

December 13, 2021

**APPROVED**

1 In attendance: Dwight Brew, Chris Yates, Will Ludt, Jared Hardner, and Tracie Adams.  
2 Staff in attendance: Natasha Kypfer, Town Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary  
3 (remote)  
4 Also in attendance: Steve Whitman, and Zak Brohinsky (remote), Resilience Planning & Design  
5

6 **1. Call to Order**

7 Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.  
8

9 **2. Update on Outreach and Marketing of Online Engagement Tools**

10 Steve Whitman explained that the online worksheet was kept open and online engagement was  
11 increased. This led to approximately an additional 40 responses. The worksheet is proposed to be  
12 kept open for another six weeks. He is proposing that each member of the Committee sign up to  
13 go speak to 1-2 civic committees/groups.  
14

15 Natasha Kypfer explained that the Community Development Department proceeded with  
16 outreach through the Recreation Department newsletter, the Library newsletter, the Amherst  
17 Citizen online edition and on their Facebook page, the ACTV channel, and through the Town's  
18 Vimeo site.  
19

20 Will Ludt stated that the Heritage Commission is signed up to speak to the Garden Club in  
21 January.  
22

23 In response to a question from Dwight Brew regarding why additional input is being requested  
24 after the original survey, Steve Whitman explained that this allows for a broad array of ways to  
25 give input. The worksheet is a larger ask than the survey, in terms of the open-ended questions.  
26 These responses give additional context.  
27

28 Will Ludt stated that he believes each board/commission should have some discussion regarding  
29 the Master Plan update at their meetings.  
30

31 **3. Initial Findings from the Forum**

32 In response to a question from Chris Yates, Steve Whitman stated that approximately 66  
33 responses to the worksheet have been received; 20-25 of those were received during the public  
34 forum.  
35

36 Zak Brohinsky explained that the completion rate for the worksheet appears to be higher for  
37 online responses. He noted that a few themes seem to be becoming apparent from the responses:

- 38 1) open space/conservation & resource protection/trails & recreation.
- 39 2) Amherst's rural character: some people seem to define that as larger, single-family  
40 lots, while others have an issue with this limiting the amount of affordable housing in  
41 Town. Affordable housing was also a popular theme topic. There seem to be more  
42 responses indicating a desire to include affordable housing options in Town, than not.
- 43 3) Traffic comments across a number of the topics, some regarding the lack of  
44 walkability around Town, and some dealing with traffic.

December 13, 2021

**APPROVED**

Jared Hardner noted that it would be interesting to see the findings from the worksheet cross-referenced with that from the survey. Affordable housing was not as pronounced of a topic that came through from the survey.

Chris Yates stated that he believes the public is unclear as to how the Planning Board can manage development. Will Ludt noted that there will be a Planning Board public hearing on Wednesday on proposed zoning amendments. Chris Yates explained that some of the proposals include putting a cap on the percentage over baseline density on Planned Residential Developments (PRDs) and trying to define 'rural character.'

Tracie Adams suggested that some of the worksheet responses may hold possible definitions to 'rural character.' Zak Brohinsky stated that he would review the responses and pull out words or themes that may fit.

#### **4. Next Steps in the Planning Process and Schedule**

Steve Whitman stated that the intention is still to complete the Master Plan update by July 2022. He noted that Tom Gauthier is helping him to get the information for Souhegan 2.0 to include in the Plan. He asked for help finding photos of seniors to include. The online engagement will continue into January. There will be an engagement report in February and focus groups could be held in March.

Chris Yates noted that approximately 100-120 people originally stated interest in being part of the focus groups and he would like to make sure they are included in the process.

Jared Hardner stated that the Conservation Commission has started working on some draft materials for water resources to be used during the update process for potential goals and implementation.

Steve Whitman stated that themes will likely begin to emerge in January. The group can then discuss future land use. The themes will likely have clear ideas for actions and measurable items that can be included in a draft Plan.

Will Ludt stated that groups, like the Garden Club, will be able to submit their comments through the worksheet and by volunteering for the focus groups. Steve Whitman stated that people can also be involved during the draft plan review that will occur for a couple of months, likely into June. Usually, it is recommended that the Planning Board hold more than one public hearing on this topic.

In response to a question from Jared Hardner regarding when concrete ideas are going to be put on paper, Steve Whitman stated that this will happen during these Committee meetings. If there are a reasonable number of themes decided on, certain groups can start to focus on items through workshops, which may be more necessary than focus groups. Actionables are needed to review with these groups before holding the workshops.

December 13, 2021

**APPROVED**

Chris Yates stated that the timeline seems short for moving forward with actionables and public involvement. Steve Whitman stated that the Committee will shortly begin to review potential themes and start to move forward with actionables.

