



MASTER PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE
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Meeting Minutes
January 13, 2015
7:00 PM
Grange Meeting Room, Town Hall, 29 Middle Road

Members present:

Voting Members Present:

John Markiewicz, Chair (Planning Board)
Les Fox, Vice Chair (Board of Selectmen)
Marie Cannon (Board of Health) at 7:45 PM
Bryon Clemence (Agricultural Commission)
David Follett (Conservation Commission)
Rebecca Morris (Energy Committee)
Al Murphy (Housing Board)
Frank Powers (Council on Aging)

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Dmitry Bykhovsky (Local Business Owner)
Adam Duchesneau (Town Planner)
Kevin Mahoney (Historical Commission)
Maria Neyland (School Committee)
Police Chief Warren Ryder
Selina Shaw (Town Administrator)

Others in Attendance:

Manisha Bewtra, Metropolitan Area Planning Council
Eric Duhamel
Christine Madore, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Voting Members Absent:

Mitzi Garcia-Weil (Recreation Commission)

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Meeting Minutes of October 29, 2014 and December 9, 2014

Mr. Fox MADE a MOTION to approve the minutes of October 29, 2014 and December 9, 2014.
Mr. Follett SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor.

Correspondence

Mr. Duchesneau indicated he had received an email from resident Yaping Shou who encouraged the Master Plan Update Committee (MPUC) to explore additional transportation options for residents in Boxborough; in particular shuttle service to the Commuter Rail station in the Town of Acton. Mr. Fox stated the Town should be taking advantage of what is available for Boxborough residents from the Town of Acton in terms of transportation options.

Review of the Following Draft Sections of the Master Plan: Local Services and Facilities

Mr. Follett confirmed that this section of the Master Plan was supposed to layout the current assets in the community. Mr. Duchesneau stated that was correct. Mr. Markiewicz asked who compiled this draft section of the plan and Mr. Duchesneau indicated he had. Chief Ryder noted he still needed to update the tables in the Police Department portion of the section. Mr. Powers stated seeing the number of 911 calls in the community would be a good statistic to include. Mr. Markiewicz felt each table in this section should be looked at to determine exactly what

information is trying to be conveyed. Perhaps showing some type of trend in the data would be helpful as opposed to just displaying very detailed statistics. Ms. Bewtra suggested that indicating the level of service and public safety in the community may be the best way to structure these Police Department tables.

Mr. Follett noted the Town has a highly trained Police Chief and the MPUC should trust him to put the appropriate data into the tables. Mr. Murphy asked if the seriousness of the crimes should also be evaluated. Mr. Duhamel asked if crime was up or down and could the Police Department sufficiently respond to crimes? He stated that when a call is made to the police, residents want to know if the police will be able to respond in a timely fashion. Ms. Morris added that knowing the level of service around emergencies and providing information to town residents are also important pieces of information. Mr. Powers added that in order to show trends in the data, information will have to be examined back past 2014. Chief Ryder indicated it was possible to look at different time periods. Mr. Bykhovsky noted that if there are data projections for where things will be in ten years, the Town needs to make sure it will be able to handle those situations. Mr. Markiewicz stated that trending information is important, but this section of the Master Plan should be providing existing baseline data.

Mr. Fox then noted the figures regarding solid waste should be updated in the Department of Public Works section. Ms. Shaw added the Town no longer participates in a “trash swap” with other Northeast Solid Waste Committee communities. Mr. Fox indicated it would be good to know the details of the cemetery space information. Ms. Morris felt it would be informative to know the percentage of residents and businesses in town that have access to natural gas. Mr. Powers stated that getting natural gas access can be very expensive.

Mr. Markiewicz asked if the water resources information that was generated back in 2008 was available. Mr. Clemence indicated it was and he also added that the Master Plan should be coordinated with the Open Space and Recreation Plan. Mr. Markiewicz noted that sources of water are critical to the future of the town. Additionally, it was noted the MassHighway salt storage facility on Swanson Road and the salting of Interstate 495 in general has caused high levels of sodium in the water in Boxborough in areas adjacent to the highway. Mr. Follett noted that perhaps the ground water contamination from the old dump should be discussed somewhere in this section as well. Mr. Fox suggested that perhaps a section on environmental concerns should also be added to the Local Services and Facilities section.

The discussion then turned towards the Education portion of the Local Services and Facilities section. Ms. Neyland indicated that some of data for the tables could be tough to tease out of the school system’s existing data. Ms. Shaw noted the tables in this section should speak to the current status of the school system. Mr. Murphy asked why the racial makeup of the school system is important to the Master Plan. Ms. Bewtra felt it would be useful information for the Master Plan to help paint a picture of the community. Mr. Markiewicz noted it takes time for different groups of people to become involved in the community in terms of town government and volunteering. Ms. Neyland pointed out that cultural differences impact school activities. Mr. Powers stated that showing trends in the ethnic makeup of the student body would be useful information. Ms. Morris wanted to know if there were any existing teacher shortages or issues with teachers living in the region. Chief Ryder noted this is actually good information to know for all Town employees.

At this time Ms. Cannon arrived at the meeting.

Mr. Follett noted that regionalization of the school system has changed Boxborough's impact on the school system. He indicated Boxborough now has less influence on the school system than before regionalization and this should be documented. Mr. Powers noted this does not mean that Boxborough school committee representatives cannot put forth suggestions to the regional system. Mr. Markiewicz indicated the schools are what drive people to come to Boxborough. Ms. Neyland pointed out the Town actually now has more influence within the regional school system.

