

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE
TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire

Minutes of April 15, 2019

Members Present: James Kelly, Valerie Jenkins, Sarah Steinberg Heller, Cathy Lanigan, Ivy Vann, and Becky Sakellarou

Also Present: Peter Throop, Laura Norton, and Kristin Bixby, Office of Community Development

Co-Chair Heller (Ms. Heller) called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

Minutes: A motion was made/seconded (Lanigan/Vann) to approve the minutes of March 18, 2019, with all in favor.

Review and Vote to Approve Updated Master Plan Chapter Summaries:

A motion was made/seconded (Vann/Jenkins) to approve the Mater Plan Chapter Updates as written, with all in favor.

Housing Chapter Update – Next Steps:

As Mr. Throop prepared to give the Board an update, Ms. Vann noted that Joe Minicozzi of Urban3, LLC was involved in an analysis for Hillsborough County and would be in the state in August. This consulting company helps communities make better decisions about the design of place through an understanding of data, economics and public policy. “We need to think about what he can do to help us with the data we collect,” she said. Noting Mr. Minicozzi was a leader in value-per-acre analysis using 3D modelling, she added, “we need to figure out how best to use him to assist the town.”

Mr. Throop agreed, adding, “we have a lot of time and meetings and presentations invested here. We need to think about the issue of housing and workforce housing that is affordable to people coming into the region.” He noted the problem was challenging not only on a regional level but at the state and national levels as well. He told the members, “we need to look at housing as a complex system, and we need a comprehensive analysis of our commuter shed to better understand the economics from several different dimensions including vacancy rates, housing types, and price points.” Ms. Lanigan asked about the commuter shed, specifically what towns were being considered as such. Mr. Throop replied, “Antrim, Bennington, Greenfield, Jaffrey, and New Ipswich. Pretty much north and south.” He noted that several of the smaller towns without municipal water and sewer do not want change and that multi-family units were not really feasible. Mr. Throop also mentioned that the recent Employer’s

Forum confirmed to him that starter homes, in the price range of \$150,000 to \$175,000, is what is missing. Ms. Lanigan asked, “can you even build a home for that amount of money?” Ms. Vann interjected, “no you cannot.” Mr. Throop replied, “we need strategies to overcome the issues we are facing and build a comprehensive enumeration of this thing that has been looked at in pieces by many different organizations.”

A brief discussion of supply and demand followed, including talk of a plan to go out and visit the large employers like NHBB, Millipore, MCH, ConVal School System, and So Clean with a survey in hand to assess their workforce needs (positions open, wage scales, types of housing being sought) for aggregated data. Mr. Throop also noted the information would be redacted to protect the employer’s statistics. Ms. Heller noted she would like to see less anecdotal data on the commuter shed and how many people are actually commuting now. “I am just curious,” she said.

Ms. Vann suggested contact with Emily Brown, Principal at Fourth Economy, a national community and economic development consulting firm that focuses on fostering action to create great communities and strong economies. While Mr. Throop agreed, he suggested the focus stay on Peterborough. He added, “the other place to investigate is the realtors, their inventory, what people are looking for (housing types), and the types of people moving to town. We need to better understand the demand so we can build to meet it.”

A brief discussion followed on supply and demand, cost of construction, price points and affordability, leverage (strategies and financing options), building types (cottages, modular), and public engagement. Mr. Throop reiterated the context must be there. He said, “it is crucial to build the context before we go out to the public, but we also have to be careful of getting stuck and going deeper and deeper into the data mud.”

Ms. Vann noted Paul Crabtree and his work in engineered wetlands instead of sewer systems. Constructed wetlands are treatment systems that use natural processes involving wetland vegetation, soils, and their associated microbial assemblages to improve water quality. “They are known as living systems,” interjected Mr. Throop, “they *are* possible but is it cost effective?” Ms. Vann replied, “for a town that does not have a sewer system it may well be cost effective.” She said that she intended to write a whitepaper on what was needed to allow giving this system a try. The members discussed the costs versus price of ownership and rentals, price points versus affordability, and the cost impact to the community. Ms. Vann said, “we’re talking about value to acre here. This is Joe’s (Mr. Minicozzi’s) wheelhouse.”

The members discussed property taxes and the order of magnitude of housing costs in New Hampshire versus other states, which are much higher. This led to a brief discussion of land purchase, cost of construction, and cost of conversion in an effort to stabilize the process. Ms. Vann noted the apartment conversions of the large house at the top of Main Street and the Rectory at the former Catholic Church on Vine Street as being excellent examples.

Ms. Vann mentioned another gentleman who works for the University of Lowell, Massachusetts who is an expert on conversions and rehabilitations. “Dario (Carrara) would know his name,” she said. Mr. Throop noted that dealing with all the penetrations (stairwells, fire ratings, wiring, and plumbing) as well as state and town building codes in a conversion can be a nightmare. He explained that throughout discussions at the employer forums, “it is clear these businesses do not want to be landlords. But the biggest restraint is land ownership. The land is largely locked up in this town.”

Citing the need to understand where they stood and where they were trying to go, Mr. Throop told the members that they needed to understand the economics of housing and the diverse quality of the community and still grow. “I think there are opportunities for growth out there,” he said. He concluded with a brief discussion on public engagement and the role of the consultant. “We are going to nail it and you are all going to help me” he said, “we are going to go into the neighborhoods to overcome the process concerns and find a compromise. Something in the middle for the layout and structure for zoning.” When Ms. Steinberg Heller asked if the goal was for 2020. Mr. Throop replied, “we’ll do the best we can. We will get as much of the backroom stuff done as soon as possible.” He told the members that Ms. Bixby was working on a grant from Plan New Hampshire’s Municipal Technical Assistance Grant (MTAG) program in assisting community outreach to shape the zoning ordinance, especially in communities that are in need of more housing. “That is due May 6th,” he said. “Keep us in the loop,” replied Ms. Heller.

Ms. Bixby noted a letter of Board support for the grant application would be appreciated, and due by May 6th as well.

Other Business:

None

Next Meeting: May 20, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.

The Meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton

Administrative Assistant