## **5. Review of the 2010 Vision, Goals, and Key Recommendations**

Steve Whitman stated that the Vision generally states a future condition and is present tense, active voice. The 2010 Vision was: *“Amherst will preserve and enhance its unique rural and small-town character. Amherst will guide development in a manner that is ecologically sustainable and protective of the environment.”* He stated that this was likely very forward-thinking for the time but may be missing items.

Jared Hardner stated that there may be issues with trying to define ‘rural and small-town character.’ These may have different meanings to different people.

Chris Yates noted that the community wants to preserve the rural character, but also modernize a bit in order to attract new people into the community. A good example of that is the new Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee and its projects.

There was discussion regarding the screening of new developments being important, along with the protection of water resources.

Dwight Brew stated that actions are needed to implement goals. He thinks the 2010 Vision statement is okay but does not involve a level of implementation.

Tracie Adams stated that the Vision statement needs to reflect the Town and involve possible next steps.

Steve Whitman asked if the Committee wants to have a goals section come after the Vision or delve into the themes and see what goals come to light. Dwight Brew stated that he believed this project was going to lead to certain themes that cross the multiple traditional areas.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew regarding examples of multi-functional themes, Steve Whitman stated that some of the options may include infrastructure (natural infrastructure, built infrastructure, and social infrastructure); natural and cultural resources; economic development (nodes of mixed-use development); housing; health & recreation; and quality infrastructure & municipal services. The Plan could also have an energy & sustainability theme instead. Another approach would be to look at themes for resources (nodes/activity, infrastructure, etc.).

Zak Brohinsky stated that some of the other themes proposed on the posters at the public forum were population/housing, water/land use, economy, transportation, heritage/culture, recreation, and land use. Steve Whitman stated that he would not include a theme on population, as it is carried throughout the other themes.

December 13, 2021

**APPROVED**

Dwight Brew stated that the Committee needs to think about the audience of the Master Plan. He stated that it seems as though the approach may be different if the audience is intended to only read one section, versus reading about the whole Town. Steve Whitman stated that he believes the audience is potentially new board/commission members and developers. He does not believe many members of the public read Master Plans before deciding to move into Town.

Chris Yates stated that the Master Plan is to identify where the Town is today, where it would like to be in 10-20 years and the actionables to get to that place. The plan is being written for the community as a whole.

Dwight Brew stated that the Implementation Plan might more naturally attach to certain themes. The Committee could work backward from action items to understand which themes are appropriate.

Steve Whitman suggested that Resilience could draft a few themes for review at the January meeting. The Committee can then tease out a list of actions and the themes will become clearer.

Jared Hardner noted that the 2010 Master Plan featured 10 Key Master Plan Recommendations. The Committee discussed if these items could be used for potential themes.

Dwight Brew stated that the items from the survey could be tagged to each one of these 10 Key ideas. Jared Hardner noted that approximately six of the items on the list struck him as clear, active recommendations. Steve Whitman stated that he believes there could be 4-5 themes gathered from the 10 Key items list. Data can then be teased out from the existing conditions, and the vision and steps to get there can be included.

Dwight Brew stated that he believes economic development and affordability seem to be left out of the list.

Steve Whitman explained that he believes housing will be adequately addressed in the Master Plan. He noted that many of the worksheet responses mentioned not minding multi-unit buildings, depending on the look of the unit and which area of Town it's located in.

Zak Brohinsky stated that there does not necessarily need to be a whole chapter for housing, but it can instead be woven into the other themes as to how it can maintain Amherst's character while still allowing for development. While the process may lead to 4-6 themes, these will also hit on a number of sectors.

Steve Whitman explained that there was a map to go along with the 2010 recommendations that identified sectors of development in Town and discussed the rural housing areas and resources. Chris Yates stated that the map is still useful but there needs to be meaning behind the recommendations. Steve Whitman suggested that maps showing a similar pattern of development may be helpful. Chris Yates stated that he would like to see information regarding multimodal

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Master Plan Steering Committee

December 13, 2021

**APPROVED**

transportation areas, conservation, water treatment options, or other long-term thinking placed on the map.

Steve Whitman stated that he and Zak Brohinsky will try to get maps on potential action items to the Committee before the next meeting.

Tracie Adams stated that she envisions each theme potentially having its own map with potential action items.

Will Ludt stated that the Town recently supported a Senate Bill for a multimodal path down Route 122 into Hollis. Steve Whitman stated that this path is part of the State's 10-Year Plan and will be listed in the Town's existing conditions.

**6. Approval of Minutes November 23, 2021**

**Tracie Adams moved to approve the meeting minutes of November 23, 2021, as presented. Chris Yates seconded.**

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

**5. Old/New Business – none.**

**Chris Yates moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:07pm. Tracie Adams seconded.**

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

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: January 25, 2022