

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Master Plan Steering Committee

September 11, 2020

**APPROVED**

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

Staff in attendance: Nic Strong – Community Development Director, Natasha Kypfer – Town Planner

**1. Roll Call to Order**

Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:30pm +/-, and Natasha Kypfer read the following statement. 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 875 2591 3497, or by clicking on the following website address: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87525913497> 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](http://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.

September 11, 2020

**APPROVED**

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

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

Chris Yates shared a presentation put together by himself, Natasha Kypfer, Tim Kachmar, Tom Gauthier, and Joe Ilsley. He explained that the proposed themes were drafted based on Nic Strong and Mike Akillian's suggestions.

Joe Ilsley stated that the recommended themes initially were: Rural Character & Quality of Life; History, Heritage, and Culture; Growth, Development, and Design; People & Community; and Essential Facilities and Services. Other potential themes included: Fiscal Practices, Goals, and Concepts; Environmental Protection Philosophies; Energy Efficiency, Goals, and Strategies; and Care for Community Members.

The final suggested list of themes is:

- Fiscal Practices, Goals, and Concepts
- Environmental Protection Philosophies
- Critical Infrastructure (Essential Facilities and Services)
- History, Heritage, and Rural Character
- Our Quality of Life (People, Community, and Education)
- Growth, Economic Development, and Design – Residential
- Growth, Economic Development, and Design – Commercial
- Resource Efficiency, Goals, and Strategies

Joe Ilsley explained that the themes were brainstormed, a definition was considered, and the guiding principles were used to define desired/undesired outcomes. He ran through the draft definitions of the first suggested theme.

**Fiscal Practices, Goals, and Concepts**

It is the goal of the Master Plan to foster and preserve the economic prosperity of this community, provide long-term stabilization of the tax rate, ensure equitable distribution of tax burden, ensure lifetime affordability to residents of our community, and pursue efficiency and the highest level of stewardship of taxpayer funds.

All elected and appointed officials, official boards, committees, and any entity contracted to the Town are encouraged to adopt, implement, and achieve the Fiscal Practices, Goals, and Concepts outlined in the Guiding Principles whenever reasonably achievable and incorporated in all phases of the planning cycle.

Dwight Brew stated that he believes this plan looks similar to what might come out after the community is surveyed, not before. He is concerned that the community may think that this small group developed the Master Plan before reaching out for their opinion.

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Master Plan Steering Committee

September 11, 2020

**APPROVED**

Joe Ilsley agreed but believes that some level of context is needed in order to ask for community support levels on each Guiding Principle.

Dwight Brew stated that some portions of what was presented are outside of a Master Plan. Some of these fiscal goals, practices and concept items may not find their way into a Master Plan but may be included in a Town/School Strategic Plan instead. Fiscal items do not necessarily fall under the Planning Board's scope but may fall under the Board of Selectmen or School Boards.

Nic Strong agreed that the Master Plan is a statutory duty of the Planning Board to endeavor to get the Town to a land use development ideal. The items that have come back from the subcommittee are ideas that she usually sees come back after a second or third polling of the community while working on themes. She envisions a process involving a survey of the community in which they are involved in putting together the detailed objectives for each theme. Land use does involve the environment, economic development, quality of life, etc., but there are items being discussed here that are beyond what she would expect to see in the Master Plan.

Jared Hardner noted that a weakness for a Master Plan could be a "fluffy vision" without detailing the amenities balanced with the tax and infrastructure needed to achieve them. Nic Strong explained that that is how a Master Plan plays with a CIP (Capital Improvements Plan). Thus, these items might not be found within the Master Plan, but the concepts that go along with them may be involved in the goals, in order to tie into the CIP. The Master Plan does not have a budget sheet; it notes the projects that are important to the plan and why.

Chris Yates noted that there is not a lot of back and forth between many of the Committees/Boards in Town. He explained that the subcommittee was looking for overarching ideas to help these groups talk about developing the community in a synergistic way.

Mike Akillian stated that he is unsure if this group has determined its role as a Steering Committee versus the role of the working groups. He is concerned that the community may think decisions have already been made by people with certain agendas. Holistic themes will allow people in the working groups to engage with other work groups to come up with questions for the public to relate to. He believes there are two levels of engagement that this group might want to have with the public: to recruit people to participate in the Master Plan process, and communications items regarding the public's thoughts on potential themes and sub questions. The group might want to think about what kind of strategic items are needed to make the potential themes happen.

Chris Yates noted that he doesn't believe it is useful to go to the public without theme examples for them to discuss.

Tom Quinn stated that face-to-face meetings with the public will be quite limited for this Master Plan process; thus, it might be useful to bring proposed themes to the public to discuss and work

TOWN OF AMHERST  
Master Plan Steering Committee

September 11, 2020

**APPROVED**

through the process differently. He noted that it is important to pay attention to if biases are carried through the process.

Mike Akillian explained that he would like the group to consider its role versus the roles of the working groups. He questioned how the group knows it has the right themes and how it will phrase them to be most accessible to the public.

Joe Ilsley stated that the group was trying to achieve exactly the process that Mike Akillian has explained. Mike Akillian noted that he doesn't find much engaging in the definitions put forth for the proposed themes. Jared Hardner stated that he believed the group was supposed to put forth a menu of themes for the public to discuss. Once approval was received for the themes, Jared Hardner stated that he believed the group would then go out to find people to discuss possible tradeoffs, to then bring back to the community. Joe Ilsley explained that he believed feedback from the community would be sought at each step.

Jared Hardner suggested that this document be edited with an eye toward questions, not answers, and questions without bias.

Chris Yates and Joe Ilsley stated that they would like some specific details about what the Committee wants from the subcommittee, if this product is not the direction that the group wants.

The group agreed that the subcommittee will meet on the 15<sup>th</sup> to try to convert the suggested themes into questions that could be posed to the public, for review by the Committee on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**Jared Harder moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 PM +/-.** Tim Kachmar seconded.

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

*Respectfully submitted,  
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: July 19, 2021