

September 28, 2021

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1 In attendance: Dwight Brew, Tom Gauthier, Chris Yates, Will Ludt, Jared Hardner, Tracie
2 Adams [6:34pm], Tim Kachmar, and Joe Ilsley.
3 Staff in attendance: Nic Strong – Community Development Director, Natasha Kypfer – Town
4 Planner, and Kristan Patenaude – Recording Secretary
5 Also in attendance: Steve Whitman, Resilience Planning & Design; Sara Siskavich, NRPC
6 (remote); and Ryan Friedman, NRPC (remote).
7

8 **1. Call to Order**

9 Dwight Brew called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.
10

11 **2. Update from NRPC regarding the build-out study**

12 Ryan Friedman explained that a build-out study is a planning tool, a piece of information to
13 inform other decisions; something to estimate the remaining developable space and potential; a
14 tool that relies on local regulations, constraints, and assumptions; something to evaluate and
15 compare possible scenarios; and a way to calculate future data via indicators.
16

17 *Tracie Adams entered the meeting at 6:34pm.*
18

19 Ryan Friedman explained that a build-out study is not a prediction, a simulation, a micro-scale
20 tool, or a representation of official town policy, goals, or a plan for the community.
21

22 Sara Siskavich stated that a build-out study is not predictive, but an expression of current land
23 use controls in Town and what may be realized into the future.
24

25 Ryan Friedman shared with the Committee that the draft build-out study was a GIS-centric,
26 parcel-based analysis that used local regulations, development constraints and existing structures
27 along with some assumptions, including an average building footprint, conservation lands,
28 wetlands, buffers, floodplains, and slopes to establish theoretical building sites. He pointed out
29 that some of these assumptions had been discussed with staff and, for instance, no mixed-use
30 properties have been included in the build-out based on existing conditions, but the Committee
31 may wish to discuss that for future development. Ryan Friedman stated that the Town could
32 contain 2,054 new buildings – 1,859 residential and 195 non-residential. He explained that this
33 results in 2,834 new dwelling units, and 3.6M s.f. of non-residential space in Town. The
34 indicators used in this process are based off dwelling units and commercial floor area. The
35 software, CommunityViz, uses national averages and rates to calculate the impacts of
36 development. He asked the Commission to consider which indicators it would like to use in the
37 build-out study. Examples of indicators are labor force, tax revenue, school age population, auto
38 emissions, energy use, traffic volume, etc. Basically, anything that a rate can be assigned to can
39 be used as an indicator and the national rates can be replaced with local rates.
40

41 Ryan Friedman explained that the other two build-out scenarios can include alternates such as
42 new zones in Town, different densities allowed, more constraints, or removing existing
43 constraints. These can be thought of as “what might happen,” or “what could have happened”
44 scenarios. He asked that the Commission discuss the base scenario to see if it is appropriate or

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needs edits, to decide on the indicators to use and to decide on the final build-out scenarios. He stated that the alternate scenarios are being proposed to be presented to the Commission in December, with a final report due in March 2022.

Tim Kachmar stated that this is good information, and he will think about what he would like to see in these scenarios.

Tom Gauthier and Tracie Adams echoed Tim Kachmar's sentiments.

Chris Yates stated that he would like to see municipal demands factored into the scenario. He asked if there is a way to account for potential Planned Residential Developments (PRDs) within the build-out number. He suggested one of the scenarios be a "what if" situation in regard to the conservation properties in Town to try to drive interest for the current Open Space Advisory Committee's work. Finally, he asked that the colors of the included charts and graphics be altered for those who may be colorblind.

Joe Ilsley asked if these scenarios can model out possible expansion of infrastructure systems in Town to support growth. He asked if the models could account for potential increase in impervious surfaces from new buildings. He would like to see if the scenarios can look at potential impact on floodplains in Town, and the water retention of these systems if development is expanded.

