

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

April 26, 2022

APPROVED

In attendance: Tracie Adams - Chair, Will Ludt, Danielle Pray – Board of Selectmen – Ex-Officio, Tim Kachmar [7:52pm], Jared Hardner.
Staff in attendance: Nic Strong, Community Development Director (remote), and Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary (remote)
Also in attendance: Steve Whitman, and Zak Brohinsky (remote), Resilience Planning & Design, and Sara Siskavich, NRPC. Also, Bill Stoughton and Jeanne Ludt.

1. Call to Order

Tracie Adams called the meeting to order at 6:31pm and introduced the members. She noted the lack of a quorum, at only four members. She noted that, per RSA 674:2, the Planning Board commissioned the Master Plan Steering Committee to adopt a new Master Plan. The group had its first meeting on August 17, 2020. A public survey was conducted which had wonderful input. Resilience Planning & Design (RP&D) has been hard at work on a draft document for the group to review. On February 22, 2022, the Planning Board met and discussed the Committee's work thus far. The Planning Board took a vote to allow the Committee to continue to develop the Master Plan. She had a conversation with Planning Board Chair Arnie Rosenblatt that updates on the Committee's work should be regular, likely during the Board's second meeting of the month. On April 14, 2022, there was a Zoom meeting between Nic Strong, herself, Sara Siskavich and Steve Whitman regarding the additional two buildout analyses. These will be discussed this evening.

2. Buildout analysis discussion with NRPC

- **Determine remaining scenarios**
- **Timeline for delivery (May 24th)**

Sara Siskavich reviewed what a buildout analysis is. A buildout analysis is a quantitative exercise and model through GIS to examine the potential for developable land in Town through different scenarios. It is also an expression of the local land use controls. The base scenario examines the existing buildings in Town and current zoning. Models are then created using different constraints to look at how the Town could be built out. Different time horizons can also be used. A 20-year horizon was used for Amherst's baseline buildout analysis. Impact indicators are metrics that quantify what the impacts could be for additional build outs, such as units, commercial square feet, town departments, emergency services, etc. NRPC works with the Town to determine what reasonable indicators could be for additional scenarios. During the April 14th meeting, the small group looked at what indicators could be included. Local environmental protections, such as protecting open space and ensuring water quality, were noted as key items to include. These natural resources are spread throughout Town

Scenario 2, Increased Local Environmental Protection, represents the benefits and impacts of increased conservation of a list of vacant parcels prioritized due to size, adjacency to conservation land, and prime habitat. It also precludes development around public wellhead protection areas and increases shoreland protections, for example along the Souhegan River.

Scenario 3, Maximum Local Environmental Protection, is a theoretical extreme in which remaining vacant land is precluded from future development, as well as commercial/industrial

April 26, 2022

APPROVED

development in the Aquifer Protection Overlay District. Additional floodplains (100 and 500 year) and moderate slopes are now also constraints to development.

Sara Siskavich explained that the third scenario is not required and may not be deemed necessary by the Committee. The Committee could also reexamine Scenario 2 by looking at reprioritizing conservation lands. Scenario 2, as presented, looks to conserve an extra 600 acres of conservation land over the base scenario. Each constraint is not necessarily exclusive, as certain items, such as steep slopes and floodplains, may be located in the same area. This will be more apparent as the model is actually run. NRPC's contract for this buildout analysis is up at the end of June and a report will be presented to the Committee. She is hoping to hear from the Committee this evening which direction it would like to go with these additional scenarios.

In response to a question from Jared Hardner regarding the preliminary numbers presented to the Committee for the proposed scenarios, Sara Siskavich explained that these numbers come from the GIS software and are ballpark figures that will then become more detailed once the model is run.

In response to a question from Will Ludt regarding how the Planning Board will use this data to make decisions, Sara Siskavich stated that one aspect is that the tax revenue of set aside conservation land can be studied. The map will show where new modeled development units will be placed, based on where conservation land is proposed to be put aside. The Board can then look at what the impact will be if development is placed only in certain areas of Town.

In response to a question from Danielle Pray, Sara Siskavich stated that these scenarios should complement the Master Plan work being done by Resilience. Danielle Pray noted that zoning changes may come about from this information.

Tim Kachmar entered the meeting at 7:52pm.

Will Ludt asked if additional models could be run based on different housing types that might be needed in Town. Sara Siskavich stated that the strength of the model is spatial in that all of the characteristics of the Town's zoning districts are included, such as types of housing allowed. A housing-based scenario could be run.

