

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

In attendance: Dwight Brew, Tom Gauthier, Chris Yates, Will Ludt, Jared Hardner (remote), and Tim Kachmar.

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

Also in attendance: Steve Whitman, and Zak Brohinsky (remote), Resilience Planning & Design; Sara Siskavich, NRPC (remote); and Ryan Friedman, NRPC (remote).

1. Call to Order

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

2. Review of baseline buildout analysis

Ryan Friedman reviewed a poster and data for the baseline buildout analysis. He explained that this baseline analysis considered a time constraint of 20 years. With this constraint, at a rate of 30 new housing units per year, the analysis shows a potential 600 new houses spread throughout Town randomly. The full buildout analysis, with no time constraint, showed a theoretical 2,500 new homes and businesses in Town. It would take nearly 100 years to reach the full buildout analysis, according to the current development rate in Town.

In response to a question from Jared Hardener, Ryan Friedman stated that this analysis does not take road frontage into account but looks at other zoning ordinance criteria.

Ryan Friedman detailed the data of this analysis. He explained that the current population in Town is 11,753. This buildout analysis shows a population in 2040 of 13,398. It also shows an increase of housing units from 4,280 to 4,880, and an increase in commercial square footage from 14.4m to 16.4m. The developed acreage in Town, based on the current trends, would increase from 12,316 to 15,404 (approximately 78% of Town). The total student enrollment in town, including Mont Vernon students, would increase from 2,251 to 2,566.

Chris Yates asked that the poster for the analysis make it clear that these numbers are based on single-family homes. Ryan Friedman agreed and explained that increased densities, for example from PRDs or multi-family units, would increase these numbers.

Dwight Brew asked if this analysis can be used to figure out what might happen on a particular square footage in Town, such as on the sites of the proposed Carlson Manor, Clearview, or Hazen development proposals. Ryan Friedman stated that this was not possible with this analysis. That particular type of targeted analysis could be a second scenario created for this project. Ryan Friedman explained that this tool does not use frontage data in its calculations.

Dwight Brew stated that this analysis appears to tell the public that approximately 600 new houses will be built in Town over the next 20 years. However, the three proposed developments that he mentioned look to possibly introduce 200 units to Town within the next several years. He believes these two different datasets may make the public question the analysis.

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

44 Sara Siskavich stated that the buildout is a modeling exercise using GIS, not survey data. GIS
45 gives a coarser level of detail than a survey plan. The buildout is meant to be an expression of
46 what is allowed under current zoning ordinances in Town. The simulation is used to distill down
47 to logical rules that are placed across the map. This analysis is for an audience similar to the
48 Committee, ones interested in planning or land use. It is not a public outreach tool. She stated
49 that NRPC is willing to participate in this process and come up with materials, but she cautioned
50 the Committee that it will be difficult to get this specific message across to an audience using
51 this tool. She stated that this analysis is not predictive and cannot be used to say what will
52 happen in the future.

53
54 Dwight Brew asked how NRPC came up with 30 houses per year to plug into the analysis. Ryan
55 Friedman stated that he received this number from Nic Strong. Nic Strong stated that she decided
56 on this number after looking at the number of building permits issued over the past number of
57 years, as found in the Town report.

58
59 Ryan Friedman stated that, if the group is sure that the three proposed housing developments
60 mentioned will move forward, he can include an additional 200 housing units into the formula,
61 and then an additional 30 units per year. Nic Strong noted that the group is unable to predict
62 when or if these developments will be built. The Planning Board has not yet discussed phasing or
63 the number of units to be built per year for any of these developments.

64
65 Tim Kachmar stated that he believes the buildout analysis presented this evening gives the Town
66 a “best case scenario.” It shows what could happen in the next 20 years based on current lots and
67 zoning, without any PRDs or duplex units included. He believes that 30 units per year seems
68 reasonable, especially when looking at current shortages in labor and supplies. This number
69 could be higher if different unit types are included.

70
71 Chris Yates suggested that the PRD variable could be included in this analysis by calculating an
72 additional 25% over the baseline density.

73
74 Will Ludt noted that this analysis still does not account for the three proposed large
75 developments previously mentioned. Chris Yates stated that only two of those proposed
76 developments have been approved, but no phasing plan has yet been seen by the Planning Board.

