

DRAFT

Notes from Comprehensive Plan Committee - Meeting #5

April 26, 2023

Present:

	Garret Barry, Public Works		John Kostek, Recreation Committee
X	Mike Bartlett, Community Preservation Committee	X	Luke Longstreeth, Conservation Commission
X	Rebecca Bench, School Committee	X	John Pease, Agricultural Commission
X	Angelika Dewey, Open Space Committee	X	Shawn Robinson, Council on Aging
X	Julia Frisby, At Large	X	Micki Sanderson, Historical Commission
X	Jalil Johnson, At Large	X	Stephanie Slysz, Planning Board
X	David Keir, At Large	X	Christopher Smith, Redevelopment Committee

Also attending: Marlene Michonski, Town Administrator; Janelle Franklin, Assistant Planner; Andrew Smith, EEA – Greater Connecticut River Valley Region MVP Coordinator; Jono Neiger and Seva Water, Regenerative Design Group; and Becky Basch, Ken Comia, Patty Gambarini, Doug Hall, Karen Martin, Gary Roux, and Shannon Walsh, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.

Discussion notes:

Welcome

Marlene welcomed everyone at 6:05 and noted that introductions would take place in break out groups.

Meeting #4 approval of notes

Shawn asked for a motion to approve the March 22 meeting notes.

VOTE: Motion by David to approve the March 22 meeting notes, seconded by Stephanie, there being no discussion, the meeting notes were unanimously approved.

Promoting engagement events on Comprehensive Plan

There was some discussion about having a table on Election Day with flyers, etc., and making announcement at Town Meeting. Shawn distributed sign-up sheet for volunteers to table on Election Day.

Chapter break-out groups

Patty described the plan for break-out groups and locations for the first round. She referred Committee members to a handout showing groups, timetable, and list of members in each group. She explained

that group assignments are based on chapter interests sign up sheet provided at December and January meetings. At the beginning of Year 2 for the project in July, members can confirm their interests for chapter working groups. These groups will meet to advance drafting of each chapter. Patty noted that this evening's activity is meant to cover review of past plans and what they said about a given topic, identify what are key questions to be thinking about for the future, and identify data and mapping needs. Slides presented for each chapter working group are appended as part of the record of this meeting. **PVPC will append as PDF once these meeting notes are finalized.**

Following are the notes recorded from each break-out group.

Historic Cultural

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

- Still has remarkable historic character
- 1st slide bullets make sense
- 36 ID properties may need an update
- Mill River and dam area are priorities
- Update on stat 64 % Hatfield homes built before 1969
 - What is significant of 1969 year?
- # of owner-occupied homes vs. rental properties
 - trends of buyers, buying homes and converting to rental units
- Complex layers make it difficult to focus just on historic issues
- Stewardship
- 500 Year Flood Zone still an issue -impact on historic structures
 - Focus on 100 Year Flood
 - guidelines for retrofitting buildings-Nat Parks Service
- Identify what are the Village Centers
 - define the neighborhoods
- Has Archaeological work been done. Should bylaw still be considered.
- Still no appetite for regulations
- Committee like Northampton bylaws
- Should consider historic overlay district and non- regulatory design guidelines.
- Scenic Road Bylaw for Tree Protection
- Scenic Vista Protection makes sense
- Adopt regs. That encourage preservation
- Promote compatible infill dev.
- Adopt Residential Design Guidelines

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- How do you create something to help define future decision making
- Strong suggestions with strong action behind it
- Historic Home Plaques
- Tree Inventory
- Native American presence-official statement
- CPC Funds to identify a historic property center for a museum 650k req.

Mapping needs?

- Flood Overlay
- MACRIS Inventory
- Hist Resource Inv.
- Priority Heritage Landscapes

One key take away?

- People like the way the Town looks and feels need to keep it that way
- Preserve and improve
- Need to get a town-wide consensus on important issues
- Accessibility to historic collections assets

Farming

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- What are small farms growing? Understand who growing what? Pressures?
- 5 huge family farms- down from many farmers – 2004-15 families
- Succession planning
- What are some ways to make farm friendly bylaws?
- What are ways to incentivize strategies for building soil health.
- What crops would help our soil types to make more fertile
- How do we attract new smaller farms to grow more diverse crops?
- What are good big local opportunities? Status w/schools? Senior center
- Protection less of a priority-so much in crops that will improve soils, flood plans. Improve habitat/ How could apply in Hatfield.
- How vulnerable are potatoes – blight soil /fertile?
- Land swap idea- can standpipe location (2-3) help to overcome infrastructure barriers?
- Can town help absorb legal costs for farmers leasing lands - barrier to investing in soil rebuilding?

Mapping needs?

- Where soils are least fertile

One key take away?

- Crop rotation diversity needed
- Excise Tax reduction – over crop
- What are other financial leverage opportunities
- New/small farmer access – important to define what constitutes “small”
- Cons Com- thinking of working w/ DEP to set up blanket permitting that enables address of difficulties through RDA
- Important to map ditches - maybe then prioritize ditch easements

Social Environment

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

- Has there been any real discussion about expansion moving Capawork?

- Effort to help people stay in homes-including help in connecting to resources -Routing people to opportunities.
- Connecting “neighbors” genealogy.
- Need for universal design.
- Is there ADA transportation plan?

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- How do we build a community that has positive healthy environment?
- How do we promote an active healthy lifestyle?
- How do we build a socially inclusive community? How bring in new people, people who are differently abled, diverse?
- Is zoning prohibitive for new affordable construction?
- How do we hold two things at once, specifically the value of living in town so long, while also being welcoming to newcomers?
- Smith Academy Park plan for pavilion worthwhile investment?
- No public playground; accessible playground would be good
- Many families use school playground (but not that easy to access, very limited availability)

Mapping needs?

