



TOWN OF PLYMOUTH PLANNING BOARD

Continuation
MASTER PLAN PUBLIC HEARING
SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

CALL TO ORDER: Rebecca Hanson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call of members was completed.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rebecca Hanson (Chairman), Chris Buckley (Vice Chair / Conservation Commission Representative, Bridget Powers (Non-Recording Secretary), Bill Bolton (Selectmen's Representative), Bonnie Sears, Jack Scarborough,

MEMBERS ABSENT: Maryann Barnsley, Steve Whitman (Alternate)

OTHERS PRESENT: Brian Murphy, Land Use & Planning Director

REVIEW OF MINUTES: Tabled

1. September 6, 2018 Minutes:

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

• **Continuation: Public Hearing 2018 Master Plan (continued from Sept. 6, 2018):**

- 1) Rebecca Hanson wanted to give people an idea of what went into the Master Plan. This is the final draft, a culmination of many years work:
 - 1) Visioning Session was put together by North Country Council. Rebecca read the Vision Statement for the Master Plan
 - 2) Public input sessions consisting of 4 topic areas:
 - 1) Town/University Relationship and Partnership
 - 2) Infrastructure, utilities and transportation
 - 3) Economic Development
 - 4) Natural, Historical and Cultural Resources

Though it has been worked on for years it is largely a result of the work of the entire Town through these public input sessions. We've worked further as a board to try and hone ideas from our residents to this document.

- 1) The Master Plan is a roadmap to the future. It provides a structure for the Planning and Zoning Boards. It is a collection of plans, maps, studies and reports. It lets us know what's happening in Plymouth right now and helps us figure out what we want to see in the future. This document is far reaching and deals with all aspects of our community. It is flexible and designed to serve over the next 10 years. Of particular importance is the Implementation chapter which contains a number of steps and actions that we can do to implement the Vision.
- 2) The Master Plan is not a legally binding document. It is not a Zoning Ordinance. It has no regulatory "teeth", it is what sets the spirit behind zoning ordinances that we establish as a Planning Board or anything we would like to change in a site plan review or subdivision regulations. Anything that is a legally binding ordinance does have to go to Town Meeting for the Town to vote on.

Public Hearing Re-Opens 6:35 PM:

Comments or questions from the Public:

- Frank Miller stated that Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances are from the 40's and 50's. There seems to be a transition going on in a lot of towns and cities. People want to live, work and play within walking distance. He believes this means a lot of people are willing to put up with some of the noise or other elements that we would use to separate those activities in our current zoning profile and design. He wonders if there was any direction from the Office of State Planning about how towns that are very well established would go about addressing high density housing in the Village Commercial Zone or the Multi-family area to grow economic development. Has there been any direction as far as addressing this change of zoning philosophy?

Brian Murphy commented that the State would put up current thoughts on zoning and leaves the rest to us. Higher density in the State is city-dwellers, particularly more in the South. As you get more rural the things you look at and values change just because of your surroundings. Walkability and a big push towards pedestrians have been observed by the Board and reflected in the Master Plan. Accessory Dwelling Units came through the previous year. Concord allows locals to determine what part to address. There is a push to keep people in the downtown area. Here, there isn't a lot of raw land. You would have to deconstruct in order to construct this. Another option would be a satellite down town. There would be a shopping center which has what people need; such as a pharmacy and grocery store. Plymouth is bounded by state highways and water courses. We really can't have a lot of outward sprawl, where it would be typical in more gentle terrain.

- Frank Miller observed the Village Commercial and Commercial Industrial zones are where people would like to build apartment complexes higher than the standard. With this philosophy people could work and live in the same area.

Brian Murphy said the population indicated liking a small town atmosphere. This includes a lot of signifiers of small towns which are not tall buildings. As far as forming a high density zone in the downtown area he doesn't know if the Board wanted to take that up as an amendment to the Master Plan or not. Indications show that this is where we want to go this feeds to the walkability atmosphere. He is not sure if there was enough information or if enough interest was spurred for the Board to do it, he feels this should be addressed.

- Rebecca Hanson acknowledged a message received from a citizen regarding the picture of the clock tower on the front cover of the Master Plan. The person felt it wasn't appropriate.

Public Hearing Closes 6:43 PM:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

The Chair asked if the Board wanted to address the idea of high density development within areas close to down town. Some individuals have shown interest in high density development. Others are not interested, or at least not within certain residential areas.

Bonnie Sears believes it is hard to have both high density and still maintain a small town atmosphere. Tall buildings don't promote a small town feel.

Rebecca Hanson stated that public comments are adequately covered by what is in the Master Plan. It seemed that everyone was in agreement.

