

NOTES
Comprehensive Plan Committee - Meeting #1
December 8, 2022

Present:

Micki Sanderson, Historical Commission; Rebecca Bench, School Committee; Angelica Dewey, Open Space Committee; Julia Frisby, At Large; David Keir, At Large; John Pease, Agricultural Commission; Stephanie Slysz, Planning Board; Christopher Smith, Redevelopment Committee; Melissa Pitrat, Principal of Hatfield Elementary School; Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator (joined by phone for first part of meeting); and Patty Gambarini and Ken Comia, both from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Next steps:

- Next committee meeting will be on Thursday, January 26, 6 to 8 p.m. Meetings thereafter will be on the 4th Wednesday of every month, from 6 to 8 p.m.
- Need to work out logistics and technology for being able to offer hybrid option at future meetings.
- Ken to send an e-mail to prompt members for ideas about what to call/brand the comprehensive planning process. Slide from presentation with examples would be helpful to include.
- Patty to send to committee members the scope of work and budget included in all subcontracts.

Discussion notes:

Welcome and Introductions

Marlene reviewed the purpose of the meeting and provided some background on the MVP plan and how this planning effort builds on that important groundwork. She introduced Micki as a co-chair and indicated that she would be inviting another member to serve as co-chair along with Micki.

Introductions by each member were as follows:

- Stephanie – Planning Board Chair, and professionally works as human resources manager for organization in Florence. She loves the farmland in Town.
- Micki – Represents the Historical Commission and professionally works as a realtor with DeLap Real Estate. She loves the vistas in town, the farmlands, main street, river.
- Angelica – On the Open Space Committee, moved to Hatfield in 2004, and works as a personal care attendant, and dog caregiver. She loves the spirit of the place and shared a story about getting a pumpkin from a field when she first moved to town.
- Ken – Deputy Director of PVPC's Land Use and Environment section. He is excited about working and learning from committee members.
- Chris – Is a small business owner of Hatfield Printing and Publishing. He has been involved in town government since 1980. He loves the small-town exchange of ideas, the small business friendliness of Hatfield. He noted that he knew Cory Bardwell who described so

well the flood of 1936, when he was just 11 years old. Bardwell would say that the waters moved two islands and changed a lot of the infrastructure. Chris said the 1984 flood that he himself experienced also had a big impact on the Town, as it backed up behind the levy.

- John – Represents the Agricultural Committee. He also serves on the Historical Society Board, and he worked in the fire department before his retirement in 2008. He loves the beauty of Hatfield. Reflecting on the flood of 1984, he said he worked with response and everyone was surprised by how quickly the water came up.
- David – Serves as chair of the Capital Planning Committee. After 36 years of teaching and coaching at Smith Academy, he is working as a groundskeeper at Greenfield Country Club. He loves Smith Academy. Stephanie and Becca were former students.
- Becca – Represents the school committee. By day she is an emergency room nurse. In Hatfield, she most loves the people here. She has family in Town with kids in the schools and she feels that community spirit in Hatfield is remarkable.
- Julia – Moved to Hatfield 17 years ago and still thinks of herself as new to Town. She grew up on the Cape. Her daughter is in Hatfield schools. Julia is a big fan of the library; she loves how quiet it is in Hatfield yet she can easily access places like Northampton. Professionally she is in sales for a software company.
- Patty – Is the Chief Environmental Planner at PVPC and she most loves the layers in the landscapes in Hatfield, from the farm fields, to the river, forests, and hills.
- Marlene – Enjoys the town center as it takes her back to her childhood in South Glastonbury, CT. The Mill is another favorite place for her in Town.

