

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Master Plan Steering Committee

April 05, 2021

**APPROVED**

1 In attendance: Dwight Brew, Chris Yates, Tim Kachmar, Tracie Adams, Tom Quinn, Will Ludt,  
2 Jared Hardner [6:47 PM], and Joe Ilsley.

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

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

7 Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:30pm., and Natasha Kypfer read the following  
8 statement. On behalf of the Master Plan Steering Committee, I find that due to the State of  
9 Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in  
10 accordance with the Governor’s Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-  
11 04, as extended by various Executive Orders, this public body is authorized to meet  
12 electronically.

13  
14 Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this  
15 meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor’s Emergency Order.

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

19  
20 We are utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting.

21 All members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this  
22 meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if  
23 necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone #312-626-6799  
24 and password 826 5424 0296, or by clicking on the following website address:  
25 <https://zoom.us/j/82654240296> that was included in the public notice of this meeting.

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

27  
28 We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the  
29 meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions  
30 have also been provided on the website of the Planning Board at: [www.amherstnh.gov](http://www.amherstnh.gov).  
31 Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are  
32 problems with access: If anybody has a problem, please call 603-341-5290.

33  
34 Adjourning the meeting if the public is unable to access the meeting:

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

37  
38 Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.  
39 Let’s start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their  
40 presence, please also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this  
41 meeting, which is required under the Right-to- Know law.

42  
43 **Roll call attendance: Dwight Brew, Chris Yates, Will Ludt, Tom Quinn, Tracie**  
44 **Adams, Tim Kachmar, and Joe Ilsley – all present and alone.**

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**2. Committee discussion regarding presentations from planning consultants for Master Plan update**

Dwight Brew explained that the Committee heard from three vendors last Monday and Tuesday regarding proceeding with a Master Plan update – Emerge Community Planning & Strategy, Resilience Planning & Design, LLC, and the Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC). He asked the Committee to consider if outside assistance on the Master Plan update is needed, the merits of each vendor, and which, if any, of the three the Committee would like to engage.

Chris Yates stated that he believes if the Town wants to complete the Master Plan process within 12-14 months it would be best to choose one of the companies interviewed. He believes that the companies have good ideas and the expertise to do the studies needed. He noted that at least one of the applicants seemed to have a newer approach, including graphs and pictures.

Tracie Adams agreed that the Town needs outside help for this project. She stated that the thematic idea seems to be a good one and she likes the idea of including graphs and pictures in order to be more viewer friendly.

Tom Quinn stated that he is weighing the pros and cons of each applicant. He stated that Emerge came into the meeting late, due to technical difficulties. He also has a concern that Emerge has never completed a Master Plan in NH; the company may not understand some of the local concerns. One pro about Emerge is that they are not the most expensive company interviewed. He believes there would be lots of benefits to hiring NRPC, as they have all of the data that most other companies will be relying on. He does wonder if NRPC would be able to help write the Master Plan without bias. Other pros for NRPC are their cost and their ability to get the project done quickly. In terms of Resilience, he has some concerns regarding their projected timeline of 12-16 months, and their cost. However, Resilience has a lot of experience creating Master Plans in NH. Tom Quinn stated that he does not believe there was a clear winner out of the interviewees. His major concern is the amount of time it seems it will take to engage a third party to write the Master Plan for the Town.

Dwight Brew noted that when the Town last updated the Master Plan, a third party was hired for a cost of approximately \$100,000.

*Jared Hardner joined the meeting at 6:47pm.*

Will Ludt agreed with hiring an outside third party to help with the Master Plan update. He noted that he does not believe there is a clear winner out of the three proposals presented. He questioned if it would be possible to create an Associated Contract Agreement and work with multiple vendors on the project in a hybrid scenario. He stated that Emerge is a company from CT and seems to have worked with a lot of larger cities on Master Plans. He is unsure how this would fit with Amherst's update. He explained that NRPC knows the Town and the region well. He also noted that Resilience appears to have a nice visual layout proposed for the Master Plan.

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Tom Quinn noted that he has a concern about any vendor not being able to drill deeply into a subject due to a limited number of meetings with the Committee and/or the public.

Tim Kachmar agreed that a third-party contractor should be used for the project. He explained that he skimmed the old Wilton Master Plan completed by NRPC and found it difficult to use because it is 200 pages long with many figures and statistics. He does not believe this type of a document would be as useful as some of the other, more visual, documents outlined by the other companies. He noted that the purpose of the Master Plan is to guide land use and development into the future. He was most impressed with Resilience, but also noted that their proposal is the most expensive. He also believed that Emerge had some good ideas as well. He wants to make sure the Town does not pay a lot of money for another update that does not develop a useful product.

Joe Ilsley stated that he has some concern about using a third-party vendor for creating the Master Plan. He is concerned that this may lead to a cookie-cutter approach but believes that the Town might be in a better place due to its intention to use a theme approach and the successful survey already completed. While he does believe the Town needs outside support for this project, he would prefer to see a smaller, nimbler vendor that can address the Town's needs.

