

# BOARD OF SELECTMEN NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF SUDBURY

## SUDBURY'S MASTER PLAN NEARS COMPLETION

By Charlie Russo, Member

What will life be like in Sudbury in 2035? What might change, what might remain the same?

Addressing these questions is the goal of Sudbury's Master Plan, now entering its final stages of development. Now, residents have a last chance to provide feedback on the document that will be used to guide Town decisions over the coming decades.

### The Mission

The Master Plan serves as a kind of roadmap for the Town to follow to achieve its vision of the future. It is used to help guide decisions about investments in town infrastructure and services, understand current town conditions as well as future trends and needs, and qualify for various funding opportunities. The Master Plan is a tool used by Town staff as well as local boards and committees to make decisions



that will impact our quality of life, such as:

- What new development looks like and where it happens.
- What investments in community services, facilities, and infrastructure are priorities.
- How the Town protects environmentally sensitive areas.
- How the Town preserves important historic buildings and landmarks.
- How the Town supports economic development.

### A Process Shaped by the Community

Thinking back to 2001, when the existing Master Plan was

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November 17, 2020

adopted, Sudbury – and the world in general – was a very different place. So Town officials embarked, in January 2019, on the creation of a new Master Plan. Since then, the process has included more than 20 Steering Committee meetings, five Community Conversations focused on important themes in town, and numerous other public forums and feedback methods, all aimed at understanding the Town’s vision for the future.

The Master Plan Steering Committee is comprised of 15 members representing various town boards and committees, plus several at-large community members. The Steering Committee is guided and led by consulting firm Horsley Witten, under the direction of the Planning Board and the Office of Planning and Community Development.

The final result of all this input will be a Master Plan made up of three volumes: Baseline Report, Master Plan, and Action Plan. The Baseline Report is a snapshot of existing conditions in the community. The Master Plan identifies the significant trends and issues that will shape decisions and policies going forward. The Action Plan is a table of individual action items that detail how the Master Plan will be implemented, including

the responsible parties and timeframes.

“Hopefully it will guide decisions and thought processes moving forward,” said John Sugrue, a Planning Board member and Chairman of the Master Plan Steering Committee, “whether by the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Select Board, or even town-wide land purchase decisions.”

### **Next Steps**

One key feature is the Action Plan, which is intended to ensure the Master Plan does not simply collect dust in a binder on a shelf. The Action Plan includes 140+ action items across 10 major themes. These themes are the Route 20 Corridor, Economic Development, Housing, Transportation & Connectivity, Historic and Cultural Identity, Natural Environment, Conservation and Recreation Land, Town Facilities/Services/Infrastructure, Housing, Resilience, and Public Health and Social Wellbeing. Action items have been identified for many Town boards and committees.

“We want to make sure there are actions we can move forward with and implement,” Sugrue said, “so the Master Plan is not simply aspirational. We want it to be based on

actionable, implementable goals.”

One of the final steps in the Master Plan process – public comment on a draft – began November 10. The public comment period provides residents the chance to provide their feedback on the plan, and vision for the future of the town. A Master Plan Virtual Open House is available online now through Wednesday, December 2, 2020 as a way for residents to review and comment on Master Plan materials.

“The goal of the virtual open house is to get feedback,” Sugrue says, “so that everyone agrees that we captured the key issues that are important to the town, and if anyone sees anything important that wasn’t captured, that it gets identified and included.”

A final version of the Master Plan is expected to be adopted in early 2021.

In the meantime, residents should visit the Virtual Open House at

[www.plansudbury.com](http://www.plansudbury.com)

to respond to surveys and share their views on the future of Sudbury.

## PUBLIC SAFETY DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

### *An interview with Fire Chief John Whalen*

By Janie Dretler, Chair

During the COVID-19 pandemic, essential services such as fire and medical response have been significantly challenged with increased calls, expanded roles, and higher personal risk. Fire Chief John Whalen responded to questions about how the Sudbury Fire Department is managing public safety during the pandemic.

**What has changed about the way the fire department responds to calls during a pandemic?** One of the major changes is that we limit the number of personnel that have contact with the resident during emergency calls. We typically would send two or three people in to investigate a fire or medical emergency, but now we limit the number of personnel in a home or business.

The wearing of face masks and personal protective equipment (PPE) is a large change in our operations on medical calls. It takes additional time to properly place PPE on our personnel and this takes a team effort. When possible, we have asked to have the patient to come outside and walk to the ambulance to limit the exposure to our employees and the residents.

**Looking back, what has helped your department address needs?** I am happy to say that we had a large supply of PPE on hand before the pandemic hit the region hard and many EMS and Fire departments were scrambling to get PPE. Early in the process, we identified alternate supply chains for PPE early in the process and those vendors supported us through the times when no PPE was available.

