

Plainfield MA

Joint Boards Meeting # 3

March 18, 2021

Creating a Community Development/Preservation Strategy

Present: Patrick Williamson, Selectboard member, Jerry Little, Brian Hawthorne, Peter Lapointe and Judith Cole, Planning Board members, Judy Williams, Jack Nelson, Erik Burcroff, Alice Schertle of the Conservation Commission, Peg Keller and Joan Wattman of the Zoning Board.

Welcome

Peg Keller opened the meeting and greeted all participants.

Research Component Updates

- o Previous Plan Uploads – some members said they had not received the documents. As the meeting progressed, Brian sent them to everyone. Thanks to Judy Cole’s son for the uploads. Because not everyone had received them for review, there was no additional discussion on this item. Peg noted that the reports contain a great base from which to move forward, relative to inventories of already protected lands (needs updating), soil conditions, historical narratives, etc. Brian added the Municipal Vulnerability Plan and the Hazard Mitigation Plan to the two earlier Open Space docs and put them all in a Master Plan file and sent it to the 4 boards. (Everyone was reminded to carry out all of their communication on this effort on their town emails, and not their private emails, and to not deliberate.

- o Local Real Estate Activity - Judy Cole reported on the following work she and Judy Ferber had compiled:
 - Over the past 5 years, 35 single family listings and 11 land listings were sold. The 35 single family properties were listed for \$39,000 to \$702,500.
 - 2 properties were listed over \$400,000
 - 7 properties were listed between \$300,000 and \$400,000
 - 9 properties were listed between \$200,000 and \$300,000
 - 12 properties were listed between \$100,000 and \$200,000
 - 5 properties were listed below \$100,000

- The price range on the land listings was between \$24,000 and \$275,000 and the acreage listed was between 2.5 acres and 119 acres. All of the land for sale was designated residential.

Judy said they have not yet gotten/researched the acreage associated with the single family homes, but that is the next step. Jerry asked if there has been an uptick in activity, Judy said there were no dates associated with the transactions, so hard to tell. The info on average days on the market ranged from 151 to 838. Brian noted that our assessor's maps which would show lot size (to relate that to sales price) are on line.

- o Hilltown CDC Housing Rehab Stats - Peg reported on the following info she received from the Program Manager:

- 54 homeowners have utilized the Housing Rehab Program since the FY97 Grant.
- 8 applicants have used the program more than once so the total number of projects completed in Plainfield since the beginning of the program is 62
- Currently there are 3 applicants pending
- On the average, 1-3 projects are addressed per grant year in Plainfield.
- Work ranges from roofs, septic systems, wells, siding, windows, flooring, porches/decks, handicap ramps and baths, updated electric and plumbing, foundations and lead paint abatement.
- Average project cost is around \$30,000 but can go to \$55,000 if there are multiple repair needs (septic, roof, siding, etc.).
- These are no interest, no payment loans that are forgiven after 15 years.
- Hilltown welcomes any assistance promoting the program.

- o Building Permit Data Request - Peg had asked Gerry Garner (Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer) to provide an additional 3 years of building permit data to match the real estate activity research time period. He said he would get it to me soon. During the review of the last 2 years at the last meeting, people asked about the definition of "tent" on the spread sheet. Here is the answer Gerry provided:

"As far as tents are concerned, tents (with sides) that are 400 square feet or less and tent canopy's (without sides) that are 700 square feet or less DO NOT require a building permit, BUT, they need to be fire resistance.

Tents that are more than 400 square feet and Canopy's that are more than 700 square feet DO require a permit filed through the Building Department. A certificate of fire resistance is required and a fee is required."