In response to a question from Will Ludt, Ryan Friedman explained that the number of potential dwelling units listed in the build-out is higher than the given number of total buildings as a way to account for residences with multiple tenants. Will Ludt stated that the effect of buying conservation land that takes that property off the table for future buildings, and the proposals before the Planning Board for PRDs should be subtracted to get closer to the final build-out number.

Jared Hardner stated that he would like to see actuals given for infrastructure information, traffic, water, etc., although this may be outside of the scope of this project. He had a few ideas for indicators, such as impervious surfaces on aquifers.

Sara Siskavich noted that a complete build-out scenario is really a fantasy condition, in which there is no land left in Town to develop. There is the option to constrain these predictions to look at a certain point of time. The indicators could be set to look at how things would be in 5, 10, or 25 years. If a certain time point is not set, this could make these scenarios essentially unactionable. Sara Siskavich stated that putting a rate on the growth predicted and tying indicators to a certain time point could make these predictions more realistic. A Master Plan time horizon could be used so that the impacts are framed within the scope of the Master Plan.

Steve Whitman stated that the base build-out scenario is helpful because it echoes existing regulations and rates of growth in Town. This will then help predict how things could unfold over time if all of this is kept as is. Future scenarios could then show how conserving one area

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could affect the number of houses or amount of road built in that area. He stated that he does not believe scenarios that look back in time are particularly helpful because people tend to get confused if the scenarios aren't kept forward-thinking. Information from the existing conditions profiles can be used to give enough information for each scenario. He suggested that the Committee review one additional scenario after the fall public forum, but then discuss the second one in early 2022. This would give the Committee the chance to think about each scenario in terms of future land use.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Ryan Friedman stated that the national and global rates that feed these models can likely be shared with the Committee. Ryan Friedman noted that NRPC often completes these type of build-out scenarios on a regional basis, instead of for single towns.

Dwight Brew stated that it would be helpful for the Committee to have a concrete example of a past build-out scenario in order to determine potential parameters to include. He noted that, in looking at a completely built out model, the Town could change regulations to allow additional units or resize lots, etc. He stated that the rules would change if there was a goal being pursued.

Chris Yates pointed out that the possible number of new residential buildings is 1,859 but the recent conceptual consultations and approved subdivisions by the Planning Board could add around 275. He stated that a similar rate of growth every year could be significant over the next few years. Dwight Brew noted that PRDs could be approved anywhere and would raise the total number of units by the very nature of PRDs. Chris Yates stated that the algorithm does not appear to include frontage which may balance some of this out.

Ryan Friedman explained that the build-out tool looks at the existing road layer to determine setbacks. The tool will not draw new roads as part of the scenario, but it will consider if parts of a parcel to be set aside are for something other than the building itself.

Joe Ilsley stated that he would like to see parcels identified that lack road frontage, to then figure out the frontage for estimating potential road expansion.

Dwight Brew asked when Resilience would like to see the build-out scenarios completed. Steve Whitman stated that he would like to see the baseline scenario shortly. The Committee can then identify parameters and play with the diversity of density for the first additional scenario. The parameters could include conservation lands, large blocks of undeveloped land, mixed use in the ERZ nodes, and so on. This could be completed in October. Sara Siskavich stated that she believed NRPC would attend the public forum in order to better understand important parameters to include. The Committee could choose to delay the second alternate scenario until after that time.

Dwight Brew stated that a scenario including more development would likely add problems for some areas of Town, because these areas are already almost filled. He asked why the Town would look to bring in more development to these areas which could lead to issues with space for

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service at the Police Department, Fire Department, DPW and schools. Steve Whitman stated that the scenario is not intended to attract more growth, but to decide how best to manage growth, and how to distribute it across the landscape. It looks to show how areas would change if switched to mixed use, for example, and how to better direct land use over time.

Tim Kachmar stated that the presented numbers will likely shock some residents. He believes these scenarios are critical to better understand the Master Plan update. He questioned that these scenarios might point to the Town disallowing PRDs or 55+ housing with ¼ acre lots, and to enforcing one house per two acres or making the lots bigger.

