

Plainfield MA

Joint Boards Meeting #2

February 18, 2021

Creating a Community Development/Preservation Strategy

Present: Rebecca Coletta and Patrick Williamson, Select-board members, Jerry Little, Bob Silberberg, Peter Lapointe and Judith Cole, Planning Board members, Judy Williams, Judy Ferber, Jack Nelson, Erik Burcroff, Alice Schertle of the Conservation Commission, Peg Keller, Bill Latimer and Joan Wattman of the Zoning Board.

Welcome

Peg Keller opened the meeting with introductions for the benefit of our new Selectboard member. Welcome Patrick!

Follow-Up Items

- Building Permit Activity Data
- Real Estate Activity/Trends
- Report out from the Planning Board/ Work Scope

Peg had distributed the information she received from Gerry Garner, Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer, showing Building Permit activity for the past two years. (Patrick and Judy Cole said they had not received it, Peg will send).

Peg noted her observations about the data:

- 33-34 a year for both years, geographically dispersed throughout town
- Commercial/Institutional activity focuses on Swift River Addiction Campus, 27 Broom Street Marijuana Cultivation facility, EarthDance
- Majority of activity is residential in nature, related to renovation and weatherization activity; only 1-2 new homes per year.

The spreadsheet Gerry keeps clearly shows how much (or little) revenue is generated by permit fees. Peg noted she was not aware of if/when the fee structure was last examined or if it is in line with other communities. She offered to get information from the Hilltown CDC about how many homes have received housing rehab assistance over the years, as funding for homeowners to maintain their homes appears to be a need in the community.

Participants asked about the “tent” designation, Peg will ask Gerry.

Judy Cole and Brian Hawthorne had not been able to compile any real estate activity info, but Judy Ferber offered to work with Judy Cole on this. They agreed to research the level of activity for the past 5 years and identify what is currently on the market. The goals are to see if there are trends, see if there are efforts required to address immediate concerns and work towards developing pro-active strategies to protect/preserve natural resource assets.

Planning Board members reported that they had not been able to discuss strategic planning at their last meeting, as it was taken up with other business. Discussion followed about if and when to think about either embarking on an Open Space and Recreation Planning effort, or a Comprehensive Community Master Plan.

Judy Williams reported that she has found and will upload an Open Space Plan compiled by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in 2007. She said it is very well done and very comprehensive. She also noted that she has been contacted by the Conway School of Design in the past about a possible studio project. Peg said the 2007 plan could be a great base from which to build. Judy agreed to reach out to the Conway School to see if they might be interested in a Plainfield project at some point in the future.

Judy Cole said she has a report compiled by Ed Kohn in 1987 that would also be of interest. She will upload that as well for our edification. Thanks ED!

The merits of an Open Space and Recreation Plan vs. a Master Plan were discussed. Participants felt that if we started with the OSPlan, that process would identify broader issues to address later, more comprehensively. Peg noted that the Survey mechanisms that are undertaken in such an effort can include other questions that the group might want feedback about, i.e. business districts, commercial activity.

Peter informed us that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is currently providing technical assistance to the town. They are working with the Planning Board on a project to create a “Town Green” around town hall and the Selectboard is working with PVPC on a DLTA (District Local Technical Assistance) grant. He said the PBoard is also working on rectifying some needed edits from the last town meeting that have been recommended by the State Attorney General’s Office, to take to our next Town Meeting.

Peg said that was good information to have. This gathering is to see what the Boards are doing, and how the ZB might assist. It is not to pressure other Boards to take on more work, or to change the schedules for work already underway. It is simply to improve communication, and share skill sets when possible. Peter also noted, very importantly, that any effort to undertake solicitation of citizen input would be far more meaningful when we are not immersed in COVID restrictions !!

Duly noted.

Project Priorities Identified to Date

- Status of Roads
- Cluster Zoning/Sub-division Regs
- Need for Housing Rehab/Weatherization Assistance
- Creation of Local Wetland Regulations
- Adding Environmental Impact Requirements to Commercial Solar Installations
(This was noted by Jack after the last meeting)
- Protecting Large Parcels that offer Natural Resources vs. tax base

Next Steps

- Upload Existing Plans:
Peg will ask Brian if he can upload the Growth Management Plan. Judy Cole will ask her son to upload the Open Space Plan and “Ed’s Plan”. Being able to review those docs will boost our knowledge of what already exists and perhaps hone a list of priority projects.
- Contact HCDC about housing rehab activity and program capacity in the future. Peg will do.
- Contact Conway School of Design Judy Williams will do.
- Building Permit Data Peg will ask Gerry if he can do the spreadsheet for 5 years to keep it the same time frame that the real estate data is being compiled for.
- Compile the real estate data Judy C. and Judy F. will connect about.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be **March 18, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.**

Judy C. ended the session with a fitting quote from Ed’s report. He is smiling down on us.

Respectfully submitted, Peg Keller