



Town of Sudbury

Planning Board

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MINUTES

NOVEMBER 15, 2019 AT 8:45 AM

POLICE STATION MEETING ROOM, 75 HUDSON ROAD, SUDBURY, MA

JOINT MEETING WITH MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Planning Board Members Present: Chair Stephen Garvin, Vice Chair Charles Karustis, Clerk John Hincks, and Justin Finnicum

Planning Board Members Absent: None

Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) Members Present: Chair John Sugrue, At-Large; Dan Carty, Board of Selectmen; Nathalie Forssell, At-Large; Patricia Guthy, Commission on Disability; Jan Hardenbergh, At-Large; Dave Henkels, Conservation Commission; Ellen Joachim, Lincoln Sudbury Regional High School Committee; Lisa Kouchakdjian, Sudbury Public School Committee; Amy Lepak, Sudbury Housing Authority; and John Riordan, Zoning Board of Appeals

MPSC Members Absent: Vice-Chair Susan Asbedian-Ciaffi, At-Large; Janie Dretler, Board of Selectmen; Robert May, Council on Aging; Lee Swanson, Historic Districts Commission; Fred Taylor, Historic Districts Commission; and Dick Williamson, Park and Recreation Commission

Others Present: Fabiola Alikpokou, Staff Planner, Horsley Witten Group; Director of Planning and Community Development Adam Duchesneau; Nate Kelly, Principal, Horsley Witten Group; and Environmental Planner Beth Suedmeyer

Welcome

Mr. Sugrue opened the MPSC meeting at 8:45 a.m.

Mr. Garvin opened the Planning Board meeting at 8:45 a.m.

Continued Master Plan Working Session with Planning Board – Review of Formative Issues

Mr. Duchesneau stated the MPSC and Planning Board would continue discussing formative issues as presented by the Horsley Witten Group.

Mr. Kelly reiterated the Sudbury Master Plan – DRAFT Formative Issues document reflected a very rough draft of the policy drivers, key issues, and critical ideas the MPSC had brought up during the Master Plan collaboration process.

Town Services

- The Town needs to plan for services that meet the needs of a growing older population.

- Continued investments in new technology for all Town departments will provide better efficiency and response to residents.
- The Town needs to have more effective communication with residents through diverse methods.
- Investments in new infrastructure (wastewater management, Bruce Freedman Rail Trail, etc.) will also require sustainable investments in maintenance and upkeep.
- The Town needs to make adequate capital investments in maintenance and upkeep of existing buildings, facilities, and infrastructure.
- Town buildings, facilities, and infrastructure need to be more accessible.
- The Town uses volunteers heavily to support services.
- The Town wants to be more proactively involved in the installation and management of utilities.

Mr. Sugrue commented the first aspect of Town planning services involved meeting the needs of a growing older population with assurance of continued investment in schools and family services as well. Ms. Kouchakdjian agreed school inclusion was lacking in the draft and mentioned the importance of a continued strong school system. She recommended a separate section/topic in the draft be dedicated to schools. Mr. Riordan asked MPSC members if the Town had underinvested in its schools. Mr. Sugrue thought not. Mr. Garvin agreed the schools must be presented with its own bullet point within the draft. Mr. Hardenbergh commented he had heard various people in town felt the schools were underfunded. Mr. Garvin added he also had heard such comments by various residents.

Ms. Kouchakdjian indicated that unless the Town taxation formula changed, the school investment part would remain the same. She asserted the Master Plan should reflect the school system continued to be valued in Sudbury.

Mr. Hincks recognized the importance of the school investment language. He stated he felt everyone could agree that services regarding the elderly population were lacking, but that investments in the elderly population and the schools were both needed. Mr. Garvin agreed with Mr. Hincks' assessment and added it was the purview of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee to conduct such discussion. A related discussion took place.

Ms. Guthy stated the entire town population was changing and the Master Plan must include a statement regarding this fact. Mr. Carty affirmed the population mix in Sudbury was changing and could change again by the time the Master Plan was finalized. He stressed constant monitoring was essential.

Mr. Hardenbergh noted within the Town Services topic, maintenance and outreach were highlighted numerous times and the importance of these aspects must be recognized in any Master Plan. Mr. Garvin noted when any land was acquired by the Town, maintenance was a constant consideration and this must be reiterated in the Master Plan.

Mr. Duchesneau suggested a maintenance inventory be included within the Town Services section, such as a 20-year Facilities Plan. Mr. Hincks wondered if the suggestion was a Master Plan topic or a Finance Committee topic. Mr. Riordan stated he felt it was both. Mr. Sugrue agreed the Master Plan should address this topic.

Mr. Henkels noted the recent acquisition planning for Camp Sewataro and all of the factors which needed to be addressed including insurance, maintenance, accessibility, stewardship, etc. He wondered if all future acquisitions should go through a similar Town process before being purchased. Mr. Riordan affirmed that such a process should be mandated and included in the Town Services section.