**What additional measures still need to be implemented?** The purchase of Power Air Purifying Respirators (PAPR's) for our ambulances will be the next level of protective devices that the Department will pursue to protect our personnel. These devices will provide additional protection when providing Advanced Life Support.



Sudbury Fire Chief John Whalen.

**Have there been changes to procedures?** 911 call procedures have changed. Dispatchers ask callers a number of COVID-19 questions to determine if COVID-19 is at the location.

During the height of the first wave of the pandemic our staff was wearing full Tyvek suits, covered head to toe, face shield, and mask when dealing with patients. This provided our employees with the best protection that was available at the time.

**Has the Fire Department received donations of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?** The residents and businesses in Town were very generous and provided many of the extra supplies we needed to get through the first wave of the pandemic. Many of the medical offices that closed in Town donated gloves, masks, and face shields. Individuals and businesses also donated hand sanitizer and cleaning wipes.

A group of teens made protective face shields using a 3D printer and we received three donated intubation boxes from two different organizations. The Department is very grateful for the support we have received from the public.

**Has CARES Act funding helped?** The Fire Department has not received any CARES funding up to this point. We have placed a request on behalf of several Town

Departments to FEMA to cover emergency protective measures related to COVID-19 costs from January to June of 2020. The FEMA process is very time consuming and complicated. I do not have high hopes of receiving this funding in this fiscal year. We have forwarded a list of our FY21 additional costs to the Finance Director as well as an estimate of expected expenses (July to December).

**What lessons have been learned during the pandemic?** Ensuring that you have a great working relationship with all the people that support your organization, from vendors to your fellow Town employees.

Communication is a key element to combatting this virus. The Chief and the Board of Health Nurse have been in constant communication to ensure that all data and information that our emergency responders need is up to date. This critical information changes sometimes hourly and is updated in real-time.

Keeping employees well informed on the development of the pandemic not only in Sudbury but the world. Working hard to understand how the pandemic is progressing and following the trends allows the department to be one step ahead of the pandemic.

**In March 2020, there were temporary deferrals for 26F inspections. Has this been reinstated in Sudbury?** Yes, 26F inspections were resumed in July of 2020. By the first week of September, the backlog of the deferred inspections were completed along with the normal 26F inspection workload. Open burning permits were received by via US Mail or by drop off. Resident's information was input, a permit was generated and then emailed to the applicant. This was a very labor-intensive process and required many hours from the administrative staff each and every day. During the burning season, 674 permits were issued. A request for this process to be placed in an online format has been sent to the Town's IT Director for next year's burning season.

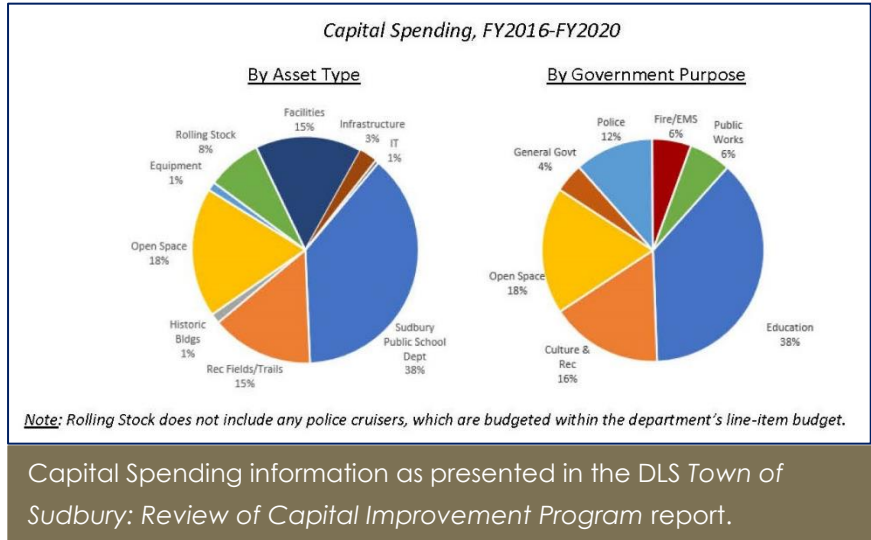
**Is the public allowed inside the firehouse(s)?** No, all firehouses are closed to the public, including outside fire service personnel. I do not see any change in this policy until a country wide vaccination program is implemented.

A heartfelt thank you to Chief Whalen and all our dedicated emergency responders. We appreciate your courage and bravery during this very difficult and extraordinary time.