The Committee discussed if the baseline scenario could be ready prior to the first public forum. Steve Whitman stated that the build-out study showed over some period of time what the existing rules in Amherst could allow. He noted that this was part of the story to understand why the Town was focusing on the Master Plan update. He further stated that the second public forum in the winter would focus on solutions. Chris Yates stated that the build-out could provide support for the ACC buying land and the Planning Board changing regulations in the future. Steve Whitman stated that the indicators were important. Dwight Brew asked how many indicators were possible and Ryan Friedman stated that 40 were possible, but that he could not promise the scenario would be ready by November without knowing the chosen indicators to input.

Joe Ilsley stated that he believes the scenarios will show the public the potential risk of exposure for the Town if it does not properly address land use, zoning, and more aggressive methods of conservation.

Steve Whitman suggested that there should not be too many indicators with the first scenario and that more could be played with for the others. He stated that he could work with Nic Strong and Natasha Kypfer to choose five important indicators for the baseline scenario.

Sara Siskavich noted that the 2014 regional build-out scenario included seven indicators: residential energy use, residential water use, commercial job addition, commercial floor area addition, commercial energy use, housing near community center areas, and housing near parks. She explained that choosing indicators and showing a complete build-out scenario will likely be quite sensational for the public to see. Ryan Friedman suggested picking a specific point in time to use for a future build-out scenario, instead of plotting a complete build-out. Joe Ilsley stated that the Master Plan generally is laid out over 10-year periods and suggested that 10 years be the future point in time to choose.

Ryan Friedman stated that there were pros and cons to each timeframe for the build-out and the Committee may lose more people than they would gain by being restrictive or sensational in setting the baseline. Sara Siskavich pointed out that the audience for a tool such as this is generally groups like the Master Plan Steering Committee or Planning Boards because of their understanding of the underlying issues. She stated that it was not best used as an outreach

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176 tool. She pointed out that in their scope of work, NRPC had suggested that they attend the public
177 input sessions to help create the final build-out scenarios.

178
179 Dwight Brew stated that he was not comfortable choosing indicators without a list of possibilities
180 in front of him. Sara Siskavich stated that the seven indicators she had quoted were from the
181 regional plan. Dwight Brew noted that he did not hear three items listed in the possible indicator
182 list – population, K-12 population, and tax revenue. Steve Whitman stated that the Committee
183 had not reached the agenda item yet about the setup for the forum but stated that it was not going
184 to be a place for NRPC to hear conversations. He noted that there would be worksheets to be
185 filled in and that the build-out scenario would be one small part of the information for people to
186 review. He stated that it would be couched in terms of the Town not being able to stop growth
187 but working to direct where it happens and asking the participants what excites or concerns them
188 about this scenario, which was a long-term view of the Town. He thought that the scenarios may
189 look at 10 or 25 years. Joe Ilsley noted that the tax revenue cannot be known until the assessed
190 value is known. Chris Yates stated that many in Town are not knowledgeable as to how this
191 process works. Steve Whitman stated that this would not be addressed at the forum and that such
192 information was helpful to this group, but not for the public. He stated that this was not
193 necessarily a tool to dig too deep with the residents. He stated that the forum was to show the
194 work already done on the Master Plan and that directing growth, taxes and geospatial
195 information would be part of it.

196
197 Will Ludt asked which towns within NRPC's reach have utilized a build-out scenario to their
198 advantage. Sara Siskavich stated that it has been years since NRPC has gone through this
199 program, but that they are currently helping Pelham with a build-out as part of their Master Plan
200 update. She stated that the outputs can be incorporated into the CIP, but that she did not know of
201 anyone in the region doing that.

202
203 *Tom Gauthier exited the meeting at 7:32pm.*

204
205 Dwight Brew stated that Steve Whitman, Nic Strong, Natasha Kypfer, and NRPC will be
206 allowed to determine the proper metrics for the baseline build-out scenario. He asked that the
207 Committee be emailed the metrics chosen. The Committee agreed with this suggestion.