Bridget Powers commented that there seems to be student housing vs. family housing in Town. The market is pretty stiff. Rebecca Hanson wondered if the Town was just trying to find dorms or are they trying to make sure families have places to live. The rental market is very tight here.

Brian Murphy stated that rents are very high. This is based on our neighbor (University). Renting by the room and renting by the home are quite different.

Rebecca Hanson inquired about an application for an apartment building which was withdrawn. Brian Murphy stated it was a project that required 4 variances and a special exception. There is no fit at all in our

current Zoning Ordinance. It would take something radical such as an overlay zone. The zone would only affect the vacant properties in that zone. It would need to be limited to down town but mostly east of Langdon St.

Rebecca stated that the location for that project was the best place for something like that because it wasn't near a neighborhood. It was totally enveloped by the University.

Bonnie Sears stated that it could be allowed one time because it is close to the University and never again. Here and only here.

Brian Murphy pointed out that doing something like that would be considered spot zoning, which is illegal.

Rebecca Hanson asked the Board if they think the Master Plan covers the comments of the public adequately. All were in agreement that the Master Plan was adequate.

Bridget Powers thought there is a lot of work ahead and a lot of mention to review the zoning ordinance, which is the plan.

Brian said this is a broad stroke. There is no indication in the tables that that's the way we should look at the Zoning Ordinance. The Master Plan is the spirit behind the zoning and if it's not indicated in here it's not really part of the Master Plan. Chris Buckley asked if he was talking specifically about high density. Brian said that only. The most on point of comments is the idea of senior housing. This is being addressed in many areas of the private sector right now.

Chris Buckley feels there are plenty of implementations in here that would give us reason to discuss if we need that type of housing. Is there a need for higher apartment buildings? Are people clamoring for that? Would that help our community at all?

Bonnie Sears pointed out that higher apartment buildings are not for families, but for the University. They'd be close to their classrooms to walk. Perhaps this would free up some of the other places in town where they're staying now, so those properties could be for families to rent.

Chris Buckley said his thought is that the college should be doing that. They should build dorms if they need them. Bonnie pointed out that we wouldn't get the tax revenue. Brian doesn't think that's the plan. Bill Bolton stated there's no dorm in the design that's been built yet.

Brian Murphy said there was an indication of bringing the student body back on campus. The idea of high density would be more of a magnet, drawing students away from the single family neighborhoods. The University could step up and keep people close, it definitely is their ball. This is something we've been wrangling with forever.

Bonnie Sears has grown up, here. Neighborhoods were family neighborhoods and she believes many people would like to see it come back if we could. The college would have their section where people could have a good time. Families would have their section which would be quieter and they could sleep.

Chris Buckley brought up another school of thought. You could create two zones that separate college students and they're not integrated into the community, or the students could be more spread out in the community and they might behave differently. There is nothing in the college community that resembles the real world. In one study college students were mixed with elderly people and stepped up and took more responsibility for their surroundings.

Rebecca Hanson scanned through the land use policy and the housing sections. She read a few excerpts that would apply to high density. She wondered if issues in regard to housing needed to be more explicit. Jack Scarborough said no. We need to keep the document flexible. Chris Buckley thinks it is OK.

Regarding the cover of the Master Plan:

- Chris Buckley feels that the picture of the clock tower doesn't seem to promote the University.
- Bill Bolton acquired the picture.
- Rebecca Hanson is inclined to keep it. It is an iconic picture with a striking view. The Board decided to keep it.

Jack Scarborough will proofread the Master Plan one final time and will give corrections to Rebecca.

A discussion began for the Board to recommend leads for the various Implementation Sections. Rebecca Hanson read each one and the Board gave their input.

Rebecca asked if a signature page was needed and who should sign it. Everyone on the Board will sign it.

There will be additions made to the acknowledgments and acronyms that may have been used throughout the Master Plan will be defined.

7:28 PM: Jack Scarborough made a motion; seconded by Bonnie Sears to accept the Master Plan for adoption with minor corrections. All in favor.

NEW BUSINESS: Distribution of application packets for 9/20/2018 Meeting

OTHER BUSINESS:

- Jack Scarborough gave a reminder that the ground breaking for Harbor Homes the homeless veterans housing will take place tomorrow @ 11:00 AM at the end of Boulder Point. 25 individual units will be constructed along with 5 family units.
- Rebecca Hanson gave congratulations to Steve Whitman for getting his P h D.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AT THE CHAIRMAN’S DISCRETION: None

ADJOURNMENT:

Jack Scarborough made a motion; seconded by Chris Buckley to adjourn. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at **7:36 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Dawn Roach