

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

June 21, 2021

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1 In attendance: Dwight Brew, Tom Gauthier, Chris Yates, Jared Hardner, Tracie Adams (remote),
2 Will Ludt, and Tim Kachmar.
3 Staff in attendance: Nic Strong – Community Development Director, and Kristan Patenaude –
4 Recording Secretary

5
6 **1. Roll Call to Order**

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

8
9 **2. Citizen's Forum** - none at this time.

10
11 Dwight Brew read a letter from Tom Quinn and explained that, due to the recent Planning Board
12 election, there were suddenly four Planning Board members on the Master Plan Steering
13 Committee (himself, Tom Quinn, Chris Yates, and Tracie Adams). This would have led to a
14 quorum of Planning Board members during Master Plan Steering Committee meetings. In
15 looking at different options and consulting with Town Counsel, it was determined that Chris
16 Yates and Tracie Adams were appointed to this Committee by the Planning Board, while Tom
17 Quinn was an at-large member. Thus, Tom Quinn respectfully agreed to step down from his role
18 on the Master Plan Steering Committee.

19
20 **3. Update on Outreach and Engagement:**

21 **-Review and Refine Outreach and Engagement Plan**

22 **-Review draft website**

23
24 Steve Whitman, of Resilience Planning & Design, LLC, explained that he will send a link to the
25 new draft website to Committee members in the morning. He noted that Nic Strong and Natasha
26 Kypfer have already seen the website and sent initial feedback. The website will include a
27 project feedback form, along with a way for citizens to remain updated on any progress made.
28 Steve Whitman explained that there is a Dropbox folder set up for Committee members to
29 submit pictures that they believe exemplify Amherst.

30
31 Jared Hardner noted that creating an Instagram account for the Town would be the easiest way to
32 receive pictures from the public.

33
34 Steve Whitman stated that Liz Kelly will be drafting a flyer that can either be printed or
35 distributed electronically regarding the Master Plan update being underway and information on
36 how to access the new website. A draft of this flyer will be sent to the Committee for review
37 prior to the July meeting.

38
39 Jared Hardner noted that he has continued to update the Amherst Conservation Commission
40 regarding the Master Plan update process. He believes other Committee members will likely help
41 to update their other boards/commissions as well.

42
43 Dwight Brew noted that it might only be possible to reach a larger portion of the community
44 through social media. Steve Whitman explained that by early August/late September materials

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45 should be ready to send out to the rest of the community. This is a phased approach, snowballing
46 toward the fall.

47

48 Steve Whitman stated that Liz Kelly will draft a short paragraph regarding the status of the
49 Master Plan update that the Committee can then edit and send out on social media, as it sees fit.

50

51 Will Ludt stated that he believes the Committee would be remiss if it does not send this
52 information to local print media sources as well. Steve Whitman explained that a short press
53 release can be drafted for review and then signed off on by the Committee for this purpose.

54

55 Dwight Brew stated that the Committee should gather any input on the draft website and bring it
56 forward for discussion at the July meeting.

57

4. Existing Conditions Analysis:

58

-Review of Population and Housing Profile

59

-Document & Organizational List by Topic

60

-Existing Conditions Analysis Next Steps

61

62
63 Steve Whitman explained that the Committee should have 4-5 topic profiles to review by the
64 July meeting.

65

66 In regard to the Population and Housing Profile, Steve Whitman explained that the State has said
67 that the 2020 Census data will not be available until Spring 2022, with some data possible by this
68 December. He noted that the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) data will be used for
69 now, and that it will be easy to update any numbers as newer data becomes available.

70

71 In response to a question from Dwight Brew regarding if Amherst is growing in population,
72 Steve Whitman stated that the trend seems to be that the number of households in Town is
73 increasing somewhat, but that the size of these households is getting smaller. Projections due in
74 the spring will be interesting to compare this trend to. Steve Whitman noted that NH does seem
75 to have a huge demand for housing, yet supposedly there is not a large amount of growth being
76 seen.

77

78 Jared Hardner noted that the Planning Board has some amount of information regarding current
79 development proposals. Nic Strong stated that she will share this information with Steve
80 Whitman for its inclusion into the Profile.

81

82 Steve Whitman explained that there seems to be a trend in rental housing that is not unique to
83 Amherst. There is a shortage of rental units in Town.

84

85 Dwight Brew noted that some senior citizens that are retired or semi-retired seem to be
86 struggling to remain in Town in the face of rising taxes. He asked if the Master Plan process
87 would be a good place to address this concern. Steve Whitman stated that during the forum stage
88 items such as this will be addressed. One common question brought up during the forums for

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89 citizens to answer is what type of housing unit they or their family members will need 10 years
90 from now.