208 209 **3. Planning process graphic & update**

210 Steve Whitman stated that the public forum is being proposed for November 15, 2021, at the
211 Amherst Middle School. There will be a second public forum in February/March 2022.
212 Resilience is currently finishing the existing conditions analyses. There will be an effort to reach
213 out to interested parties to form focus groups for specific subjects after the first public forum.

214 215 **4. Existing Conditions Analysis:**

216 **-Review of Economic Development Profile**

217 Tracie Adams pointed out a minor correction. Joe Ilsley stated that he was shocked by the 20%
218 telecommuter number. Steve Whitman stated that the new census figures might show changes to
219 this.

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Steve Whitman noted that, while reviewing this profile, there appears to be a more recent business that was developed in one of the Town's Economic Revitalization Zones (ERZs), LaBelle Winery. He suggested that Resilience reach out to the business and ask if placement within this Zone had anything to do with their decision to construct the business in this area.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Steve Whitman stated that the Town's ERZs were created in 2012 and were renewed last in 2017. He explained that, if these Zones make Amherst attractive to businesses, it would be good to understand how to leverage this for the Town. Dwight Brew stated that the recent furniture warehouse would be another one to investigate and the details should be provided to Steve Whitman.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Nic Strong stated that she is unaware of any businesses in Town that have taken advantage of these ERZs and the associated tax credit.

Tracie Adams stated that she likes the way this profile continues to integrate charts, graphs, and pictures.

-Review of updated Heritage and Culture Profile

Steve Whitman noted that he would like to let Will Ludt, Chair of the Heritage Commission, and his group continue to work on this profile for a bit longer.

In response to a question from Tracie Adams, Steve Whitman stated that there can be a hyperlink inserted under the paragraph for the 314 properties noted on page 4 of this profile that refers to the Amherst Historic District Survey.

Tracie Adams noted that the profile might look to include information about the Souhegan Valley Women's Social & Newcomers' Club. Steve Whitman noted that any additional groups that are not already included can be mentioned to him.

- Public Facilities and Services is in progress

Steve Whalen stated that the Committee will hear about the Public Facilities & Services profile at their October meeting.

4. Update on Outreach and Engagement:

- Draft Forum Flyer

Steve Whalen displayed the draft flyer for the public forum.

- Public Forum Date, Format, and Location – November 15

The public forum is proposed to be held on November 15, 2021, at 6:30pm, at the Amherst Middle School.

- Review meeting format and table themes

Steve Whitman explained that it would be helpful to have Committee members make introductions and run through the forum procedure. Resilience will then make a short

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presentation regarding what a Master Plan is, and the work completed so far for this update. The public will participate in a World Café. The idea behind this is giving people places around the room to get information on certain topics and share their questions/ideas/concerns. At each station there will be a large map and a large poster for each topic that includes handouts infographics, charts, findings, etc. There will also be question prompts at each station for people to fill out. The public will be encouraged to go to each station but is not required to. People can move from station to station, obtaining any amount of detail they want, and speaking with who they wish along the way. Steve Whitman distributed copies of an example of the handout and questions that would be available.

Tim Kachmar stated that he thought it was great that the handout included reference to the survey results. He suggested there be a QR code for the questions at each station, as some people may not wish to do so much writing at that time. Steve Whitman stated that this has never been an issue in the past and does lead to brevity; the Middle School also has trouble with access to Wi-Fi. He stated that there will be a welcome table for registering participants, where they can place a dot on a map of Town where they are located and offer their contact information. There will also be postcards with a QR code for the website. Steve Whitman went on to say that there will be a Survey Monkey survey created for each of the questionnaires, so that people may continue to fill them out later if they wish, forward them to their friends, etc.

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Will Ludt asked if the printouts were based on the existing conditions profiles. Steve Whitman explained that they were adaptations of the data. The profiles would be kept on the website. He stated that participants at the forum would be told that the questions and information would be on the website. He noted that people like to contribute in many different ways.

