

February 14, 2022

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1 In attendance: Dwight Brew, Will Ludt, Jared Hardner, Chris Yates, Tim Kachmar (remote), and
2 Tracie Adams.
3 Staff in attendance: Nic Strong, Community Development Director, and Kristan Patenaude –
4 Recording Secretary (remote)
5 Also in attendance: Steve Whitman, and Zak Brohinsky (remote), Resilience Planning & Design,
6 and Bill Stoughton
7

8 **1. Call to Order**

9 Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.
10

11 **2. Presentation on Water Resource Plan – Jared Hardner**

12 Jared Hardner explained that the Conservation Commission (ACC) has been brainstorming on
13 how to be helpful and create content for the Master Plan update. He explained that the public
14 survey ranked protecting and securing water resources in town as the highest priority. Thus, the
15 ACC has sought concrete, actionable items to address this. Of the 1639 respondents, 85.2% listed
16 water resources as the highest or high priority. This survey also ranked natural resource
17 protection, such as protecting drinking water, surface water, the aquifer, and dealing with
18 flooding/instream flow, as a high priority.
19

20 Jared Hardner explained that there are three sources of drinking water in Town: fractured rock
21 aquifers (granite), alluvial aquifers (sand & gravel), and water utilities such as Pennichuck.
22 Fractured rock aquifers deal with water flowing through fractures in the rock. In these
23 circumstances it is unclear where the water is traveling from and unclear the productivity of
24 nearby wells. However, water travels more easily through alluvial aquifers. This area is very
25 productive for water in the alluvial aquifer zone. It is considered one of the best, if not the best,
26 in the entire State. There are also some areas in Town that are supplied by Pennichuck for their
27 water. In regard to if development will diminish the availability of the quantity of these drinking
28 water sources, it will not have an effect on water utilities, it is unlikely to have an effect on
29 alluvial aquifers, and it is unknown if this would have an effect on fractured rock aquifers. In
30 regard to if development will degrade the quality/safety of these drinking water sources, it will
31 not have an effect on water utilities, it will have an effect on alluvial aquifers, and it is possible
32 to have an effect on fractured rock aquifers. He explained that the concern is the amount and
33 density of proposed developments built on top of the alluvial aquifer in Town. Some of the
34 highest quality aquifers in Town, such as those along Route 101A, have already been developed
35 on top of, unfortunately, and their quality is diminished. There are some small areas within this
36 zone that can still be protected and used for a public water supply in the future. He mentioned
37 that PFOA's are complex issue and can be spread airborne. As more and more people test in
38 Town, contamination has been found further spread out. More testing is needed to determine the
39 full range of contamination and range of sources.
40

41 The ACC has examined ways to ensure that new developments will have high quality water
42 available. Certain actions that could be included in the Master Plan are:

- 43
 - Educating Amherst residents on their sources of drinking water

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- 44 • Recommending that the Planning Board investigate community wells for future
45 developments
 - 46 ○ ensure water quality for residents of future developments
 - 47 ○ ensure water quantity for future and current residents
- 48 • Recommend that the Planning Board strengthen its requirements for private wells
 - 49 ○ minimum drinking water standards before granting a certificate of occupancy
 - 50 ○ improved capacity testing for new wells
- 51 • Recommend that the Planning Board evaluate septic controls
- 52 • Investigate protecting lands with the potential for community wells
 - 53 ○ reclassify groundwater areas to GA or GA1 under the New Hampshire
 - 54 Groundwater Protection Act 1991 (currently there is no active management in
 - 55 Amherst in many areas)
 - 56 ○ acquire conservation lands with groundwater resources (example, Buck Meadow)