Economic Development

- Sudbury relies heavily on its residential tax base, accounting for over 93% of the total assessed value. Both its residential and commercial tax rates fall in the middle of the range of neighboring communities. Per capita spending is on the higher end of neighboring towns, with most revenues coming from tax levies.
- The largest employer is the Town (municipal employment). Health Care and Professional Services have also contributed to job growth. These sections are expected to continue driving future growth.
- Median annual earning for jobs with Sudbury (\$44,300) is considerably lower than the median earnings of Sudbury residents (\$81,609). This points to a mismatch between resident skills and the types of employment opportunities in town, and explains the high level of cross-commuting. Over 90% of resident workers commute out of Sudbury for work and 88% of workers commute into the town for work.

Mr. Riordan commented the associated topics listed had no relationship to visioning. He queried if the Town should strive for a more equitable ratio between resident tax levies and commercial properties. Mr. Riordan mentioned additional opportunities for in-town professional employment in connection with a decrease in commuter travel to Boston or Interstate 95. Mr. Hincks noted Mr. Riordan presented an interesting concept which could be easily calculated. Mr. Riordan added the state would also provide financial incentives.

Mr. Sugrue indicated the topic was a considerable issue and should be included in the Master Plan. He noted increasing the commercial tax base was a consideration, but the Town would not want to become a “Natick” or “Framingham.” Mr. Carty agreed the mentioned towns were different from Sudbury and questioned how much growth the residents of Sudbury really wanted going forward. He expressed he did not want the town to have too much more commercial growth.

Mr. Hincks stated the “right” mix of commercial development needed to be examined and felt the 90% resident tax-base was acceptable. Mr. Carty agreed a bit more of the “right” mix of commercial development would be acceptable going forward. Related discussion continued. Mr. Garvin noted workplace technologies and the global economy would determine what the commuter situation would look like in the future. Mr. Hincks commented the Town should be aware of those trends and plan for them, and Mr. Garvin agreed.

Ms. Kouchakdjian noted, as a former Natick resident, she was attracted to Sudbury in consideration of no mixed-use zoning (residential with commercial) which Sudbury upholds and commits to.

Mr. Hincks commented Sudbury would remain a residential community, but the Town had to be forward thinking about commerce and plan for potential new zoning as appropriate. Mr. Kelly stated the mixed-use consideration was appropriate and the community would be revisiting the subject.

Ms. Suedmeyer noted that as the Town shifted emphasis from retail to services in coordination with historic/cultural resources increasing and foot traffic growing with rail trail and bicycling provisions; the

service industry had an opportunity to take advantage and increase a presence within the mentioned areas. She suggested there could be designated zoning for these types of more natural, less impactful business opportunities, which would help advance the vitality of the community and provide connections to these important cultural, historical, and recreational locations.

Housing

- Overall, housing costs are increasing in Sudbury and the region, which puts a disproportionate burden on low income residents and households with fixed incomes. While the average household income is increasing, so is the cost of living and the buying power of residents has remained flat over the past 20 years. These conditions create a need for more affordable and diverse housing options.
- Sudbury has achieved its 10% Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) goal. However, this achievement has not satisfied the local need. Units are still expensive and, because many units are rentals, market rate units were eligible for the SHI.
- Sudbury Housing Authority's (SHA) current housing stock is aging and will require investments in maintenance in the future. Much of the housing is located on smaller sites scattered throughout Town. Funding sources for the SHA to build new units is also limited.
- Transportation needs to be linked with housing development to ensure residents can access work, school, and needed services; particularly seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income residents.
- There are few rental housing options in Sudbury.

Mr. Carty noted the Town had just increased the housing stock by 10% and almost all of the units were rental units. Mr. Garvin stated the units at the Quarry North residential development were not available to the public yet. Mr. Carty affirmed such consideration had been covered with the final bullet point. Mr. Garvin agreed and the discussion continued.

Ms. Lepak noted the rental units at the Coolidge at Sudbury were all low income and over age 55. She stressed the Town was missing affordable rental units for working people and families. Ms. Lepak suggested permitting smaller multi-family developments would help with this problem.

Mr. Carty asserted the Town had done its part regarding providing for affordable housing, which exceeded 10%. Perspectives on Sudbury housing was shared.

Mr. Karustis opined about how many more single-family homes would be built in town, and asked if residents wanted more diversity in housing and to go beyond the 10% minimum requirement. Ms. Lepak indicated only 440 units as approved on the SHI, were affordable. Mr. Carty compared the towns/cities of Boston, Brookline, Watertown, Waltham, Wayland, Wellesley, and Weston to the Town of Sudbury, and detailed that none of those locations had met the prescribed SHI 10% minimum.