Project overview

In the course of the project overview presentation by Stephanie and Patty, the following points or questions were raised:

- Chris noted the 1986 plan was more about proposals for zoning. Not sure there was an actual plan. Not like 2002 where had a full plan document. Becca's dad was chair of 2002 Plan.
- To Stephanie's point about the Comprehensive Plan process enabling the Town to move along on some of the other MVP priorities, Chris noted the Wastewater Treatment Plant already got about \$12 million to do upgrades now. There's also work happening to alleviate the drainage issues on School Street.
- Julia asked if there is a plan to do a town-wide survey and noted it might be better than a public meeting. Patty noted that while the grant scope of work indicates three town-wide public meetings, in addition to outreach of specific audiences, it may be possible to switch one of those town-wide public meetings to a survey instead. Guidance from the Committee on this will be important and Marlene will need to talk with the MVP Regional Coordinator.
- Becca asked how the project would reach to farmers. Stephanie explained that it is on us to make sure that happens. In addition, there is specific engagement programmed into the project for getting input from farmers.
- Micki recommended that the project web page be as interactive as possible. She said that it might be good to get a survey up there and keep it there for months so that people can provide comments and we get a lot of people participating. Or maybe we even post

different surveys, she suggested. Angelica noted that the just completed open space survey had 250 responses.

- Chris suggested that the project ought to bring in Wayne Feiden to speak since he seemed to have figured how to do the infill to save farmland and advance some great housing projects in Northampton. He might have some good ideas to share.

Branding

Following Ken's description of other towns providing energy and excitement for comprehensive planning through a tag line or logo, there were several comments and questions.

- Julia asked how long a time period does the plan cover. Patty confirmed with Ken that state law on master plans does not stipulate a time period. Patty noted that while it makes sense to set a timeframe for the plan, it might also be good to include elements that extend to a longer time frame given the changing climate.
- Ken noted that given the energy created around Southwick's plan, they had 900 responses to their town-wide survey
- Some words mentioned by committee members included: "Grow," "Sustain"
- John noted that it is important to think about planning for the next generation, what is going to be here for the next generation?
- There was some discussion about developing a contest within Town for ideas on branding, but it was not clear who would run the contest. Ken said that Southwick and Blandford ran photo contests as part of their planning effort and those were very popular.
- Ken will send an e-mail prompt to seek ideas from committee members so that they have a chance to think.

Working together and logistics

In the course of Stephanie's review of the committee role, working together, a few ground rules, and logistics, the following comments or questions were raised by committee members:

- David and other members agreed that since the technology exists in Town, it would be best to do hybrid meetings. It was noted that Selectboard and Planning Board are doing hybrid meetings and though not always successful, this group needs to at least make the effort. Stephanie noted that with hybrid, microphones seem important to have so that people joining remotely can follow.
- It was noted that there were only 8 out of 13 members present and that the offer of hybrid can help with attendance. Micki will also be in London for the next meeting and she indicated she can join if the meeting is indeed hybrid.
- John would like use Prospect Meadow Farm for providing food at all Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings going forward.
- There was general agreement on the following:
 - Two hours seems the right length of time for a meeting
 - Town Hall works as a location for Committee meetings
 - 6 to 8 p.m. is a good time to meet
 - Members would like to see the budget for the project. Patty will send scope of work and budget included in all subcontracts for the project.

- Members would like to have formal review and approval of meeting notes

VOTE: Motion by David, seconded by Becca, and unanimously approved to hold the next meeting on Thursday, January 26th, but thereafter all meetings will be held on the 4TH Wednesday of every month, from 6 to 8 p.m.

At the threshold of this comprehensive planning process, what do you see as Hatfield's greatest future challenge?

Patty explained that the idea will be to share question responses now, but then review again at the end of this two-year planning process to see whether there were changes in people's thinking. Micki suggested this is like a time capsule for the project.

To this final question at the meeting, members wrote their response on yellow post it notes and then shared aloud the following responses:

- Stephanie – Balancing small town charm and farmland preservation with development pressure and housing needs.
- Micki – Keeping the school system here and thriving – avoid financial pressures to regionalize. Continued high percentages of home ownership, which = strong community.
- Angelica – Bring all farming practices to organic. Farming to protect Hatfield's resources.
- Melissa – To ensure a population to support 2 schools.
- Chris – Residential vs. commercial growth. Next 100-year flood.
- John – Housing growth on farmland??? Weather events and flooding in all areas of Town.
- David – Keeping the schools open and independent from regionalization!
- Becca – Flexibility
- Julia – Encouraging new young families to move here to continue and build a thriving, colorful, diverse community.