57 Jared Hardner explained that, in terms of surface water quality in Town, there are three existing
58 watersheds: Baboosic Brook (38% of Amherst, 7% developed, 29% protected); Souhegan River
59 (53% of Amherst, 23% developed, 15% protected); and Pennichuck Brook (8% of Amherst, 45%
60 developed, 1% protected). Baboosic Brook has the greatest potential to conserve a healthy
61 watershed. There is more that can be done for the Souhegan River watershed, and there's not
62 much that can be done for Pennichuck Brook as it has already been heavily developed over. He
63 explained that some of the lakes, ponds, and streams in Town already exceed EPA water quality
64 limits for things such as E coli, phosphorus, pH, etc. Baboosic Lake Beach and Young Judaea
65 Beach have both been impaired in the past by E coli and cyanobacteria. While the TMDL's have
66 been calculated and most point sources are regulated by the EPA, it is the non-point sources
67 (yard fertilizers, farms, parking lot drainage, etc.) that are the key source of these issues and are
68 not being currently controlled. The Town would need to decide to identify and work towards
69 regulating the non-point sources. Private septic systems may also contribute to these problems.

70
71 Certain actions that could be included in the Master Plan to deal with surface water quality
72 include:

- 73 • Recommending greater implementation of the Amherst Stormwater Management Plan
74 (last updated 2011) per the MS4 permit
- 75 • Recommend that the Planning Board evaluate septic controls
- 76 • Recommend that the Board of Selectmen improve agricultural nonpoint source controls
- 77 • Recommend continued efforts to increase natural habitat protection
 - 78 ○ watersheds need to be 70-75% naturally vegetated to be kept healthy. There are
 - 79 areas in the north side of Town where this would be completed.
- 80 • Recommend a watershed-scale assessment of costs and benefits of development
81 restrictions in sensitive locations in Town
 - 82 ○ based on results zoning and planning ordinances could be updated. This looks to
 - 83 strategically locate developments in Town to reduce water quality impairment.

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85 Jared Hardner stated that water flows through the watersheds in Town. The rate at which it flows
86 through is affected by the amount of development within the watershed. As natural habitats are
87 removed, there is a higher volume of water flowing in a shorter amount of time, thus potentially
88 leading to flooding. Natural vegetation holds the water in place and allows it to leach into the
89 land over a longer period of time. 89% of Amherst is outside of the 100- and 500-year flood
90 plains. It is not expected that a large number of structures in this area would be affected by
91 flooding. However, there are certain areas in Town that may be affected by flooding, especially
92 in terms of roads then being blocked. Pinch points in roadways affect many residents and
93 emergency access. Certain actions that could be included in the master plan to deal with flooding
94 include:

- 95 • Recommend that the Police and Fire Departments develop access plans for floods
- 96 • Recommend that the DPW plan to upgrade culverts and bridges at strategic locations in
97 Town
- 98 • Recommend protection of natural habitat in locations with water retention capacity.

99
100 Jared Hardner noted that increased flooding is likely in the future due to climate change.

101
102 Jared Hardner summarized key points for considerations for the Master Plan update, including:

- 103 • Recommendations that developments should proactively integrate water resource
104 protection
- 105 • Identify and protect strategic areas in Town for groundwater resources, natural habitat
106 cover necessary for surface water quality, and flood water retention
- 107 • Strengthen measures to manage future impacts such as the Amherst Stormwater
108 Management Plan, community wells, new private well requirements, and septic
109 requirements.

110
111 In response to a question from Will Ludt regarding wells in the Village that Amherst used in the
112 1980's through its Water District, Jared Hardner stated that these wells are no longer in use by
113 Pennichuck due to high levels of manganese.

114
115 In response to a question from Will Ludt regarding if neighboring towns are as judicious with
116 their water supplies, Jared Hardner stated that it depends on the watershed. There are small
117 tributaries coming in from the north. The Souhegan River watershed covers approximately 250
118 miles to the northwest, with water coming through Amherst from various towns upstream. Some
119 of the streams that originate in Amherst and flow into the Souhegan River are heavily polluted
120 by non-point sources, and these are things Amherst is solely responsible for.

121
122 Will Ludt noted that he believes a video showing residents where their water comes from would
123 be a great addition. Jared Hardner explained that the ACC has a contact at Pennichuck who
124 might be able to help with this project.