Mr. Garvin recognized the Town was limited with expansion of such housing as most development was done by private developers and out of the control of the Town to a great extent. Mr. Riordan noted the Town's risk regarding "hostile" 40B housing development was null. Mr. Garvin stated if the Town continued to develop at the current rate, the 10% quota would soon be surpassed (likely in ten years). Mr. Carty agreed with the inclusionary zoning aspect for additional affordable housing.

Mr. Sugrue stressed this topic was also about the vision for Route 20 as development on the corridor would be mixed-use and likely include housing.

Mr. Duchesneau noted a town-wide buildout analysis by a consultant would help to determine how many Town lots were currently open for potential development excluding wetland and topography challenged parcels. Mr. Garvin added septic system requirements played a significant part in this determination.

Public Health and Social Wellbeing

- Increasing awareness of mental health issues in Town is critical to gain support for services needed for residents of all ages. Demand for services provided by the Town's Social Worker are expected to grow around hidden/arising issues of domestic violence, substance abuse, social isolation, homelessness, and others.
- Build education initiatives around environmental public health issues.
- Some important services and support for older residents and their caregivers are not available in Sudbury. For example, many will travel to Concord, Boston, and Worcester for medical appointments.
- There are opportunities for social engagement, including programs at the Goodnow Library, Recreation Department, Sudbury Public Schools, and Senior Center. Some programs with costs can pose a barrier for participation.
- Many residents are not aware of the services available to them through the Town. Communication is also important, especially finding a way to connect to hard-to-reach segments of the population (elderly – particularly homebound, low income, minority) and spreading the word about services (see communication issues in Town Services).
- Zoning does not allow for the creation of more close-knit communities where neighbors can engage socially (see Housing topic).

Ms. Guthy spoke of adding the needs of the disabled to the Public Health and Social Wellbeing segment of the draft document.

Transportation

- Traffic congestion is an issue in Sudbury, particularly on the state routes near the Town Center and along Route 20. Congestion is a result of both local and regional traffic trips.
- The Senior Shuttle is very popular and overcrowded. Demand is expected to increase.
- The Route 20 Commuter Shuttle is a great amenity but is not currently meeting commuter needs.
- Sudbury has a robust walkway network and improvements continue, but gaps exist with missing links between residential areas and important destinations like commercial areas, schools, and parks/open space. The nature of Sudbury's roads, which are winding, narrow, and tree-lined; make it difficult to add some of the missing connections.

- The walking and biking network will be expanded in the future through the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) and proposed Mass Central Rail Trail. These will be major transportation and recreation assets to the Town.
- Schools require residents within two miles to pay for bus service. It is difficult to walk or bike to schools. Because of the fees and lack of walking and biking access, many parents will drive their children to school, adding to already congested roads.

Mr. Garvin spoke of Complete Streets, which could help decrease such congestion. He added the Melone/Quarry North residential development would implement a senior shuttle service from the development to various destinations throughout town.

Mr. Garvin suggested such private development services to the Town be strongly encouraged going forward.

Ms. Kouchakdjian stressed the benefit of sidewalks to ensure safety for students walking to and from school. She inquired about a Sudbury shuttle which might go to the Lincoln Commuter Rail Station and suggested Davis Field serve as a commuter parking area. Mr. Garvin stated the Quarry North developers would implement a shuttle service for their residents which would be a substantial amenity for the residents of Quarry North and serve to take those commuter vehicles off the road. He noted the challenge associated with the proposed use of Davis Field for commuter parking would be monitoring. He agreed the idea should be further explored.

Mr. Carty stated the Transportation Committee would discuss the train shuttle idea. Ms. Joachim noted such a plan might be inconvenient and would prefer to see neighborhood stops in order to avoid the parking lot idea. Mr. Carty noted any type of related transportation needs parking as well, which is one of the issues with the Route 20 shuttle program. He suggested this aspect be added to the Transportation section of the draft document. Mr. Hardenbergh commented about the Lincoln and Concord train fares.

In summation, Mr. Kelly felt the Housing and Economic Development sections required more work and consideration by the MPSC and staff.

Mr. Riordan thought the Davis Field parking area was a good idea and would look forward to continued consideration of the topic.

Mr. Duchesneau announced an Economic Development and Transportation discussion session, hosted by the Chamber of Commerce, would be held on November 19, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at the Wayside Inn. He also noted the Broadacres Farm Design Charrette would be held on November 21, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. at Town Hall, 322 Concord Road.

Mr. Hardenbergh announced the League of Women Voters would be sponsoring a public forum entitled “State Education Funding” on November 17, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. at the First Parish Church of Sudbury.

At 10:00 a.m., Mr. Garvin closed the Planning Board meeting.

At 10:00 a.m., Mr. Sugrue closed the MPSC meeting.