77
78 Dwight Brew stated that he is uncomfortable with the potential level of accuracy of this analysis.
79 He believed the analysis would include frontage and acreage into the calculation. He noted that,
80 while this analysis does not account for PRDs, PRDs are currently allowed in Town ordinances.

81
82 Chris Yates stated that he believes this is a simplified approach based on what the Town could
83 expect under a certain number of parameters. He believes this is a very conservative number.

84
85 Will Ludt expressed concern over the analysis not specifically calling out the few large,
86 proposed developments, as people will not be able to see what can be done to limit development
87 in Town.

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

Tim Kachmar noted that if 25% above baseline density is calculated out to account for PRDs, this would be approximately 150 extra units, or a total of approximately 750 units over 20 years.

Chris Yates noted that the software cannot determine new roads.

Dwight Brew stated his concern would be saying to the public that, over the next 20 years only 30 homes per year will be built. He believes many people may look at that and think that as long as there are methods in place to limit growth to that rate that would be okay. Chris Yates noted that the Committee will need to describe the particular parameters used and why this is not a definite number.

Sara Siskavich stated that this analysis is only an expression of the current zoning ordinances. Next, the Committee will need to determine what scenarios it wants to have examined as bases for comparative analysis. These buildouts do not model potential realities but do illustrate the pros and cons of developing properties around Town.

Chris Yates asked if the analysis tool would be able to show what a buildout would look like if the Town changed its ordinances to increase wetland buffers. Ryan Friedman stated that this would impact the analysis and give a different buildout scenario.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Ryan Friedman stated that, if the input to the analysis was for 60 units per year instead of 30 units per year, the data given for each item, such as population or school enrollment, would be doubled and the additional units would be randomly placed on the map.

Ryan Friedman noted that another Town that NRPC is working with is looking at the impact of senior housing on this type of buildout analysis.

Dwight Brew asked about showing a map and data based on the 30 units per year possibility and one based on the 60 units per year possibility at the forum, in order to allow people to look at comparisons. Ryan Friedman stated that NRPC usually never gets the public involved in these buildout scenarios. He stated that, in his opinion, something of true value to the public would be completing the two additional buildout scenarios in order to make comparisons.

Steve Whitman stated that the buildout analysis is a powerful tool. He believes if this map and dataset are shown at the public forum, people will only look at it and never make it to the stations. He suggested that the Committee give itself time to digest this information and wait until the next public forum to display two or three of the different buildout scenarios, in order to tell a better story to the public regarding how potential policy actions would change the scenario.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Steve Whitman stated that he would not even display the data without the map at the public forum, as he is afraid people will take a deep dive into it and take it out of context. Ryan Friedman agreed and stated that he left the parcel lines off

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

the analysis map because people automatically look to see if something will potentially be built next to their parcel.

Chris Yates agreed with waiting to show this information to the public.

Jared Hardner stated that, even if the map and data aren't shown at the public forum, he believes the message needs to be conveyed to the public that growth can and will happen. The landscape is not static, and the Master Plan will help plan for this growth. He would like the analysis to eventually show comparisons for thresholds, such as the number of extra students that would require more space in the schools, or the number of people that would require more police staff and cruisers, etc.

Steve Whitman suggested that the Committee sit with this information, get initial feedback on the other information to be presented at the public forum, and dive into the focus groups. The test questions asked of these focus groups can help inform the additional scenarios.

Tim Kachmar suggested that people may want to hear the maximum number of houses built in Town in any of the previous several years.

Steve Whitman stated that the message at the public forum will be that growth will happen and have impacts, and this project is to direct those impacts. He explained that some of this information from the buildout scenario can be included in his introduction at the forum, but he would suggest not having hard copies of this for people to take.

Dwight Brew stated that people will want to know if nothing is done in Town, what will growth look like, and what tools can help with this. He would like this to be discussed soon by the Committee.

In response to a question from Sara Siskavich, Steve Whitman stated that the public forum will include a formal discussion from Resilience explaining the Master Plan process and how people can participate in it. There will then be stations located around the cafeteria, such as one for transportation, which will have open ended questions, facts and figures, and ways for people to give feedback.