125
126 Tim Kachmar asked what the Town has done to establish a baseline of water quality and
127 quantity. He noted that developments will continue to progress in Town, and it will be important
128 to have a baseline study in order to measure possible impacts to water resources in Town. Jared

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129 Hardner stated that, while this would be ideal, it is likely not possible to achieve a baseline
130 report. Doing this work has shown that, in terms of quantity, Pennichuck customers will not run
131 out of water, alluvial aquifers will likely not run out of water, but fractured rock aquifers could
132 be in danger of running out of water. This is an issue if new developments continue to be placed
133 along fractured rock aquifers. He is suggesting that new developments have community wells, as
134 these require more rigorous testing than private wells. This water would also be treated by a
135 professional operator, so that the people within the development are receiving clean drinking
136 water.

137
138 Chris Yates asked about having community education on fertilizer, detergent, and deicer use as
139 part of a long-term strategy for water resource protection. Jared Hardner stated that this can
140 occur as part of the Amherst Stormwater Management Plan, but that broader education would be
141 helpful. The community needs to think about these issues in terms of the scale of the watershed
142 itself.

143
144 In response to a question from Will Ludt, Jared Hardner stated that he assumes Camp Young
145 Judaea is aware of the impairment in its water, but he has not communicated with them directly
146 about this.

147
148 **3. Review of Updated Master Plan Vision and Themes**
149 Dwight Brew noted that, at the last Planning Board meeting, Planning Board Chair Arnie
150 Rosenblatt appointed Tracie Adams as Vice Chair of the Master Plan Steering Committee.
151 Dwight Brew explained that this will be his last meeting with the Committee, as he is not
152 running for reelection to the Board of Selectmen. He thanked the Committee and all those
153 involved for their work and noted that he appreciates everyone's efforts. He believes the vision,
154 themes, and actions all support one another and seem in agreement with the initial survey and
155 most of the public outreach. He suggested that the group not allow the recent public outreach to
156 have more impact than the initial survey, as the initial survey had approximately 20 times more
157 input. He also suggested that the group avoid moving items forward that are not directly tied to
158 the survey, without a larger discussion and consensus among the Committee. He believes
159 anything brought up outside of the surveys would need to have a lot of additional discussion
160 before inclusion. He suggested that the draft vision, themes, and actions be communicated to the
161 Planning Board and larger public.

162
163 Steve Whitman agreed with Dwight Brew. He suggested that the Committee give feedback and
164 suggestions on the draft Master Plan outline before drafting a memo to share with the Planning
165 Board, before sharing it more broadly. He questioned if it will be possible to put this all together
166 quickly enough to share with the Planning Board at its meeting this Wednesday.

167
168 Bill Stoughton, 11 Pinetop Road and Vice Chair of the Planning Board, explained that the
169 Planning Board would likely have time to review this item at its meeting this Wednesday.
170 However, the Planning Board's first March meeting had a full agenda. The next meeting in
171 March will likely be an organizational meeting, as there will be new members, and elections for

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172 officers will be held. He believes this Wednesday would be the time to get feedback on the draft
173 from the Planning Board.

174
175 Dwight Brew noted that he would also like to have the opportunity to speak to the Department
176 Heads and Board of Selectmen on this draft, while still a member of this Committee. A brief
177 memo, referencing the draft documents, could be submitted to the Planning Board for review at
178 their Wednesday meeting, so that these can then be more broadly distributed. Bill Stoughton
179 suggested that this information could be submitted to the Planning Board Chair in parallel with
180 submitting it to the Department Heads.

181
182 **4. Draft Master Plan Outline**

183 The Committee discussed the draft vision document. Jared Hardner stated that he believes the
184 edits made to the document are appropriate. This document may continue to be edited along the
185 way.

