

2023 APR 12 PM 1:30
OWN OF WESTBOROUGH

**Master Plan Implementation Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 27, 2023
7:00 PM- 8:36 PM**

Committee Present: Chairperson Mark Silverberg, Vice Chairperson Wendy Mickel, Patrick Welch, Kristi Williams, Hank Rauch, Jack Haagensen, Catherine Nourse, Dan Schur, Maria Barney, Stephanie Doyle, Christina Kelleher
Also present: Jim Robbins-Town Planner, Kristen Belanger-Planning Dept. Administrative Assistant
Not present: Ding Han, Kris Allen, Tom Bleier,

The fourth meeting of the Westborough Master Plan Implementation Committee was held in the Fire Dept. Training Room on Milk St in Westborough, MA. on Monday, March 27, 2023. The meeting was convened by Mark Silverberg at 7:00 PM.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

**Member Schur made a motion to approve the minutes from the 3/13/2023 meeting. Member Rauch seconded.
Vote: 11-0**

Planning Board and the Master Plan

Jim Robbins gave a presentation to the committee on the role of the Planning Board and how it relates to the Master Plan.

He reviewed the responsibilities which include subdivision, ANR, Special Permits and Site Plan. During plan review things to consider are zoning, transportation, infrastructure, fiscal impact to public services and historic and cultural resources.

Department roles interact with SB, EDC, DRB, MPIC, ATSC, Zoning Review, Municipal Vulnerability Study committee, Affordable Housing, and Worcester Framingham commuter rail task force.

Questions were asked of the Planner.

Member Kelleher asked when projects are proposed are there things they should be expected to know. Site plans are submitted to the Planning Board and could take 3-6 months, subdivisions are more like 9 months, housing development is 90 days. Every project is reviewed by the Board of Health, Fire, Police, Conservation, Building, School, Engineering and ATSC.

One stop is the meeting that happens with all department heads prior to an application being submitted. It is an opportunity for the applicant to get feedback on their project in order to expedite the timeline from beginning to end and ensure all issues are addressed.

Member Williams informed the committee that the budget document is a great reference tool. It has each department's list of goals (to give an idea on what the department is focused on) and what strategic plan initiative they are working on. This is mostly successes and achievements.

The committee asked if the various boards ever meet together.

- All of the boards have some connection with each other.
- Active Transportation and Safety Committee has quite a cross section of groups represented by their membership. They have members of the BWALT, Police, Fire, Planning, Building, and Conservation.

The Financial Summit is an annual meeting and all departments are invited to talk about their budgets. This is a great opportunity to hear about everyone else's budgets.

Member Williams mentioned to keep in mind that as the MPIC is talking to different dept.'s, there are multiple dept.'s that may be involved.

Chair Silverberg commented that the Planning Board rarely works directly with the Rec Commission. However, items will be brought up in the Dept. head meetings that may require collaboration.

Member Welch pointed out that we may consider, instead of having each dept. head come in individually to speak to the group, we could ask multiple dept.'s that would be involved to collaborate with one another, to come in together.

Chair Silverberg doesn't think this committee is for advocating policy. It is for encouraging action on goals by providing support and accountability on action.

Are there lessons from the last Master Plan Implementation Process?

- Jim responded last time around they identified goals and then systematically went thru the list trying to check them off without much thought on priority.
- Once we order priorities, we will make a lot of traction.

A Housing Production Plan was identified in the last Master Plan in 2003 but never got completed. It is again in this Master Plan and needs more attention.

The goal of the committee is to focus on 16 identified goals as high priority. After having the opportunity to talk to dept. heads, the MPIC may narrow down the number of priorities even further.

If a person is interested in Public Health, every time a goal is moved forward you should be asking, "how does this relate to public health".

Housing always favors opposition. You need to overcome objections and make a goal favorable.

Chair Silverberg mentioned the issue is with affordable housing and the zoning that will allow more dense housing. Another thing the Master Plan identified was revitalizing downtown. How do you do this with a commercial component. Zoning will be more mixed use to replace older buildings that no longer have a functional use.

For years the community refused to accept Community Preservation Act money. The pool of money is finite. Money is only available at certain points. You need to capitalize on opportunities to acquire state and federal money.

Member Rauch commented that Affordable Housing units have less revenue and bring in more costs since they have more children.

Typical Zoning is 1 acre per single family house. Affordable developers would put 4 houses on same property. There was a discussion on SHI percentage to be over 10% otherwise developers do not have to adhere to zoning regulations.

Chair Silverberg would like pertinent articles presented to this committee to see if they are addressed in the Master Plan.

Chair Silverberg thinks this committee would be present at one Select Board meeting or town meeting per year to provide an update.

Are there any key bylaws that stand in the way of large initiatives? Allowing multifamily in highway business district. Will be mission of this committee to create zoning to keep developers downtown. Highway Business needs to be saved for commercial development that brings in revenue.

Revitalizing downtown is a good point of focus. High priority issues like traffic, utilities, density.

Chair Silverberg suggested we may need a master plan specifically for the downtown business district.

Member Williams jotted down notes on how to prepare the other dept. heads.

It was asked how Planning Board addresses diversity?

- There is a diversity and inclusion committee. Planning Board could ask this group what topics or issues they deal with.

When making decisions, is it ever identified what impacts are on diverse populations. There currently isn't broad representation on town committees.

Member Welch shared that the minority population is afraid, they don't speak the language and can't be involved.

Member Barney commented our role could be to support priorities brought to town meeting.

- Town reports. The Narratives describe everything the dept. is responsible for.
- Summarize if each action item is ongoing or complete.
- Are there key initiatives that have come up during town meeting.

Each member should read the annual report to understand the duties and then look at budget to see what projects they are working on.

7 of the 16 high priority items have Planning Board as the leadership role.

Member Welch was looking for Mr. Robbins to share the plan for accomplishing them and what are the impediments.

LU 2-2 work closely with EDC Building Commissioner, DPW.

Member Welch wants to see, what needs to be accomplished and are there hurdles that may be faced.

Dept. head may know where there are grants available. This may influence priorities available and can be taken advantage of now.

Next meeting will be with DPW. At that meeting the MPIC focus is on those goals.

Kristen will send the 16 priorities to the Dept.'s/Groups that are invited in. They will get a questionnaire "What are you working on now, what do you need to implement".

Member Rauch asked for the DPW annual report and the budget to be sent to the MPIC.

Member Doyle thinks we need to come away with an actionable item after getting answers on where they stand.

1 hour for presentation then last 45 minutes what are we doing next.

Homework for the committee is to review annual budget and town report. Next meeting committee can familiarize on sustainability goals. Environmental action fair is in May.

Next meetings would be 4/10 and 4/24.

- DPW will be invited for 4/10
- Sustainable on 4/24

Member Schur made a motion to adjourn at 8:36 pm. Member Welch seconded.

Vote: 11-0

Respectfully Submitted by Kristen Belanger, Planning Dept. Admin. Assistant



**One board member signature required for approval.*