Sara Siskavich asked what NRPC's best use of their time could be at the forum. Steve Whitman suggested that NRPC not attend the forum, unless interested as a citizen. All feedback captured during the forum and afterwards will be shared with NRPC.

Dwight Brew agreed with the method discussed for this public forum and stated that he would like to soon start discussing potential tradeoffs and impacts.

Steve Whitman suggested that the Committee have a work session without NRPC to discuss the other potential buildout scenarios.

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

In response to a question from Chris Yates, Ryan Friedman stated that the software used for this build out analysis is CommunityViz through ARC GIS.

4. Existing Conditions Analysis:

- Update on Public Facilities Section

Steve Whitman stated that Liz Kelly continues to work on this section. She is working with the Town, Schools, Pennichuck Water, etc. There is no draft for the Committee to review at this time. This section will be available for the Committee to review at its November meeting.

Will Ludt stated that he has looked through all of the existing conditions profiles and believes that some things are missing, such as education/schools. He stated that, if the SAU's proposed \$83M bond is passed by the Town, this will have an impact on the Town. He proposed adding a section for education.

Steve Whitman noted that each existing conditions profile so far completed has been backed up by data. The problem is that Resilience does not have that data for the schools. He noted that the Master Plan is a land use focused document.

Will Ludt stated that the Master Plan is a Town-wide document, and he would like to spend time discussing education and enrollment. He noted that one of the existing conditions documents mentions that enrollment is going down or staying stagnant, but enrollment in Town is actually going up. He noted that other profiles he would like to see included are Governance and Communication.

Steve Whitman suggested that there can be focus groups on these topics to have informed discussion, but that he does not want to confuse the document by adding these in.

Tom Gauthier stated that the SAU's Joint Facility Advisory Committee (JFAC) is holding its own public forums, including one upcoming on November 8, 2021.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Will Ludt stated that he would like the education profile he is proposing to not only discuss school facilities but also curriculum. Will Ludt explained that one of the main reasons people come to Amherst is for its schools. Dwight Brew stated that he believes it would take a long time to create this type of profile.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Steve Whitman stated that he has never included an education section in any other Master Plan he's worked on. Steve Whitman stated that he may include information about school facilities, but not beyond that.

Dwight Brew stated that he believes the JFAC is doing what it can to inform people, and that this does not necessarily need to fall under the Master Plan update.

Will Ludt noted that, in regard to a possible governance profile, the Town recently shifted from having an appointed to an elected Planning Board. He stated that there may be additional boards

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

or commissions needed, or commissions that need to be consolidated. With regard to communications, Will Ludt asked how the Town disseminates information and wondered if the Town needed a Town newsletter, or an enhanced Town website. He would like to know how people in Town get information about the Town.

Dwight Brew explained that, while the Master Plan name sounds overarching, it is really only a land use tool. He believes it would be overstepping boundaries for the Master Plan to suggest the number of boards the Town should have, or how they are laid out.

Will Ludt stated that, if a new school is built in Town, there will be an influx of people, which could impact a 20 year build out scenario.

Tim Kachmar stated that there has been a lot of Town feedback received during this process. While this may not fit directly into the Master Plan, it may still be good to have a focus group on some of these issues while the public is interested.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew regarding it being incorrect for a Master Plan to touch on communication or governance, Steve Whitman stated that it is not wrong, per se, but he has never experienced it before. He suggested that there could be a question at the forum as to how well people are being served by the Town and how they are communicated with by the Town. This could be left very open-ended.

Chris Yates stated that he believes feedback is a good idea. However, he believes having a focus group on schools could be a bad idea. He believes the School Boards are taking care of this on their own. Tom Gauthier agreed that this is a function of the School Boards and JFAC.

4. Update on Outreach and Engagement:

- Forum Flyer and circulation promoting event

Steve Whitman asked that the Committee get out the word about the public forum on November 15, 2021, at 6:30 PM, at the Amherst Middle School. He stated that he is currently working with Nic Strong and Natasha Kypfer to film an overview of the presentation that will be made at the forum for online engagement.

- Public Forum draft materials

Jared Hardner reviewed a number of changes that he would like to see to the draft materials.

