

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

January 28, 2021

APPROVED

In attendance: Dwight Brew, Chris Yates, Tom Quinn, Will Ludt, Tracie Adams, Tom Gauthier, and Tim Kachmar.

Staff in attendance: Nic Strong – Community Development Director, Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary

1. Roll Call to Order

Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:33pm., and Natasha Kypfer read the following statement. On behalf of the Master Plan Steering Committee, I find that due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, as extended by various Executive Orders, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order.

However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:
Providing public access to the meeting by telephone, with additional access possibilities by video or other electronic means:

We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.

All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #312-626-6799 and password 838 3477 6897, or by clicking on the following website address: <https://zoom.us/j/83834776897> that was included in the public notice of this meeting.

Providing public notice of the necessary information for accessing the meeting:

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the Planning Board at: www.amherstnh.gov. Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603-341-5290.

Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled.

Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote. Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to- Know law.

Roll call attendance: Dwight Brew, Chris Yates, Tom Quinn, Tracie Adams, Will Ludt, Tom Gauthier, and Tim Kachmar – all present and alone.

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Discussion of the Survey Results:

Dwight Brew explained that the Master Plan survey close date was extended from December 2020, to January 18, 2021. There were 1,815 responses received. There were also 2,327 responses received to the open response questions. The guidance from these open response questions is fairly mixed, as people seemed evenly divided on some of the issues. As a whole, the responses seemed thoughtful, and the public seemed engaged with the survey. He believes the response information will be useful in creating the new Master Plan.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Tracie Adams suggested that some of the working group topics could be taxes, schools, walking/sidepaths, housing, etc.

Tom Gauthier stated that he was surprised by the number of responses and also by the age of participants. He believes the number of responses from younger generations hopefully shows an investment in the Town. He was otherwise not surprised by the priorities that seemed to come out on top of the responses.

Tim Kachmar stated that he was also surprised by the number of responses. He is happy with the results. He also believes that the open response questions included a mixed bag of information. Some of the themes he is thinking about for the working groups include taxes, bike paths/walkability, recreation, and schools.

Will Ludt stated that he found the number of responses from younger families interesting. He believes that schools, development, and conservation items all seem to be important from the survey results. He would prefer to be able to break into working groups in person, instead of via Zoom.

Tom Quinn stated that, after seeing some comments on Facebook regarding the Master Plan process being rigged, he is not comfortable deciding on themes before getting comments from the working groups about the survey results. He believes without this engagement, some of the public may believe that the Master Plan was created by a small group of people and steered in a specific direction. He believes that the comments made on the open response questions were the most interesting part of the survey data received.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Tom Quinn stated that it is difficult to determine who will choose the themes. It is possible that the themes could be determined towards the end of this process, once the data has been more thoroughly discussed in the working groups.

Chris Yates stated that he is happy with the number of responses received. He believes that there is enough data to establish some themes and layout the process enough to engage the community into breaking out into working groups. He believes that if the Committee tries to wait until it can meet in person to create these working groups, it could be another 6-8 months. He stated that he thinks the Committee could lay out some reasonable themes and procedures for the working

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88 groups. The leaders of the working groups could then further delve into these topics. It's possible
89 that an additional 1-2 themes may be discovered during this process.

90
91 Dwight Brew noted that the Committee has not yet communicated back to the public with its
92 thanks and the results of the survey. The group discussed how best to share the results with the
93 public.

94
95 Nic Strong stated that her takeaways from the survey were that the items of large interest seemed
96 to include the schools, taxes, and senior items. She found it interesting that the surveys submitted
97 first seemed to talk a lot about new schools, but that this item faded toward the end of the survey
98 period (possibly due to the fact that the School Boards changed their proposed Warrant Article
99 items regarding a proposed new school building).

100
101 Natasha Kypfer stated that she believes the number of responses is encouraging, and that she is
102 glad the close date was extended. She believes there were many good comments regarding the
103 schools and recreation in Town. It's important now to figure out how to synthesize all the data
104 and move onto next steps.

105
106 Dwight Brew explained that the Committee does not need to establish the themes tonight, but
107 that themes are needed as a next step to engage the community. As people are brought into the
108 process, the task can be broken up by coming up with themes.

109
110 Chris Yates suggested that the Committee come up with some themes and break out into smaller
111 working groups. These working groups could contain one or two representatives from the
112 Committee.

113
114 Dwight Brew stated that he believes there will probably be somewhere between 5-9 themes. He
115 believes that community members need to be solicited to lead the working groups. Committee
116 members may then participate and help coordinate these groups. Representatives from the
117 working groups will eventually come and present to the larger Committee. Committee members
118 can help coordinate the working groups and provide direction but will not dictate agenda items.

119
120 Tom Quinn suggested that the Committee should test the data that it has already received to see
121 if it's good or not. It should also try to determine if there is other information that has not yet
122 been captured.

123
124 Dwight Brew explained that the working groups can work on each theme and come up with
125 different options to present to the Committee/public. The community can then be invited to
126 comment on the work done. The task of the theme groups is to propose tradeoff options for some
127 of the items that the community seems to want, with what can actually be done.

128
129 The group discussed third-party company options that could be brought in to help synthesize the
130 survey data.

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Dwight Brew explained that the Master Plan is a land-use document. There are some items that are not usually addressed by it, such as the curriculum of the Town's schools. Tom Quinn noted that there is a disconnect between the Town and the schools; this could be a way to connect the two groups. Tom Quinn noted that, although the schools are separate from zoning issues, the two are directly related. Any increase in Town population will also impact the schools.

In response to a question from Tim Kachmar, Nic Strong explained that the Master Plan lays out the goals and objectives for land use in Town. The Town's Zoning Ordinance takes those and put them into categories of what's allowed in different zoning areas of Town.

The group decided to interview a couple of outside consultants for help with next steps and survey data synthezation. It was agreed that the outside consultant needs to be honest, flexible, and not looking to push any certain agenda.

The group discussed waiting to move forward with a style sheet before communicating with the public about next steps until a discussion is had with a third-party consultant.

Minutes:

Tim Kachmar moved to approve the meeting minutes of October 27, 2020 as submitted Tom Gauthier seconded.

Roll call: Chris Yates – aye; Dwight Brew – aye; Tom Gauthier – aye; Tom Quinn – abstain; Tracie Adams – aye; Will Ludt – aye; and Tim Kachmar – aye. 6-0-1; motion carried.

Chris Yates moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 PM. Will Ludt seconded.

Roll call: Chris Yates – aye; Dwight Brew – aye; Tom Gauthier – aye; Tom Quinn – aye; Tracie Adams – aye; Will Ludt – aye; and Tim Kachmar – aye. Motion carried unanimously.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: July 19, 2021