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TOWN OF WESTBOROUGH

**Master Plan Implementation Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
April 24, 2023  
7:00 PM- 8:40 PM**

**Committee Present:** Chairperson Mark Silverberg, Vice Chairperson Wendy Mickel, Patrick Welch, Kristi Williams, Jack Haagensen, Ding Han, Kris Allen, Tom Bleier, Dan Schur, Christina Kelleher, Maria Barney, Catherine Nourse

**Also present:** Kristen Belanger-Planning Dept. Administrative Assistant

**Not present:** Hank Rauch, Stephanie Doyle

The meeting of the Westborough Master Plan Implementation Committee was held in the Fire Dept. Training Room on Milk St in Westborough, MA. on Monday, April 24, 2023. The meeting was convened by Mark Silverberg at 7:00 PM.

It was discussed moving the meeting time earlier to 5 pm. The members that were in attendance responded it would not work with their schedules. Since we have been maintaining quorum, we will continue at the same time. The committee will continue for now at 2 times per month.

Goal of the committee is to track and monitor progress of the departments and then report to Select Board.

**Community Development and Economic Development Update**

Fred Lonardo, Community Development Director and Zach Boughner, Economic Development Coordinator gave a presentation.

These two departments are Implementation partners for:

**LU 2-2 Adoption of an Adaptive Reuse Policy.** Dept does not have an inventory at this time. It would require significant staff time. One thing that Mr. Boughner requested was a definition for abandoned or vacant? The Chateau which is currently considered vacant, has a new owner in front of the Planning Board with plans for a future project on this site. Would this be part of the inventory?

Member Schur asked what authority the town has to enforce zoning on vacant properties?

- Member Welch said this is to help the property owners find grants and maximize their space. It's not meant as a punishment.
- Chairman Silverberg said the purpose is to find what can be done to streamline the process and help owners get occupancy.
- Member Williams added you can incentivize for a specific use as well.

There is an opportunity for the town to offer a vacant property inventory when requested. Intent is a way to target properties. One town has a vacant storefront bylaw that requires owners to report to the town when vacant.

There is also adaptive reuse to consider. The former Reliant office was a medical use. Is there a way the owner could repurpose to another use.

**LU 3-4 Develop land use techniques that encourage foot traffic in downtown.**

- The Town is currently having a conversation with CMRPC regarding a downtown Master Plan.

- In the last year the zoning was changed to allow projection signs downtown.
- EDC has several projects that will increase vibrancy /walkability of downtown.
- Other towns have implemented a special permit based on specific uses. For example, regulating banks in downtown.

**OSR 3-2 Expand outdoor recreational areas for adult use.** They are providing technical expertise on implementing this goal via a one stop meeting and advice on permitting. Recreation has applied for a grant for a dog park that will be contingent on receiving the grant to move forward, there is a cricket pitch going in by the State hospital. A splash pad is in conversation.

- Chairman Silverberg mentioned that if the splash pad has a flat surface, it could be fitted to be an ice rink in the winter.
- Member Williams mentioned this project would need to go to town meeting and be approved, the costs are considerably higher than expected. The ARPA funds are going to be reallocated for the dog park.

**SCC 1-7 Seek funding for climate mitigation projects.**

Both will be supported and managed by a Sustainability Coordinator. Coordinator will support PACE- which is a financing mechanism. They will be collating resources and opportunities and leading outreach.

**SCC 4-1 Develop Climate Action Playbook.**

Will have more capacity once there is a staff member in this position. Will be part of the Community Development Dept. and will work with the Climate Action Plan. Tasks for sustainability are spread out but will be centralized with a coordinator.

Currently working on ED 1-3, ED 5-1, ED 5-10, T&C 1-1  
All are recommended from ERP economic recovery plan.

ED 1-3- branding campaign

ED 5-1- identify grants to support businesses affected by Covid.

ED 5-10-use events and programming to feature local businesses, like pop ups, rotating restaurants etc. Pop Up retail will launch end of May. Definition of pop up is for business to set up temporarily without modifications to be made to the space. Proof of concept type idea. Currently activating one storefront for 3 months. If successful and the hosted brand turns into a long term rental, other property owners may be interested.

Zoning allows a use or not but technically the Town cannot cap the number of businesses in that category. Restaurants are regulated because they have limited amounts of liquor licenses.

Mr. Lonardo said zoning is relatively liberal. Retail Sales and Services, restaurants fall under this. Grease trap is required for restaurants, this is an expensive addition for a small restaurant to take on.

There is an overlay in downtown DPOD that allows first floor retail and then second floor residential. However, this cannot be implemented because there is a moratorium on sewer use so we cannot add any units at this time.

CMRPC planning hours can be used to fill out the grant application for the downtown master plan.

**T&C 1-1- improve wayfinding in downtown.**

Directional cues help orient and move people through a space.

EDC Received a grant for wayfinding design through the State One Stop Program. We expect signs to be installed in the latter part of 2024. There is a lot of money from state for planning type work, not as much for implementation.

Member Kelleher asked when there are grants from the state that are available but need to go through the owner, how do we communicate to them. The EDC ambassador program does community outreach. EDC plays a facilitation role between the owners and state programs and is usually through word of mouth. EDC also sends out emails and social media posts.

EDC committee has grants available as well. Many of these grant programs have their own business development arms that reach out to these businesses.

Member Bleier pointed out that if we do not have an inventory we are only responding to people that come to us being more reactive than proactive.

It was debated on whether an inventory is necessary to create the policy.

Member Welch said maybe we don't define vacant and leave it broad. Let the owners decide what they determine is vacant. And then provide some tools to move forward to help them.

Planner will need to identify what barriers are preventing a property from being used. What is holding the owner back from repurposing for an alternate use.

Member Williams said the Downtown Master Plan can focus on Zoning that can be changed to increase overlay potential.

DPOD overlay allows residential to be in Downtown with a Special Permit along with a certain number of affordable units, etc. Baystate is an example of this.

Chairman Silverberg asked how much DPOD zoning has been restricted due to sewer issues.

- Mr. Boughner said he couldn't give an accurate estimate since he has not advertised to this group due to the sewer restriction.
- There is one mixed use project in front of them now that is being held up by sewer.

Member Bleier asked about the property across from Tractor Supply.

- Mr. Lonardo said that it may be under agreement. A more serious person has come forward recently. The parcel has frontage on both Milk and Rt. 9. You pay premium for that, it is two separate parcels.

Over the next meetings, MPIC will invite council on aging, recreation, sustainability, active transportation, affordable housing, conservation.

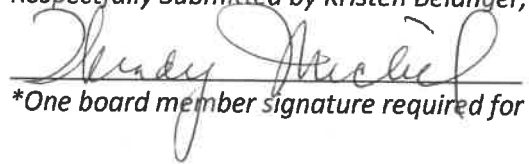
Member Schur said it would be helpful to invite Conservation to discuss impacts on future development.

Member Allen was not able to attend but historic is updating the monuments, and developing signs with braille.

**Member Schur made a motion to approve the minutes from 4/10/2023. Member Bleier seconded.  
Vote: 11-0**

**Member Schur made a motion to adjourn at 8:40 pm. Member Silverberg seconded.  
Vote: 12-0**

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

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mandy Mitchell", written over a horizontal line.

*\*One board member signature required for approval.*