Jared Hardner stated that this exercise reminds everyone that we live in a dynamic setting. It is important in the context of managing growth over time. These models cannot detect exactly where a unit would be placed in the future, but rather explain where units may be more likely to be placed. Some items proposed on these models will/will not occur based on decisions made by the Planning Board. Previously, he believed the group thought these scenarios would simulate the effect of changes made by the Planning Board because the Master Plan is a reflection of what the community wants more/less of, and these scenarios tie into the Master Plan. Certain details of the Planning ordinances cannot be reflected through these models though. He struggled with coming up with ideas for the additional scenarios because these are not the correct way to

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

April 26, 2022

APPROVED

88 analyze the effects of Planning Board ordinance changes, which seems to be what the Master
89 Plan reflects.

90
91 Tracie Adams agreed that the scenarios cannot model these small details.

92
93 Sara Siskavich stated that the audiences for buildout analyses are Planning Boards or similar
94 groups. These are tools for those involved in land use controls, but not necessarily for laypeople,
95 or to be used as educational outreach tools.

96
97 Steve Whitman explained that the meeting on February 14th brainstormed that natural resources,
98 water resources, and land conservation, were some of the items to drive where development in
99 Town should happen. There may be other resources or values that the group would like to use
100 instead, and these could be noted to NRPC for additional scenarios. If, upon comparing Scenario
101 2 with the baseline scenario, the group decided that it likes the results, this may allow the group
102 to determine what regulatory actions could drive toward that. The group has not seemed
103 comfortable in the past deciding where exactly in Town to place development/conservation,
104 which is why this scenario distributed it throughout Town.

105
106 Jared Hardner suggested that he would like to see a map shaded by density of new development,
107 instead of specific points. Sara Siskavich stated that she understands. The model is based on a
108 lot-by-lot basis, but she may be able to create a density map representative of this.

109
110 Jared Hardner stated that he has ranked every parcel in Town based on priority for conservation.
111 These are ranked based on contribution to connectivity, size, etc. He could share this with
112 NRPC, but is not sure that is the best idea, as this is essentially the Town's "card" based on its
113 open space acquisition plan and it shouldn't necessarily be placed on a map. Sara Siskavich
114 stated that this work sounds much more detailed, and she would be interested to see it.

115
116 Tim Kachmar suggested that the density heat map be laid over each of the scenarios.

117
118 Jared Hardner explained that there is an additional scenario which could be used for other
119 constraints of interest to the group. He stated that all of the numbers have to relate to critical
120 thresholds. For example, if the scenario shows that the number of police calls rises based on the
121 proposed buildout scenario, the group must then know how much the number has to rise before a
122 new Police Station is needed. Similarly, the number of additional children in Town, and how
123 many would then require new schools to be built. These numbers are only numbers until they
124 have implications on the actions of the Town. Sara Siskavich stated that the basic scenario could
125 be run all the way to full buildout so that thresholds for certain impacts can be timestamped. This
126 could be the third scenario. The group would need to tell NRPC which thresholds it wants to
127 examine.

128
129 Nic Strong stated that she sent emails to all Department Heads asking what their needs would be
130 for facilities and services based on the baseline scenario. She has heard back from two of the
131 nine so far.

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

April 26, 2022

APPROVED

Sara Siskavich stated that running the buildout scenario to a full buildout will also give a better idea of the overall numbers. Jared Hardner stated that he believes this will be the most helpful output to tell the group what things will look like in the future.

Bill Stoughton, 11 Pinetop Road, stated that the various scenarios won't change the amount of growth; this is dictated by x units/year of growth rate put into the calculation. Jared Hardner stated that, if the calculation is always driven by growth rate, this becomes limited to local concerns, such as if people want to live in a certain area of Town based on where development/conservation may occur. Tim Kachmar stated he does not believe the growth rate will necessarily remain constant. There are too many initiatives in the State trying to open up growth. The Town may be driven to produce certain amounts of growth based on the State.

Sara Siskavich stated that another item to look at could be residential proximity to open space. This could show potential benefits of a scenario.

Jared Hardner suggested that if the scenarios were driven by growth rates, it might show if any of the items will ever become capped out. Sara Siskavich stated that the model looks across the Town and considers what is available. As growth rate slows, the pattern of this development will remain the same, it will simply fill in more slowly.

Tracie Adams stated that NRPC could always be commissioned in the future to reevaluate these items if the drivers change, such as changes handed down from the State, at which time a further build out scenario could be run.

Jeanne Ludt, 3 School Street, mentioned an article from Yankee Magazine 1977 regarding *Who Wants to Live in Amherst*. This was during a huge time of growth for the Town, from 1960-1977, when the population grew from 2,000 to 8,000. At that time NRPC at a public hearing predicted that the population would grow to 15,000 by 1980. Historical perspective is valuable. Conservation and environmental protection are important things to consider at this time. She is concerned that the Master Plan should have a theme that is centered on communication because the Town seems to have a problem getting the word out to the public. This is not due to lack of trying, but lack of resources. She hopes the Committee will keep that as a central focus.