- o Planning Board Discussion/ Future Work Scope – Brian reported that their Board has not had a chance to discuss that yet, as they have had other business on

their agendas. (They just held a public hearing on the proposed Zoning By-law changes going to this year's town meeting)

- o Conway School of Design Availability – Judy Williams tasked Erik to contact the school. Peg also spoke with their representative, at Erik's request. Highlights of the discussion with CJ Lammer are as follows:
 - They would be interested in doing a winter project with the town
 - Climate Resiliency would be the thrust (as prioritized for State grants)
 - A team of 2 students and staff supervision would be available late winter through next spring
 - There is a cost of \$11,000, for which they would assist with grant writing. Grants are reimbursable, so the town would have to front the funds
 - If a concept were agreed upon, it should come from the Selectboard, through a public presentation, for everyone to see
 - The gist of the (very generic) proposal she put together in a few hours for our discussion purposes was this:

DRAFT SCOPE

Plainfield Climate Resilience Plan

The climate crisis is here and communities have been examining ways they can address the local impacts of climate change locally. Plainfield has completed a Municipal Vulnerability Plan and a Hazard Mitigation Plan, both of which have recommended actions to address climate change. The MVP Plan recommends the Town address erosion issues and forest and tree canopy loss, critical elements of the proposed Climate Resilience Plan. The purpose of this plan is to create a long-term vision for the Town of Plainfield's landscape, addressing how it can be socially and environmentally sustainable and climate resilient. Its location at the headwaters of two watersheds, one of which is a National Scenic River, makes this location an appropriate place to examine and apply the tools of climate resilience. The project would examine available data on the soils, water, trees/forests, and demographics and make recommendations for increasing resilience across the landscape. If the Conway School of Ecological Design is chosen as the consultant, the work would be completed over a three month period in the winter of 2022 (January - March). A team of two or three graduate students would be assigned to work with a small committee of people representing the Town. That committee would be tasked with keeping the other stakeholders informed and providing comments on the final draft. The Conway Team will conduct two community engagement sessions, following covid-19 protocols that may be in place at the time. Examples of previous Conway Team work products can be found at this link. The project fee is \$11,000. If a grant application is prepared the school will assist with writing it. At the moment, the best grant source is the Planning Assistance Grants provided by the state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs.

Discussion followed. Issues identified were:

What is the actual end product?

Would this duplicate the Municipal Vulnerability Plan?

Would this project take away from energy needed to produce a Master Plan/ now referred to as a Community Plan?

Headwaters for three watersheds should be a focus

State is indicating that the MVP and Hazard Mitigation Plans were needed to access state grants for Climate Resiliency funds

Jack worked extensively with Howard Bronstein on the MVP Plan; with PVPC

If we decided to do this, a warrant would need to be on the Annual Town Meeting agenda to designate the \$11,000 (to be reimbursed by grants and/or private fundraising)

The deadline for the Town meeting warrant may be April 1st (!)

This project could be a component of our Community Plan

Recommendations:

- ☐ This group would invite CJ Lammer to a meeting to further flesh out a possible work scope
- ☐ (Joan will circulate a Doodle Poll to determine the date in the next 2 weeks) **tentative date April 8th at 7 p.m.**
- ☐ Peter Lapointe would attend the Finance Committee meeting Monday night (March 22) and ask that the funds be reserved (we can relinquish them later if need be)
- ☐ After this group meets with the Conway School and if a decision is made to move ahead, a public presentation hosted by the SelectBoard would occur in April or early May
- ☐ The Conway School, with the assistance of this group, would submit an application to the State (EEA) for a Planning Grant which is due the end of May
- ☐ We would consider asking the Selectboard to appoint a Community Planning Committee, to be composed of a cross section of the existing boards, including the Plainfield Tree Alliance and the Energy Committee, as well as interested citizens, to oversee this project and the ultimate comprehensive Community Plan effort to follow in the future.
- ☐ We will not contract with the Conway School until funds are secured.
- ☐ Erik will ask Conway when they would need to be under contract and how this work would relate to a Community Plan.

Everyone agreed that we need to get the word out of this activity. Joan and Erik offered to submit a summary for the next Plainfield Post and Peg will get these notes and agendas to Brian for posting on the town website. Discussion followed about whether to ask for the Committee formation in tandem with the funding request at Town Meeting, but Brian said it should be separate as forming a committee requires an adjustment to the Town By-law, a different process.

ONWARD!

Adjourn/ the meeting concluded at 8:30 p.m.

Peg Keller