- Sidewalks
- Public buildings and accessibility

One key take away?

- Aging population that needs to respond
- Plan serves everyone
- ADA signage facilities

Facilities and Services

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

- Connect more residents to water and sewer to spread out the costs.
- Services and Facilities to attract more people.
- More rental and ADUS
- Zoning changes needed – w/ sewer and water
- Check in – how the town followed up on infrastructure improvement- progress has been made
- Schools- Buildings are not old- upkeep /maintance needed
- Invest in facilities that attract more families
- Infrastructures and Services

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- What do we do with the schools?
- Services
- How do we create places for everyone to gather
- Where could we put more senior housing – 55 + independent living
- Apartments for younger people

How do we communicate with everyone?

- Town Websites-update
- Town Billboard
- IT/communication person
- COA communication is effective

How do we build multigenerational community (social resilience)?

- Rel Director
- Newsletter to everyone
- School Senior Center Events
- SC Newsletter paid hr. by Ads
- Concepts and events for all ages
- Playground - accessible
- New senior center
- More funds for senior services
- Committed to implement the plan

Data needs?

- COA Data- #'s of people who use it
- School Data- Enrollment School Board

One key take away?

- As a town, we need to have a difficult discussion about where we want to invest money
- Schools? Senior Center
- Where could new developments go and what would that do for budget?
 - Residential Commercial
 - Enough infrastructure to expand
- Invest in staff - Town Manager development
- How do we make strategic decisions?
- Town organizational structures
- Need committee to implement the plan

Land Use

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

- Industrial lots in floodplain near water treatment facility
- Spot Zoning: rural residential w/preexisting nonconforming use
 - * Home based businesses (Sunderland example)
- Incentivize preservation of ag land

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- Better tools to incentivize ag/open space
- Compare zoning bylaws frontage and lot size w/neighbor towns different for each neighborhood?
- not too complicated?
- What is biggest bang for buck without too much development

- Town planner on staff?
- How do we shape bylaws that will attract what we want?

Map needs?

- flag lots
- commercial vs. light commercial
- ag1 vs. ag 2 (see Whately)

One key take away?

- Balancing agricultural priorities/ preservation **tripemen** zones with thriving residential and commercial tax revenue
- More commercial along 5/10, going to result in less residential housing
- Pick the right comparison; not Hadley Rt. 9. Maybe instead S. Deerfield, Belchertown
- For survey, find out what would be okay?

Transportation & Circulation

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

- Safe walking and biking
- Traffic noise and congestion – truck route?
- Chapter 90 funds
- No state scenic roads
- No PVTA – enhanced public transit needs

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- Truck route – non-residential (Routes 5 & 10)
 - No Elm/Main/Maple Corridor
 - Access to CNS
 - Limit 18-wheel delivery
 - Nighttime restriction?
 - Voluntary route?
 - Truck speed enforcement
 - Safety concerns
- Document where large trucks are driving and times
- Police enforcement and key delivery times
- More speed feedback
- Northampton/**Amherst** bike path grant– some is in Hatfield – opposition to this
- No off-road bike path and no on-road bicycle markings
- Bike path parking concerns
- Need more sidewalks to expand walking loops
- Sidewalks on Bridge Street
- Walking path behind Smith Academy
- Accessible access for seniors and wheelchairs?
- Cost per mile of sidewalk construction?
 - Grants?
 - Complete streets?
 - Safe routes to schools
- Separate out local crashes/non-interstate

- Breakdown of compete streets program
- Micro-transit? (More ex.)
 - With Council on Aging Equipment? Potential pilot program
 - What route would make sense?

One key take away?

- Bike/multi-use trail-advocacy for connecting trails – linking with other communities – education? Benefit for residents to improve access and circulation.
- Short-term approve bike path
 - Take advantage of current infrastructure and transportation grants and opportunities
 - Don't miss opportunities – ASAP!
- Air quality – meet emissions goals
 - Where does Hatfield fit into this?

Economic Development

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

- Blank slate of opportunities
- Not a business/economic community
- Value of agricultural economy?
- Local supportive economy as a strategy for sustainability
- CT River – recreational economy
- ED Board/Commission
- Replace aging workforce with new generation
- Business incentives (ENERGY)

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- What should the economy look like moving forward?
 - Aging population: help aging in place. Connecting seniors who need services with local employees.
- Gig economy – access
 - Destination for young professionals
 - Coworking spaces
- Close to 5 colleges – benefits for employment
- New pool of employees living in Hatfield
 - If they can work from home – attracting flexible workers.
- Home business/home occupation bylaw

Housing

What still makes sense from earlier plans?

- 3 past plans
 - 2009 M.P.
 - 2015: Housing Prod'n Plan (HPP). 3% “affordable” HPP in 2015 (unchanged '23)
 - 2017: DLTA-PVPC report (zoning changes following 2009 M.P. had been ineffective)
 - 2015 – 10% affordable housing required by Section 40B (since 60s)
 - Question re : 55+ retirement units (Elm Street)
 - Question re : ‘local préférence’

- Convert huge (and usually older) homes to multi-units?
- By-law review remains relevant; facilitate affordable housing

What questions need to be answered for 2040?

- Schools
- Elderly

Data needs?

- Building permits

One key take away?

- By-laws need to be less restrictive
- Public information campaign regarding unsustainability of status quo, reliance on property taxes
- Common vision on growth/change