91
92 Steve Whitman stated that Zak Brohinsky is currently working on GIS mapping of the Town. He
93 is pulling data for natural and water resources, historic and cultural resources, etc., and will have
94 some draft maps refined for the Committee to review in July. Steve Whitman explained that Zak
95 Brohinsky looks at a lot of comparative data between Amherst and surrounding Towns. He noted
96 that Amherst seems to be in the middle of this data so far.

97

98 **5. Update on Build Out Analysis**

99 Steve Whitman stated that he spoke with NRPC regarding the build out analysis and then staff
100 realized that this item would need to go out to bid. Bids are due by June 30, 2021. Regarding the
101 build out analysis, if chosen, NRPC would run an initial analysis this summer as the existing
102 conditions reports are finished to give an early draft of what this might look like. The Committee
103 will then review this and ask questions so that adjustments can be made. NRPC would then
104 review the already completed survey data and collect more detailed information on each topic
105 area before rerunning the analysis. This will be an iterative process, as another draft will
106 probably be run again in the winter.

107

108 In response to a question from Jared Hardner regarding the output of the analysis, Steve
109 Whitman explained that the analysis will look at growth figures and local land use and give a
110 vision of what areas of the Town might look like if zoning was changed in certain ways.

111

112 Jared Hardner stated that he believes the water analysis should link closely with this. Steve
113 Whitman stated that Zak Brohinsky is already looking into information on watershed and water
114 bodies in Amherst. This report may likely be completed by July.

115

116 In response to a question from Jared Hardner, Steve Whitman stated that the reports will look at
117 things like the percentage of impervious surfaces in certain watersheds in Town and the amount
118 of impairment already taking place.

119

120 Jared Hardner noted that the Town recently voted in favor of an open space acquisition bond,
121 and that this information may be helpful in determining how to prioritize lands in Town.

122

123 In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Nic Strong stated that she will get the number of
124 active building permits in Town and the amount of vacant land available.

125

126 Steve Whitman stated that he will gather the building permit information from the ACS to cross-
127 tabulate it with the Town data. He noted that the schools have been very willing to share their
128 data.

129

130 Steve Whitman noted that the 2020 Census data may be slightly skewed due to COVID19.

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132 In response to a question from Chris Yates regarding the maximum capacity of the schools, Tom
133 Gauthier stated that he believes some of the schools may already be almost at capacity now, but
134 the School Boards also would like smaller class sizes. The schools are trying to use their square
135 footage as best as possible. Tom Gauthier explained that Banwell Architects has been hired by
136 the SAU and there should be information on the cost of a new school building available by July
137 1, 2021. Chris Yates stated that this information would be good to know for this process and for
138 the Planning Board.

139
140 Nic Strong stated that the housing enrollment report from the early 2000s completed by Russ
141 Thibeault could be compared against current data in Amherst. She believes the report showed
142 that, while many believe a 3-bedroom house adds many kids to the district, the actual numbers
143 are a lot lower. Steve Whitman stated that he would have to have a survey completed of the
144 housing units in Town in order to compare.

145
146 Dwight Brew stated that there is a 2–3-year-old report with similar data regarding number of
147 bedrooms and how many children are generally found in each type. This allowed for an
148 assumption as to how many students might come out of each type of home in Amherst. This
149 study could be updated for the Master Plan process. Steve Whitman noted that an update of this
150 report could also be a recommendation that comes from the Master Plan.

151
152 Mike Akillian, remote participant, noted that there are a number of people in Town who are
153 hoping to engage in this process around a number of topic areas. He asked what this involvement
154 will look like. Steve Whitman explained that the initial communication to the public will be to
155 explain that the process is underway, how to keep informed of updates, and background data to
156 review. In the fall, there will be public meetings regarding where Amherst is headed, along with
157 pointed questions from the survey topics and questions from the public. These meetings will
158 involve topic-specific focus groups.

159
160 Dwight Brew noted that the Committee was able to clearly see and hear two public participants
161 during this meeting and that the hybrid method seems to be working.

162
163 The Committee will continue to meet on the third Monday of each month. The next meeting will
164 be on July 19, 2021.

165
166 **Jared Hardner moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:32pm PM. Will Ludt seconded.**
167 **Voting: 7-0-0; motion carried unanimously.**

168
169 *Respectfully submitted,*
170 *Kristan Patenaude*

171
172 Minutes approved: July 19, 2021

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