Jared Hardner exited the meeting.

In response to a question from Will Ludt, Steve Whitman stated that he has not spoken to any members of the Historic District Commission but is working with Will Ludt on the Heritage profile.

- Maps for Forum

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

Zak Brohinsky showed the Committee a list of the maps he is proposing to display at the forum including, an aerial map with roads, existing land use, conserved lands, unfragmented blocks of land, Wildlife Action Plan priority habitat, surface waters, aquifers and development, properties that support recreation, Recreation Department facilities, trail networks with trail system areas. This will equate to 5 maps throughout the 7-8 stations.

Will Ludt asked about a map with Amherst's historical resources on it. Steve Whitman stated that this is typically a land use focused document, but heritage and cultural sites can contribute to a person's quality of life in Town. Will Ludt stated that he would work on a draft of this map.

Dwight Brew noted that the recreation maps may take some liberties, because the Town does not own any playing fields or indoor recreational facilities, but many of these located in Town are used by the Recreation Department. Steve Whitman stated that participants generally do not care who owns the land, but they do like to see where items are located and who can access them.

Nic Strong suggested having a map for Town facilities. Steve Whitman stated that his concern is that this may leave some people unsatisfied as there will be no additional information on it.

Steve Whitman stated that he is suggesting four focus groups that will have informed people on each topic to sit and have a discussion that can be documented for future planning purposes. These focus groups are housing, economic development, municipal facilities, and conservation/resource protection. There are two user groups that will be reached out to separately, youth and seniors. He believes these focus groups could be started after the holidays, possibly in January.

Dwight Brew stated that he struggles with including a focus group for municipal facilities because, if not considering the schools, there have only been minor expansions to the DPW and Police Station facilities but otherwise there are not many other facilities in Town and there are no plans to build more, other than the proposed Recreation Center from the Recreation Department.

Tim Kachmar noted that there may be changes to Town services, depending on the buildout analysis results. He asked if it would make sense to plan for the growth of Town Departments due to increased population.

Chris Yates suggested that this focus group could be for municipal facilities and services. He believes there could be discussion regarding recreation facilities, sports courts, the Transfer Station, and future growth.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Steve Whitman stated that he would plan to reach out to youths and seniors in January as well. He stated that he would normally find a group of approximately 15 to 20 children interested in discussing some of these topics. It usually works best for him to go in and be part of classes during school hours.

October 26, 2021

DRAFT

Bill Stoughton, 11 Pine Top Road, asked if the Committee will be seeking input on reduced use of energy resources or more efficient use of these resources in Town. He suggested the Committee could consider policy changes requiring solar power or increased insulation standards for new developments. He explained that some members of the Conservation Commission would like to drive home these points at the public forum.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Bill Stoughton stated he believes that the Town may have latitude to enact ordinances requiring developments to be built to more stringent requirements than the national building codes.

Dwight Brew asked if this item would be considered as a proposal for increased bonus density to developers. Bill Stoughton stated that, while he was not considering that, the Committee may want to discuss if the Town wants to be proactive in requiring or encouraging this type of ordinance. Bill Stoughton noted that it could be a question for Town facilities also, in that placing solar panels on a facility may reduce how much is spent on electricity.

Steve Whitman stated that he would be interested in the Committee agreeing to have a focus group for energy and sustainability.

5. Approval of Minutes August 24, 2021, & September 28, 2021

Will Ludt moved to approve the meeting minutes of August 24, 2021, as presented. Tim Kachmar seconded.

Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Will Ludt - aye, Tim Kachmar – aye, and Tom Gauthier - aye; motion carried unanimously.

Tim Kachmar moved to approve the meeting minutes of September 28, 2021, as presented. Will Ludt seconded.

Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Will Ludt - aye, Tim Kachmar – aye, and Tom Gauthier - abstain; 4-0-1 motion carried.

5. Old/New Business – none.

Chris Yates moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm. Tom Gauthier seconded.

Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Will Ludt - aye, Tim Kachmar – aye, and Tom Gauthier - aye; motion carried unanimously.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: (enter date of meeting at which approved and then go to header, change DRAFT to APPROVED and include approved date in the footer.