186
187 Steve Whitman addressed the draft actionable items document submitted by Will Ludt regarding
188 heritage items for the Master Plan. He questioned if some of the actions should be included in the
189 Master Plan or completed internally by the Heritage Commission. Will Ludt explained that his
190 intention is to get more public participation than there currently is. Chris Yates stated that some
191 of these items could be taken by the Heritage Commission after the fact and worked on. Steve
192 Whitman stated that he will include Will Ludt's action suggestions into the document for now, to
193 then be reviewed at a later date, if needed.

194
195 Steve Whitman noted that he will replace action items #22-32 with the items outlined in Jared
196 Hardner's PowerPoint presentation from this evening.

197
198 Will Ludt stated that he does not believe the proper number of action items are being mentioned
199 regarding the schools. Steve Whitman stated that there are not usually items for the schools listed
200 in the Master Plan, as these are handled by a different set of regulating boards. This is a land use
201 document. The schools are mentioned in the vision and the content sections, but these are
202 managed by a different body. Unless there are specific actions regarding land use and schools,
203 there is not much more to add. Dwight Brew stated that there is a lot of danger in taking over the
204 powers of another statutory board. However, there could be an item stating that there will be
205 limited phasing of new developments to align with the school's ability to include new students.
206 Steve Whitman stated that the Master Plan can look for ways to align those, or study that. Chris
207 Yates agreed that there has not been a lot of discussion during Planning Board application
208 hearings regarding phasing and accurate information from departments such as DPW or the
209 schools, in order to make a case for phasing a development. Steve Whitman noted that action
210 item #28 is proposed to be for a Town wide Fiscal Impact Analysis or Cost of Community
211 Services Study and use this to determine something about greater development in Town. This
212 would be a holistic approach looking at all of the departments in Town and the associated
213 studies. Tracie Adams agreed that this holistic approach containing data points is needed for the
214 Planning Board. Dwight Brew explained that not many understand how to estimate impacts in

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215 this overall, holistic way. At some point these impacts lead to an increase in services. A new
216 house could also bring in taxes to cover some of these municipal costs.

217

218 **5. Outreach and Engagement Report**

219 The Committee reviewed the draft outline document. Steve Whitman asked that photos begin to
220 be compiled by the Committee and shared for the Master Plan.

221

222 Tim Kachmar expressed concern regarding the draft Vision statement that “Amherst’s municipal
223 facilities reflect a commitment to the residents, embody sustainability and community resilience,
224 and have inspired private property owners to pursue energy conservation, renewable energy, and
225 regenerative landscaping projects of their own.” He stated that it sounds political without a lot of
226 meaning behind it. Steve Whitman agreed that this statement could be simplified.

227

228 Tracie Adams stated that there are only two items: redevelopment – keeps the look of existing
229 structures, and education, that are not included in this draft document from the 10 key
230 recommended items mentioned in the previous Master Plan document. The redevelopment piece
231 is mentioned throughout the Master Plan, though, regarding keeping the rural character of the
232 Town.

233

234 It was noted that feedback from the Planning Board can be sent to Resilience via Nic Strong.
235 Steve Whitman stated that these sections can likely begin to be written next month.

236

237 The Committee reviewed the public input and how the public will continue to be informed on
238 these items.

239

240 **6. Actions by Theme**

241 *This item was previously discussed.*

242

243 **7. Approval of Minutes January 25, 2022**

244

245 **Tracie Adams moved to approve the meeting minutes of January 25, 2022, as**
246 **presented. Will Ludt seconded.**

247 **Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - abstain, Tracie Adams – aye; Will Ludt -**
248 **aye, and Jared Hardner – aye; 4-0-1 motion carried.**

249

250 **8. Old/New Business –**

251 Tracie Adams thanked Dwight Brew for his leadership and work on the Committee.

252

253 **Jared Hardner moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:01pm. Tracie Adams seconded.**

254 **Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Tracie Adams – aye, Will Ludt - aye,**
255 **and Jared Hardner – aye; 5-0-0 motion carried.**

256

257 *Respectfully submitted,*

258 *Kristan Patenaude*

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

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259 Minutes approved: July 26, 2022