiatives in their responses to Question 7. The Committee concurred with this suggestion. Diane Cronin noted that there is no mention of historic priorities in Question 6. Roland Nutter responded that the issue is included in Question 7, and added that it could be moved from Question 7 to Question 6. Diane Cronin responded that it could remain in Question 4. The Committee decided to include historic preservation in Questions 4, 6 and 7.

Rob Rand stated that sustainability should be added as a priority. Roland Nutter stated that he is concerned that people are not going to know what sustainability means. It was noted that many of the elements within the survey are part of the sustainability concept, and that sustainability will be considered in each chapter of the Master Plan. Rob Rand asked if there is anything in the survey about a sustainable lifestyle through cooperatively-owned energy by the town or by area towns, and by providing more solar energy through lifting of the net metering cap. He asked that community solar be added to the survey. Roland Nutter suggested that the language in the draft survey be reworded to read: “renewable energy initiatives like solar”, noting that a more in-depth discussion on renewable energy can take place at a later date. Mark Vasapolli noted that energy technology may change in five years. Rob Rand suggested adding the word “affordable”. Diane Cronin noted there is a line labeled “adding sidewalks/pathways” in Question 6 but she is unclear as to the definition of a pathway. Roland Nutter noted that this could be referring to a pathway along the river or in a residential area, and that it is not necessarily a designated trail. Paula Terrasi stated that the protection of aquifers and municipal wells should be called out in the survey. The Committee then agreed to add a line in Question 4 for groundwater and aquifers, and to add an affordable energy efficient public transportation line in Question 6, in addition to the previous agreed upon edits. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the survey with the agreed upon edits.

6. Proposed Master Plan Development Schedule

The draft schedule for the Master Plan was distributed and reviewed by the Committee. Roland Nutter stated that the schedule will need to be modified given what the Committee has accomplished to date. He added that the next Visioning Session is scheduled for the end of June.

7. Other Business

There was none.

8. Closing Public Forum (added by Committee during meeting)

Sherrill Rosoff stated that there is nothing about public health in the survey, and that the topic includes epidemiology, and air quality, which relates to traffic patterns, etc. She suggested reaching out to Tracey. She then suggested that meeting packets be hand delivered to everyone involved in the Committee and to town hall one week in advance of the meeting. She added that the topics outlined on the schedule are out of order and illogical.

Steve Fordman (?) raised concerns about data integrity and the need to prevent residents from submitting more than one survey. Sherrill Rosoff suggested that NMCOG use SurveyMonkey or another app for the survey. Roland Nutter replied that he does not know which tool will be used by NMCOG, but that they have a way of preventing multiple responses from being submitted by the same person. Paula Terrasi noted that paper copies are also needed, given that Seniors do not always have access to a computer, and noted that the 7th and 8th grade classes also provided input for the Open Space Plan. A resident then asked whether the survey question regarding design guidelines should be revised. A discussion ensued. The resident then requested that the Master Plan Committee meetings be advertised more publicly, perhaps with roadside signs. He also suggested reaching out to the high school. Sherrill Rosoff noted that telephone and electric infrastructure is a problem and it is not included in the survey. She noted that electric grid capacity is needed to advance further solar development. She added that natural gas leaks are also a problem. Roland Nutter noted that these industries are regulated by the state and federal governments, and that the Town has no control over private utility companies. He noted that the Town has struggled to get National Grid to address the double pole situation throughout town. Renee Dargento suggested asking residents how they feel about their health and inquiring as whether there are things the Town could do to improve their situation. Rob Rand suggested adding something to the survey about the electric grid and internet service. He suggested asking survey respondents to list their name and street address. The Committee voted unanimously to add a survey question on public health and a question on utilities.

9. Adjournment

Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Mark Vasapoli, the Committee voted unanimously to adjourn at 8:34 pm.