Will Ludt asked if the PFOA issue should be brought into this scenario as a constraint. Jared Hardner stated that there is not yet enough data on the distribution of PFOAs. He has recommended that new developments have community wells to deal with the treatment of water on those properties. Other, existing wells do have options to treat this issue.

Jared Hardner asked about the Shoreland Water Quality Protection constraint. Sara Siskavich stated that the baseline should include some levels for this. This item can be followed up on.

Sara Siskavich stated that the Overlay District has some conditional uses within the Aquifer Protection District which are not directly mentioned in Scenario 2.

April 26, 2022

APPROVED

Bill Stoughton stated that the Town does not currently prohibit building in the floodplain. Certain constraints are placed on the construction, but it is not prohibited. This should possibly then not be included as a constraint in the baseline scenario. It may be interesting to include the prohibition of building within the floodplain (500-year) in Scenario 2.

The Committee agreed to get any additional changes to Nic Strong for consideration.

Sara Siskavich summarized the changes discussed this evening, including that the baseline scenario will include the Shoreland Protection District information and remove the restriction on floodplains. Scenario 2 will include the prioritization on conserved land as presented, keep the grade for slopes at 20%, and include the 100-year and 500-year floodplains.

The Committee agreed that Scenario 2 should move forward, as proposed, and continue to discuss a potential third scenario at a future meeting.

Jared Hardner moved for NRPC to move ahead with two scenarios for the buildout analysis, with changes as discussed. Tim Kachmar seconded.

Voting: 5-0-0 motion carried.

3. Update on Master Plan with RP&D

- **How the Buildout will inform the Plan**
- **Tentative schedule:**
- **Continue drafting**
- **May 24th review Buildout Scenarios**
- **May 24th review Draft Actions by Theme**
- **Finalize text and begin formatting**
- **June 20th meeting to review draft plan**
- **Request for images**

Steve Whitman stated that Resilience is considering how much of the Master Plan draft document to keep writing at this time, knowing that the Committee may yet change course based on results from the NRPC buildout scenarios. Approximately 60% of the document has been written, in line with what the Committee previously shared with the Planning Board. He explained that he will bring a draft to the Committee, and that he then might come back to the Committee with priority actions after the Committee hears from NRPC on the completed scenarios. The first draft should be engaging, and the Committee will need to speak to its style. There will also be a digital story map as part of the final project. Photos are very necessary to this process.

The Committee stated that it would reach out to various people to gather photos of Town. Steve Whitman stated that he would send the Committee a place for people to add photos to.

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

April 26, 2022

APPROVED

Steve Whitman stated that the Committee is doing great on budget and timeline for the Master Plan. If the group decides to slow down the process in order to focus on the NRPC scenarios, that is okay.

Tracie Adams asked if the buildout scenarios should be capped at 20-years into the future. Steve Whitman stated that he believes it seems that would be the cap for the baseline and Scenario 2. There could be an option to create a third scenario based on a full build out if the Town can receive the necessary information from departments.

Will Ludt asked about the theme to be used for the third scenario. Steve Whitman stated that the Committee should think about if it has another question that needs to be answered from the baseline scenario. The Committee could ask the Planning Board if it has an opinion on this. Tracie Adams noted that the next Planning Board agenda is slightly packed, and this may not be able to be addressed.

Steve Whitman stated that the Committee also previously discussed identifying areas in Town that could be appropriate for mixed use development. Allowing for a higher density than the current zoning allows for in certain areas, could be interesting to see.

Will Ludt stated that he would like to see the Economic Revitalization Zones in Amherst reevaluated at some point.

Steve Whitman agreed with the idea to see a density heatmap as part of the buildout scenarios.

It was noted that the next meetings are proposed to be on May 24, 2022, and June 20, 2022.

Will Ludt asked when the Master Plan will be shown to the public for its input. Steve Whitman suggested that the Committee review it for a couple of months first and bring it to the Planning Board around August. Tim Kachmar suggested that September might be a good time to show it to the public after summer vacation time.

Will Ludt stated that he briefed this item to the Amherst Dems and Garden Club. There was not much feedback from either group.

4. Approval of Minutes February 14, 2022

The Committee agreed to table this item to its next meeting.

5. Old/New Business – None at this time.

**Tim Kachmar moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:01pm. Jared Hardner seconded.
Voting: 5-0-0 motion carried.**

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

TOWN OF AMHERST
Master Plan Steering Committee

April 26, 2022

APPROVED

263 Minutes approved: July 26, 2022