

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

Thursday February 15, 2024 at 7:00 pm

Online via Zoom

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 pm.

Members Present: Bob Roemer, Panny Gerken, Stacia Downey, Cia Boynton, Sharon Shepela, Mary Ciummo, Ken Troup

Others Present: Pam Harding, Olivia Knightly, Tony Jagodnik

Minutes. The minutes for the February 1, 2024 meeting were approved unanimously.

Final Review of Implementation Matrix. The group then reviewed additional member comments on the revised implementation matrix from the previous meetings. Key areas of discussion and subsequent agreement were:

- Questions came up as to whether FOSPRD would be modified or replaced. Bob noted the proper title, as used in many other towns, would be Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) that protects substantial open space while permitting more concentrated housing. The group agreed on appropriate rewording of several actions within Land Use and Housing. They also agreed that multiple boards and committees need to be involved in creation and implementation of OSRD.
- After discussion, the group agreed to move and broaden action 1.3.6 to address more uses than just agriculture. Bob noted that there is tax taking land that could be retained by the town and used in addressing future municipal or other needs.
- A number of suggested word changes in the Housing section were discussed and approved, with the intent of diversifying housing opportunities without singling out any particular demographic or group. An action was reworded to implement and continually update the Housing Production Plan.
- Cia raised a question of why the Mixed Use Overlay district is not being used. Bob noted that the purchase of half the Bolton Office Park offered the possibility of commercial businesses and amenities that could serve the new apartment complex.
- Cia also suggested looking at the New England Power easement that includes both town-owned and private land. Harvard was able to get the easement waved to the benefit of the town. Wording was included to investigate the easement.
- Mary suggested language to encourage historical preservation, but noted that a recent discussion of a possible historic district at East End met with significant resident opposition. With regard to what would be allowed in a local historic district, Tony wondered whether solar panels would be allowed. The solar panel question led to a discussion of the failed attempt to local a solar farm on the septic field by the sewage

treatment plant near the school. The group decided to add solar or geothermal uses to the land use action in 1.3.6.

- Although the group had previously decided not to include personnel requirements in proposed actions, they did agree to add the need for a grant writer to 6.1.3. This was viewed as applying to many different sections of the Master Plan and issues in town and was very important for the future.
- In discussing emergency shelters, the group clarified that the current shelter is at Atlantic Union College in Lancaster and that the new high school in Bolton will have a shelter. They also agreed to combine actions 6.3.2 and 6.3.3 to educate the town in the need and availability of emergency shelters and procedures.
- The group discussed sidewalks, partly in response to DPW chief Randy Heglin's comments during his interview with Olivia and Pam. There was agreement that crosswalks should not be put at traffic lights that did not have sidewalks. Some noted there are places such as under 495 that could not ever have sidewalks, while others noted that future developments around 495 could lead to additional sidewalks. A new action 7.2.3 was added to note a desire for more sidewalks and that sidewalks should not be forgotten when land is redeveloped. And a new action 7.2.4 was added to advocate for meandering walks that go around trees. Mary also noted that Complete Streets includes sidewalks and that the town is eligible for state grants that could be used. Stacia mentioned the need for improvement of the existing sidewalks near the school. Actions were reworded to emphasize priority of sidewalk maintenance or upgrade in high pedestrian areas.
- A new action 7.4.4 was added by the group to deal with funding for existing drainage structures in town.

Department Head Interviews. The members had received draft notes from the interviews with three of the department heads. Bob requested that the department heads review the notes to assure that the context of their inputs was clear in the notes. Pam and Olivia will be interviewing several other department heads in the next two weeks. Bob asked that they finish the interviews and review of takeaways from the interviews prior to the next meeting. Bob said one thing the group should think about is how we intend to use the interview results in the Master Plan.

Next Steps. In view of the late hour, the attendees agreed to discuss Climate Change at the next meeting. Bob also asked the group to think about education quality in the town, not just school buildings. Pam noted that education is not usually discussed in a Master Plan, but Olivia said it could be included in the narrative sections. Bob's concern was the meaning, if any, of increases in Nashoba students going elsewhere including Clinton and private schools, as well as decreases in the school system's performance ratings.

After considering two different dates, the attendees agreed that the next meeting will be at 7:00 pm Thursday March 7, 2024. They did not say whether the meeting would be in person or via Zoom. The meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.