# DIVISION OF LOCAL SERVICES (DLS) CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM REVIEW

By Jennifer Roberts, Vice-Chair

Successful capital planning and well-designed funding strategies are components of strong municipal management. In recent years, both of these topics have generated discussion about optimal strategies for Sudbury. In this article, “capital” refers to long-term community assets such as land, buildings, equipment, and rolling stock. Maintaining and adequately funding capital in a cost-effective way permits Sudbury to sustain desired service levels and prevents premature failure of existing assets. In 2019, the Board of Selectmen enlisted the help of the MA Division of Local Services to review Sudbury’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and recommend a roadmap for the future. DLS is part of the MA Department of Revenue. In its role, it “promotes sound municipal financial management practices and supports local officials by providing guidance, training, and oversight.”<sup>1</sup> Its recommendations were given to the Board of Selectmen in April 2020. It is expected that the Town will consider these recommendations as it enters



the upcoming Town budget cycle and continues updates of financial policies. In this article, I will describe highlights of the DLS review.

In the report, DLS recognizes recent efforts by Sudbury to enhance capital planning (through a dedicated capital funding task force and creation of a capital stabilization fund), however it notes that there is still much to be done. In particular, it states that the Town has not pursued “a financing strategy that strikes a sound, predictable, and sustainable balance between debt and cash funding options.” It highlights that this results in

repetitive, temporary additions to the tax levy.

The report divides the components of the CIP into four sections including: Financial Policies, Capital Planning Procedures, Funding Strategies, and Capital Forecast. I will list some key points from each section.

### Financial Policies

Financial policies are described as creating the capital management procedural roadmap for town officials. DLS recommends that the Board of Selectmen improve its policies, which conveniently aligns with Board goals; the Board started review of its financial policies in

<sup>1</sup> Mass.gov/ DLS webpage

2019. DLS recommends that the Board policies address key areas, such as utilization of reserve funds, free cash usage, and in-levy vs. out of levy debt exclusions. In particular, it recommends increased usage of capital reserve funds and greater incorporation of debt into the tax levy.

**Capital Planning Strategies**

DLS recognizes that Sudbury’s capital planning process is carried out during the Town’s well-coordinated annual budget process. It did offer a variety of recommendations including increasing capital maintenance funds in the operating budget and improving the capital submission sheets submitted by department heads to the Town Manager.

**Funding Strategies**

A key takeaway from DLS’s funding strategies assessment is an overreliance on debt

exclusions to fund projects. Debt exclusions require both Town Meeting and election approval, often resulting in denial of critical capital projects. Additionally, debt exclusions contribute to tax fluctuations for citizens over time. Instead, DLS recommends that capacity be built within the tax levy – in the form of a capital stabilization fund – so that important projects can have a reliable funding source. It states that this policy reserves the use of debt for the largest projects, both in terms of cost and longevity. DLS also recommends creating more in-levy debt-capacity, further offering more consistent sources of funds.

**Capital Forecast**

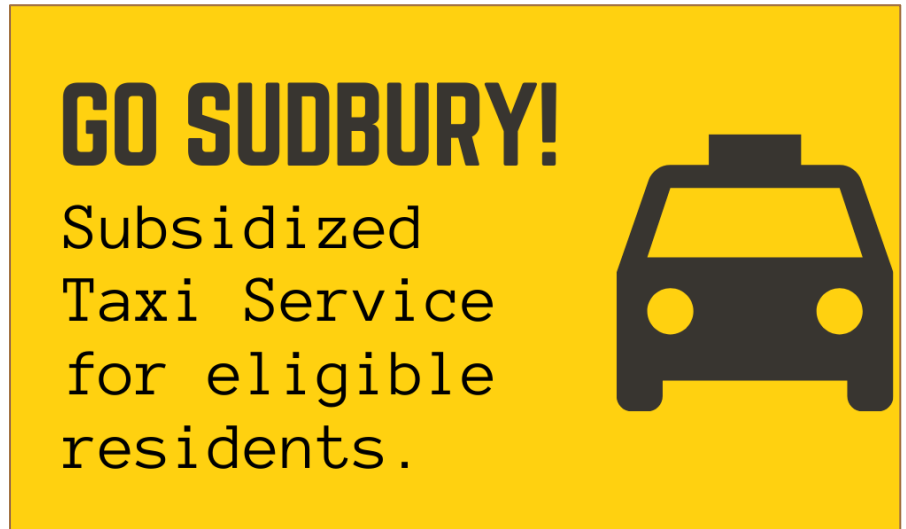
DLS describes the capital forecast as being an extension of a Town’s multi-year financial forecast. It advises that a successful CIP requires Sudbury to “develop its annual budgets

with the intent of ensuring due allocation of funds toward capital investment.” Specifically, it suggests dedicating 6% of the prior year’s general fund revenue toward capital. According to their analysis, in FY 2020, Sudbury put forward 4.32% of the prior year’s revenue amounts for capital, falling short of their recommendation. This recap provides just a sampling of the insights and guidance provided by the DLS Capital Improvement Program review. To view the full document, please visit [https://sudbury.ma.us/boardofselectmen/sudbury\\_capital\\_report\\_dls/](https://sudbury.ma.us/boardofselectmen/sudbury_capital_report_dls/). In the upcoming year(s), the Board of Selectmen and Town Manager will further review and consider implementation of the various strategies and policies recommended in the report.

