

**Planning Board Special Meeting – Master Plan Review**  
**Thursday 1/21/2021 at 7:25 PM**  
**Approved Meeting Minutes**

Attendance:

Brad Hutchison, Diane Mulvaney, Melissa O’Brien, Joanna Brown, Nate Therien, Michael Adelman; Richard Harris, Planning Director; Anne Capra, Assistant Planner

Chair Hutchison called the meeting to order at 7:25 PM, with all present via roll call vote. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom. Planning Director Richard Harris stated that the purpose of the meeting was for the Planning Board to review the *South Hadley Draft 2020 Master Plan Update*, dated December 2020, as referred to the Board for adoption by the Master Plan Update Advisory Committee (MPUAC). A full copy of the draft plan under review is posted on the Planning Department’s website here:

<https://www.southhadley.org/DocumentCenter/View/7464/DRAFT-2020-Master-Plan-Update-as-Recommended-by-the-Master-Plan-Update-Advisory-Committee-2020-12-03>

Assistant Planner Anne Capra summarized the planning process, professional consultant role, advisory board role, public outreach and engagement, and municipal staff outreach and engagement that were conducted since January 2019 to develop the final draft plan under review tonight.

Planning Director Richard Harris then summarized how the Planning Board conducted their review and adoption of the 2010 Master Plan. He mentioned several ways that Board could consider approaching the review of the plan. The Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) is currently conducting their annual outreach to Town boards and committees, using the Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Plan from this December 2020 draft plan. MPIC will share any feedback they receive with the Planning Board.

The Planning Board will need to hold a Public Hearing to solicit public comment on the draft plan. Thereafter, the Board will adopt a final plan, after edits are completed to satisfy the Board. Last, the final plan as adopted by the Planning Board will be submitted to Town Meeting for endorsement.

Chair Hutchison requested that these meetings be kept to between 1.5 to 2 hours.

Members discussed options for distributing the draft plan for public comment prior to a Public Hearing including, creating a google form, issuing a press release and social media posts, emailing Town Meeting members, emailing attendees from public forums, utilizing the networks of the MPUAC, and submitting articles to area newspapers.

Members discussed that these review meetings are “special meetings” of the board, and due to the busy regular meeting agendas, the Board would schedule four more meetings to complete their review by March 1<sup>st</sup>. A public Hearing would be scheduled thereafter.

Members discussed strategies for conducting the review of the draft plan. Ms. O’Brien, who was on the Planning Board for the 2010 Master Plan review and adoption, suggested starting with a review of the goals, objectives and actions. Agree to the broad vision and goals of the plan first. Ms. Brown asked if Open Meeting Law applied to these meetings. Mr. Harris stated in the affirmative and that no exchanges between board members should occur outside of the meeting. Members are welcome to send comments directly to Mr. Harris or Ms. Capra, who will bring them forth to the Board.

Mr. Adelman inquired about the Appendices, particularly an Excel file that was referenced in the draft plan. Mr. Harris said he would be sure to post all of the draft Appendices in their entirety to the website. Ms. Mulvaney notes the Selectboard did have the referenced Excel sheet in their meeting materials for the 1/19 mtg. Mr. Therien, who is a member of MPIC and the MPUAC, said the spreadsheet also includes a timeline for implementation so it should be reviewed carefully.

Ms. Mulvaney stated the plan was well laid out graphically and easy to read, which was much different than the 2010 plan. Members agreed. Mr. Hutchison inquired about whether the Boards review is restricted to the role of the Planning Board as identified in the draft plan, or was it much broader than that? Mr. Adelman noted there are over 140 actions and no metrics for baseline conditions so how is implementation of the plan evaluated over time?

Mr. Therien discussed how the Implementation Plan assigns task to various entities – both lead and supporting; and includes timeframes, and metrics to measure the success of the implementation of each task. A system for checking in during implementation is needed. Perhaps input from the Selectboard and Town Administrator about how to measure annual progress and hold entities accountable.

Mr. Harris stated the implementation of a community plan is different than the implementation of a discreet project such as building a road, for example. There are so many external factors related to implementation that it isn't a linear process per se. MPIC's role has been to do annual check in with board and committees to gather feedback on the status of implementation since 2010. This could continue.

Mr. Harris noted that state law identifies the Planning Board as the entity to adopt the plan. Town Meeting created MPIC for reporting back about progress from boards. He notes that several entities are not required to be included in the Master Plan per state law including schools, Fire Districts, SHELD. These are separate legal entities from the Town, but are important for aspects of the Master Plan's success.

Ms. Brown suggested an approach to get started was to see if any members have any overarching concerns. For example, she continued, on Page 71, Goal 1-25 refers to assessing and mapping small lots, and rates it as "Immediate". She stated she doesn't support this activity as "immediate".

Members then inquired about how the Chapter 5 Recommendations are related or incorporated into the Implementation Plan. Also noted is that the Table of Contents should include the Chapter/Section number.

Mr. Hutchison felt that the review needs to be more structured. Mr. Harris recommended starting with Chapter 3 Community Vision, Goals and Objectives. Achieve consensus on the big picture first, then address rest of plan.

### **Community Vision**

There was discussion about what is meant by "Be a leader in municipal Communication." Anne and Nate clarified that this was about better communication with the public so that they can become more engaged. Ms. O'Brien stated she felt it needed to include communication between town departments, boards and committees as well. All agreed. *Recommended broadening the sentence to: Be a leader in municipal communication, with the public and among municipal staff, boards, and volunteer committees. (p.27)*

Ms. Brown stated that she felt the vision statement was missing references to diversity, and recommended adding “respect” and “welcoming” to the vision statement: Create a respectful and welcoming environment in which all community members can prosper and thrive.

**Goal 1: A thriving Community**

Discussion about what is “light manufacturing” - example, Elnk.

Objective 1-1 doesn’t seem to capture current conditions where the majority of the work force is telecommuting from home offices.

Mr. Hutchison mentioned that the arts and a creative economy are not mentioned in this goal. Need to track this topic in review of other goals as he believes the creative economy to be a major factor economic expansion and redevelopment in other area towns and cities.

**REMINDERS – THINGS TO COME BACK TO – ITEMS TO CARRY FORWARD**

- Table of Contents should include the Chapter/Section number.
- The Arts and the creative economy are not mentioned in Goal 1. Need to track this topic in review of other goals to ensure this is brought forward somewhere.

**Vision Statement**

- *Recommended broadening the sentence to: Be a leader in municipal communication, with the public and among municipal staff, boards, and volunteer committees. (p.27)*
- Missing references to diversity, and recommended adding “respect” and “welcoming” to the vision statement: Create a respectful and welcoming environment in which all community members can prosper and thrive. (p.27)

**Goal 1**

- *Add “professional telecommuting” to Objective 1-1; consideration for expansion of home offices*

**NEXT MEETINGS**

Thursday, February 4<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm

Thursday, February 18<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm

Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm

Thursday, March 18<sup>th</sup> @ 6pm

Respectfully Submitted By,  
Anne Capra, AICP  
Assistant Planner/Conservation Administrator