Jared Hardner agreed with bringing in a third party. He stated that his largest concern is making sure the Town is left with an actionable plan that lays out specific steps and possible courses of action. In terms of items such as protection of water quality, which was discerned as being important to citizens through the survey, he believes a valuable Master Plan will show the Town what it needs to do in order to make that happen.

Chris Yates noted that Resilience's proposal equates to approximately 16 hours/week for about 14 months. He liked the visual display shown by Resilience. He noted that he would like to see a build out analysis from NRPC, overseen by Resilience, if the company is chosen. He believes it is important to have a neutral third-party vendor for this project.

Tracie Adams stated that her preferred vendor is Resilience. She believes the company's proposal included an easy-to-look-at and actionable plan, of a visual and graphic nature. While NRPC has many of the necessary documents and has experience in this area, she is unsure if they could be completely neutral in their opinions. She noted that Emerge also showed a visually graphic plan but has not done work with Towns of this type and size.

Dwight Brew noted that Emerge is actually out of NJ but has completed Master Plans for CT towns. He noted that NRPC has a lot of the necessary data that other vendors might use because it is a quasi-governmental organization. He believes that there would not be an issue with either of the other vendors getting data from NRPC, if chosen. He believes that the Town should engage one of the vendors as a partner in this project, and that the Committee can continue to do additional work on the topic. He stated that he believes NRPC says they would be able to work for the Town on this project without bias, but that is yet unclear. He believes the most flexible,

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small team that has all of the knowledge necessary about this process is Resilience, even if their proposed timeline is a little longer than desired.

Nic Strong noted that Emerge's connectivity issues were unfortunate. She stated that Emerge does not appear to have worked with many small towns and actually uses participants from two separate companies in designing Master Plans for towns. She expressed concern over the fact that NRPC does not only work on Master Plans and may become very busy at times. She also noted that the thematic approach is a different type of innovation for NRPC. She noted that NRPC could perform a build out study for the Town at any time as a stand-alone document. She stated that she believes Resilience was a very professional group. She believes them to be the most innovative of the three and found their Rochester Downtown Master Plan to have very clear implementation strategies. She believes the Committee should select one of the vendors and then work to negotiate the scope of work, including a timeline, number of hours, etc.

Natasha Kypfer stated that Emerge's technical issues were unfortunate. She believes that Emerge has some interesting plans, but that they were not necessarily articulated well. While she has a lot of respect for NRPC, she was very impressed with Resilience. She believes Resilience's presentation was on point and that they provided examples showing towns from all over the state, with an innovative point of view.

The Committee discussed the possibility of reworking the RFP and sending it out for bid again after reviewing the scope of work desired.

In response to a question from Tom Quinn, Nic Strong explained that towns are supposed to update their Master Plans every 5-10 years, but that if one takes extra time they will not be penalized by the state.

Tom Quinn stated that, per section 4.17 regarding Planned Residential Developments (PRDs), these developments need to be consistent with the Master Plan. The Town only has the current Master Plan to work with and it is not consistent. He does not want to leave this item to sit for another 16 months.

Joe Ilsley stated that it is more important to have an actionable plan than to complete one quickly.

Chris Yates agreed that having to wait an extra few months for an actionable plan is okay.

In response to a question from Will Ludt, Nic Strong stated that if one theme section of the Master Plan is completed before the others, the Town can have as many public hearings as it wants on that section in order to get the points done and the section updated.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Nic Strong explained that it is important for the Master Plan to match any zoning amendments to be made. If there are some clear vital items that

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come up in regard to zoning changes through this process, the Town can move forward on these items for next year's ballot.

Dwight Brew suggested that the Committee take Resilience's submittal and turn it into a scope of work for the members to comment on. Chris Yates suggested that the group meet with Resilience to refine the project scope and timeline as needed. This could also be incorporated into a kick-off meeting with Resilience.

Dwight Brew explained that the potential next step is to invite Resilience to speak with the Committee about additional items, after the Committee writes down some thoughts on other items it wants to see in the scope of work.

**Chris Yates moved to select Resilience Planning & Design, LLC, based on their proposal and visual presentation to move forward with the Amherst Master Plan project. Joe Ilsley seconded.**

**Chris Yates amended his motion to select Resilience Planning & Design, LLC, based on their submittal and presentation. Joe Ilsley seconded.**

**Roll call: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Will Ludt - aye, Tom Quinn - aye, Tracie Adams - aye, Jared Hardner - aye, Tim Kachmar – aye, and Joe Ilsley - aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

**Jared Hardner moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:47pm PM. Tracie Adams seconded.**

**Roll call: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Will Ludt - aye, Tom Quinn - aye, Tracie Adams - aye, Jared Hardner - aye, Tim Kachmar – aye, and Joe Ilsley - aye. Motion carried unanimously.**

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: July 19, 2021