

## MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

TOWN OF PETERBOROUGH, New Hampshire

Minutes of June 17, 2019

**Members Present:** James Kelly, Valerie Jenkins, Cathy Lanigan, Sarah Steinberg Heller, Karen Hatcher, and Becky Sakellariou

**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. She welcomed the audience, followed by introductions of the Members and Staff.

**Minutes:** A motion was made/seconded (Lanigan/Jenkins) to approve the Minutes of April 15, 2019 with all in favor.

### **Committee Membership and Leadership:**

Ms. Bixby reviewed membership terms expiring in 2019 (Ms. Jenkins and Ms. Heller) and asked if those members were interested in continuing in their roles. Both expressed interest and will be re-appointed by the Board of Selectmen. It was noticed that while they enjoy full membership the Members should continue to think about candidates for alternate positions. Mr. Throop noted consideration of particular skills potential candidates may have to compliment the Board was a helpful way to start thinking about it.

### **Housing Chapter Update:**

Mr. Throop gave a brief review of what has happened since their last meeting. "Since then we have gotten town election results and what has transpired from them" he said, "the concern includes the process." He noted an outstanding appeal of the Citizen's Petition #15 to be heard by the Board of Selectmen and told the Members, "we are convinced the most important thing is how we engage the community as we go forward with the Housing Chapter, then use that Chapter to update the zoning ordinance." He also noted the MTAG Grant they'd applied for and how they would use the grant in a two-part process. "It is very important to be engaged in community outreach," he said. When asked about the time frame Mr.

Throop replied, “I’m not sure of the time frame, but the first phase will help people better understand the (housing) need and draw a consensus on value and vision for housing support. That could take 6 months or longer. The outreach will be town - wide, going into the neighborhoods.”

Holding a book entitled *Community: The Structure of Belonging* by Peter Block, Ms. Hatcher interjected she’d walked by her bookcase when the book caught her eye. She told the Members that it was troubling for her to see the town divided on housing with people locked into positions with a sense of mistrust. “That bothers me” she said, “this book describes the process of creating a community through conversations, where descent is acknowledged but not considered an obstacle to moving forward. It is where people bring their gift to the table and engage in conversation. It got me excited.” Mr. Throop noted the book was available at the Toadstool Bookshop and in an audible format. He also reiterated the consultant hired will facilitate and be a part of the outreach of community conversations to create a more welcoming, healing community interaction around the housing issue. “Every member of the community will have the opportunity to be heard and be a part of the process” he said, “and we are going to allow the time to do it well.”

Ms. Jenkins agreed noting a series of charrettes her hometown had conducted. “It works, sometimes it is not pretty and getting it right takes time,” she said. Mr. Kelly agreed, “this is a critical part of the problem.” Ms. Heller asked, “so who is going to go into the neighborhoods?” Mr. Throop replied, “the consultant and whatever type of subcommittee is formed for this” adding, “we *will* need and *are* working on funds to make it work.”

Ms. Sakellariou suggested simple listening sessions before larger public meetings and neighborhood pod meetings. She told the Members, “some people do not want to go to public meetings but may stop you on the street to talk, and if that happens, we just listen and try to remember the important points.” Mr. Throop agreed but cautioned against the collection of information and data without documentation. Ms. Sakellariou replied, “it could be a starting point for conversation for those who may not want to be a part of the public process.” Ms. Lanigan suggested an anonymous survey may be a useful tool. Ms. Hatcher agreed while noting, “it is all in how you frame the questions.” Mr. Throop added, “that is the most important part.” Ms. Hatcher went on to say, “we’ll take our time with it to determine the overarching questions for housing in our community.” Ms. Heller added, “determining the bigger, real questions” with Ms. Lanigan interjecting, “and the fears.”

Ms. Hatcher concluded, “we will take our time and do it well. It is a community building process especially now in an environment of mistrust. I can look at you and say *I am your neighbor*, let’s figure this out. We can do it together.” Ms. Sakellariou noted the issue of taking sides and told the Members, “we cannot do that.” Ms. Hatcher agreed, “there is room for all points of view in the conversation.”

From the audience Sharon Monahan told the Members, “I like the idea of how this is being facilitated,” adding, “I prefer gatherings, but I like to hear about other perspectives.” A brief discussion on another public forum in Bass Hall and other venues followed. Mr. Throop reiterated, “the focus is on taking the meeting to the public.” From the audience Peter Campbell encouraged the Members to “use all the different tools at their disposal.”

Before adjourning the Members briefly discussed the status of other Master Plan Chapters. Ms. Heller asked about the prioritization of finishing updates to chapters as well as starting a new a chapter. Mr. Throop confirmed the Transportation Chapter was pretty high on the list for an update.

Ms. Hatcher asked Ms. Bixby to remind each member what chapters they had done summaries on over the past few months and then asked the Members to review them and report back to the group in July on their status. Ms. Heller noted, “identifying anything that is not appropriate anymore helps us develop a scope of what needs to be done.” When Ms. Jenkins noted she did not join the Committee until after the chapters had been assigned. Ms. Hatcher suggested she review the Vision Chapter.

**Other Business: None**

**Next Meeting:** July 15, 2019 at 4:30 p.m.

The Meeting adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Norton

Administrative Assistant