Mr. Murphy stated he felt that stereotypes will seem to pervade into any ethnic group data that is included in the Master Plan. Ms. Neyland noted the demographics of the school system will have an impact on the initiatives that will be undertaken in the school system. Ms. Morris noted she would like to see the demographic difference between teachers and the student body. Mr. Follett felt the MPUC should circle back later on this topic.

Ms. Morris indicated she felt the Local Services and Facilities section should speak more to the disabled population in Boxborough. Mr. Fox suggested combining some of the information to create a new portion of the section entitled Community and Social Services. Mr. Markiewicz stated he would like to see a Chapter 61, 61A, and 61b map added to the section. Chief Ryder noted the Boxborough Emergency Reserve Corps portion of the section needed to be updated.

At this time Mr. Powers left the meeting.

Chief Ryder wondered if something should be said about the significant improvements that have been made to the wireless infrastructure in town. Mr. Clemence felt the section on transportation from the Open Space and Recreation Plan should be added to this section of the Master Plan.

Discussion Regarding Master Plan Goals as Related to the Vision Statement

Ms. Bewtra went over the bullet list that had been provided as a draft Vision Statement back in December. She noted it was MAPC's initial idea to have this be the Vision Statement for the Master Plan, but the MPUC felt these bullet points would fit better into the various sections of the Plan. Ms. Bewtra then went over the changes and new additions that had been made to the list of bullet points.

Ms. Bewtra then explained the draft goals and topics section. Mr. Duhamel asked how the goals and topics had been created and Ms. Bewtra noted they were generated from the Public Kickoff and Visioning forum that was held on November 19, 2014. Mr. Follett stated the high level themes for the Master Plan are represented in the concise Vision Statement that was generated. The 12 bullet points that had been developed seem to weight each bullet equally and this does not reflect the idea of the Vision Statement, which in turn seems to weaken the overall document. Mr. Follett felt the list of bullets should be hierarchical instead. Ms. Morris felt the bullet points were all very interrelated and integrated. Mr. Follett noted he was proposing a restructuring and not a removal of any of the bullet points or information. He simply felt the rest of the document should follow the structure of the Vision Statement. Mr. Markiewicz suggested that the consultant group the 12 bullet points under three to four items that tie into the Vision Statement.

Discussion Regarding Economic Development Section

Ms. Madore noted this was a very important section of the Master Plan and she wanted to get feedback from the MPUC on how to approach addressing this particular section. Ms. Morris wanted to see any future economic development use renewable energy sources. Mr. Follett was concerned the goals and objectives which had been laid out were not achievable. Ms. Madore stated if that was the case, the group should figure out which of the items were actionable. She continued on to note that tonight's conversation about this section should figure out the specific goals of the section to help provide her direction on the research process.

Mr. Murphy noted there is nothing wrong with having a goal that may not be achievable if everyone in the community wants to strive to achieve that goal. Mr. Clemence agreed as he felt the goals were being established to express the community's intentions. If the goals are actionable or not, he felt they all had a place in the Plan. Mr. Fox felt items should be actionable or people will lose interest. Ms. Bewtra stated she felt a Master Plan was more than just a business plan for town government and it should also be aspirational. Ms. Madore stated she would like talk with people who work or live in Boxborough to begin to do research.

Ms. Morris felt the research should focus on looking at existing processes in the town and how the new goals and objectives could be reached. Mr. Follett wanted to know the costs and benefits of actions that the Town could take in actual figures that are quantifiable. Mr. Fox wanted to know what percentage of the land in town is vacant office space. Mr. Markiewicz noted the MPUC does not have a baseline for economic development in town and this needed to be established first. He wanted to know what was missing and how the gaps can be filled. Mr. Fox wanted to know where there is untapped economic development potential. Mr. Markiewicz noted there are currently vacant commercial spaces and the Town needs to figure out what can be done to encourage occupancy of these spaces. Also, what can be done to help existing businesses grow? Mr. Follett added that knowing basic economic development data would be helpful. The baseline needs to be understood first.

Mr. Markiewicz stated that knowing what is limiting growth and what is slowing people down are questions that need to be answered. He continued on to note that the consultant should reach out to large companies to figure out how they can grow and what they need to stay in town. The problem with the existing situation needs to be understood first before any recommendations can be made. Mr. Bykhovsky felt knowing the ratio of residential to commercial land use in the community would be helpful. Is this something the Town would like to maintain or is it something the Town would like to change? He also felt it should be made clear what the Town wants Route 111/Massachusetts Avenue to look like in the future. Mr. Fox wanted to know why the existing Industrial-Commercial zones are not fully developed. Mr. Markiewicz reiterated that the baseline information for economic development needed to be understood first. Mr. Follett questioned the viability of agriculture, suggesting there are only two or three viable farms in Boxborough and that the Town subsidizes agriculture.

Update on Master Plan Website

Mr. Duchesneau noted the Master Plan website is still being created by the Town's webmaster and the site would be a sub-site of the Town's existing website. Once the framework of this website has been created, MAPC would be creating and uploading all of the content.

Scheduling of Future Meeting Dates

The MPUC set their next meeting for Wednesday, February 25, 2015 at 7:00 PM in Town Hall, 29 Middle Road. They also tentatively scheduled a March meeting for Wednesday, March 25, 2015, pending the ability to obtain a quorum.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 PM on a MOTION by Mr. Follett, SECONDED by Mr. Fox, with all members voting in favor.