## INCREASING TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS IN SUDBURY

By Dan Carty, Member

In our Spring newsletter, I wrote about the Transportation Committee and the various initiatives in which we were involved. In this issue, I felt it worthwhile to provide update on the progress we have made. Sadly, the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) Route 20 shuttle connecting Sudbury to the Riverside T station is still shelved due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but that I am happy to report that the Go Sudbury! Taxi Program is up and running. I had reported that the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) announced a grant opportunity providing emergency funding for state and municipal agencies to help meet the transportation and delivery needs of vulnerable populations during the COVID-19 emergency. This grant was funded through a portion of the MassDevelopment Transportation Infrastructure Enhancement Fund (TIEF) collected from calendar years 2017, 2018, and 2019 with the purpose of focusing on emergency funding to assist vulnerable populations with transportation services that will help them to physically distance, remain in their homes, access housing or shelter if they need to do so, obtain critical



supplies such as food or medicine, or access jobs for essential workers. Our committee partnered with Tommy's Taxi of Framingham and JFK Transportation of Natick, firms compliant with Center for Disease Control guidance, to provide sedan and wheelchair accessible vehicle rides to older residents, veterans, those financially vulnerable, and persons with disabilities. We applied for a grant of \$23,260 and received it late in the summer. Additional funding came from a BayPath grant as well as mitigation funds Sudbury received from the Meadow Walk development. We quickly operationalized our program and piloted it with our first rider the day of Town Meeting (September 12, 2020).

To date, we have signed up approximately 60 riders, and the data thus far has been very compelling. Understanding that riders can fall into multiple categories, thus far 88% are aged 50+, 55% have some type of disability, 45% are financially vulnerable, and 4% identify as essential workers. We have not yet had any veterans apply, but we will coordinate with the Town's Veterans Agent to get the word out. Through October, we have provided approximately 200 rides, including nearly 30 for individuals in wheelchairs. Reasons for rides roughly breaks down as 39% medically related, 22% shopping for groceries or prescriptions, 21% going to work, and 18% fall into other various categories. More information and as well as instructions on how to

participate can be found here <https://sudbury.ma.us/transportation/?p=583>. The

Transportation Committee is excited for the results of the program thus far, and we are looking to partner with neighboring towns like Stow and Hudson to apply for a new grant MAPC is offering with awards of up to \$250,000. This should allow us to increase wheelchair accessible vehicle ridership, encourage racial equity and diversity across the taxi and livery industry, continue to provide service in transit-isolated areas of Sudbury, improve first/last mile connections to public transportation, improve non-emergency medical transportation services, and

meet other transportation needs for citizens of Sudbury.

We aren't stopping there; we are moving forward with our "Making the Connections" Uber program I first reported on last year. That program will allow qualified individuals to call for a subsidized Uber ride within and outside of Sudbury to fill the gap left when on-demand paratransit, public vans, and shuttles are not running, don't connect to other lines, or don't go where riders need to go. And I continue to be impressed with the Transportation Committee's dedication to Sudbury. Our members are a mix of Town staff and various committee members, including Sandy Lasky from the Council

on Aging, Alice Sapienza our Livable Sudbury Ambassador, Planning Director Adam Duchesneau, DPW Director Dan Nason, Senior Center Director Deb Galloway, and Doug Frey from the Commission on Disability. We also have an advisory group that includes Police Chief Scott Nix, Charlie Dunn from the Chamber of Commerce, Town Social Worker Bethany Hadvab, Beth Suedmeyer from our Planning Department, Ellen Joachim from the LS School Committee, Lisa Kouchakdjian from the SPS School committee, State Representative Carmine Gentile, and our "unofficial members" Kay Bell and Linda Faust. Thank you all!



**HOW TO SAFELY CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING DURING COVID**

- Have dinner with only the people who live in your household
- Share your recipes with family & friends to cook at their own homes
- Set up a virtual video call to connect with your family & friends

LEARN MORE ABOUT SAFE HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS BY VISITING: [WWW.CDC.GOV](http://WWW.CDC.GOV)

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