Jared Hardner asked how Resilience will handle the volume of responses to the number of open-ended questions. Steve Whitman explained that Liz Kelly will put all the responses into Survey Monkey and then code them for themes and locations. This data, along with the raw data, will then be presented to the Committee.

In response to a question from Dwight Brew, Steve Whitman stated that the process works best if the stations are not manned. He suggested that the Committee members attend as residents, and float around the room to the stations as well. He stated that residents take control of the process with no one at the stations and figure it out for themselves.

Chris Yates stated that he was curious to see what part of town people will come from. Steve Whitman noted that there will be a large map at the entrance of the forum for people to place a dot on the location they live in Town. This will be a way to measure which areas of Town are represented.

Steve Whitman stated that he will present a copy of the materials for each table to the Committee in October. The Committee can then comment on any proposed changes, suggest questions to ask, etc. He explained that the Committee will first be tasked to push to the public the forum date/time/place. There will then be additional information that the event took place, in hopes of getting more people to fill out the survey. Will Ludt stated that it will be hard to have the public think of the existing conditions in Town because they will want to think down the road instead. Steve Whitman stated that each handout would have the existing conditions on the front and the forward-thinking questions on later pages.

Steve Whitman stated that, having gone through the existing conditions profiles, he could see that the Town was in a good place on most of the topics and were at the refining and focusing phase, as opposed to being overwhelmed with problems. He stated that the flyer could direct people to the website where the existing conditions profiles can be found so that those who want to can prep ahead of time. Chris Yates stated that he could put the flyer out on Facebook.

Steve Whitman stated that the forum setup did not lend itself to being videoed because it will only be a brief presentation and then everyone will wander around individually going to the different stations. He stated that Resilience could film their brief presentation that will open the forum, for inclusion on postings after the forum takes place. This could also accompany the surveys that will be online.

The group agreed that the postcards should mention that there will be a second forum taking place in 2022, until a more specific date is chosen. It was discussed that it might make sense to

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nestle the second forum in-between the Deliberative Session and the Town Meeting. Steve Whitman stated that the second forum would be future land use focused.

-Online Survey that mirrors format themes and questions

Steve Whitman noted that the draft online survey will be shown to the Committee in October but will not go live until the day of the first forum and be open for one month.

Tim Kachmar thought that the forum should be mentioned at a Board of Selectmen meeting.

Steve Whitman stated that these types of events have been really successful and fun, even in challenging communities where there was a lot of conflict, and the participants are usually very pleased to have participated.

Jared Hardner asked if only 100 people show up to the forum, which would be a tiny sample and biased through self-selection, how Resilience will weigh their input relative to the online survey, which was also self-selected, and balance it out as data is processed from the forum. Steve Whitman stated that the input gathered will be elements of the story. He stated that looking at the census data, GIS data, the survey data, then holding the forum and the focus groups, will tease out the wishes of the townspeople. He stated that if the Town boards/committees consistently hear, "we don't like X" and then recommend an implementation action to do "X", they have not been listening. Steve Whitman went on to say that the data might not be statistically valid, but it would be processing the qualitative and quantitative data together. He stated that Resilience will help the Committee by stating what was heard and what the possible ideas and changes are for the Committee to consider. Steve Whitman stated that the Committee can then say yes or no to the suggestions. He stated that it was a little bit more art than science sometimes and that Resilience did not want the Committee suggesting implementation actions that there have been undercurrents throughout the process of people not liking.

5. Old/New Business – none.

Chris Yates moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:13pm. Tracie Adams seconded.

Voting: Dwight Brew - aye, Chris Yates - aye, Will Ludt - aye, Jared Hardner - aye, Tracie Adams - aye, Tim Kachmar – aye, and Joe Ilsley - aye; motion carried unanimously.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kristan Patenaude*

Minutes approved: October 26, 2021