

## Planning Board

July 13, '22 meeting

7:30 pm to 9:05pm

**Present:** Ken Kahn, Steve Freedman, Tom Ewing, Van Stoddard, Richard Nathhorst, Tim Shores, Swan Keyes

Minutes taken by Tim Shores

1. June 8 minutes approved unanimously. (Swan Keyes not present during the vote)
2. Tom asked if we prefer a separate attachment when circulating the minutes among Planning Board members. In general, there was no clear preference for a separate attachment.
3. Deliberations regarding the final Working Group Report, the Steering Group recruitment process and planning an RFP for the next Comprehensive Planning Consultant.
  1. Ken pointed out the discussion of OSRP on the Working Group Report p. 13. This paragraph cites the 2019 OSRP report's conclusions about the Cost of Community Services, which is a method of analyzing municipal revenue and costs by land use type. The 2019 OSRP refers to a 2005 Cost of Community Services analysis from Deerfield that finds residential land use costs the town more in service expenses than it brings in as tax revenue *{deleted sentence beginning 'Ken observed'}* (see footnote a). Tim replied that on the Working Group Report p. 14 Emily goes on to state that the Comprehensive Plan would include other methods of land use analysis, such as fiscal impact analysis based on more detailed evidence in Leverett to provide more precise and accurate reports of revenue potential from land use change in Leverett.
  2. Ken also pointed out that the Working Group Report did not have any descriptions of regionalization, and insufficient coverage of our record on affordable housing. Ken also pointed out that there are substantial documents and information about Leverett's Affordable Housing Programs on the Town's website. Tim replied that the scope of the Working Group report is to provide a catalogue of data and documentation on existing conditions, and gaps thereof, not to provide a representation of existing conditions. According to Emily's suggested timeline for Phase 2, a report that is representative of Leverett's existing conditions would be produced by February 2023. As to the documentation of the Affordable Housing Programs on the Town's website, Tim pointed out that while the Leverett Affordable Housing Trust web page has documents, and Affordable Housing documents were included in the set of data that Tim curated for the Working Group (item 6 in the document titled "Lev PB Master Plan Existing Conditions Data: Links to online data and documents"), there was no indication from Planning Board members prior to tonight's meeting that any

specific document, metric, or narrative related to Affordable Housing should be prioritized for the Working Group's attention. The Working Group did not highlight this work, and as a deliverable of that community-driven process, Emily's report does not pay extra attention to this work. (see footnote b)

3. Steve expressed concern that Emily is overly wordy. The Executive Summary goes on for several pages, when it should be one page with bullet points. Swan agrees with this, it should be written in a way that is more accessible.
4. Tom requested that someone who is not Tim or Tom take on the task of comparing the Working Group Report to the RFP, to ensure that proposal requirements were met. When no one stepped forward, Ken asked, without disagreeing at all with Tom, if Tim or Tom wanted to take on this task (see footnote c); Tom replied that Tim and Tom have done nearly all other tasks for the Comprehensive Plan project. With no volunteers stepping forward, Tim asked that we take some time to talk about whether or not we are all supportive of the Comprehensive Plan project, citing an apparent lack of support from some Planning Board members. Tom agreed that this round of discussion would be fruitful. With Swan providing ace facilitation, here is a summary of how each member responded:
  1. Richard is supportive, and he thinks Emily has done an excellent job. We're far from done, and the hardest parts are ahead of us, but the first half is well done and well written. Any time you do a Comprehensive Plan, unless it's actively and continuously updated with amendments and updates, it becomes a snapshot in time and eventually a dead letter. So, most of the work will take place after the Plan is finalized.
  2. Steve says this is a new process to all of us, and it's the biggest process undertaken in his 93-year tenure on the Board. Sometimes he has difficulty getting his arms around it. He attended WG meetings to get a sense of what was going on. He wasn't sure what the level of engagement was. The attendance was spotty, and he wasn't sure there was a lot of involvement from WG members. In Phase 2, we'll have to think about how to get that right. He finds Emily too wordy. He'd be happy to take on the project of reviewing the WG Report with respect to the RFP.
  3. Ken says he has continually supported the Comprehensive Plan, and thinks Tom and Tim have done an excellent job. ~~sentence beginning 'He'~~ Ken also stated his hope that the stressing of the importance of Phase 2 in creating a road map for Leverett's future development would generate more community participation.
  4. Van was not able to attend WG meetings. His partner Kathy was a WG member, and she reported to him that the WG meetings were boring, too detailed about things that weren't necessarily

relevant, with spotty attendance that prompted repetition of topics that Kathy felt was not fruitful. Kathy pointed out that the Planning Board opted to accept everyone who volunteered, and the volunteers didn't all show up, which made the meetings less productive. Van is in favor of this process, and he hopes that we can learn from our experience with the Working Group to improve the much bigger tasks ahead with the Steering Group, Community Vision meetings, and Comprehensive Plan finalization processes.

5. Tom is very much in favor of this process, and he has conviction that it will be a benefit to the town. It's also a huge project and it is difficult to manage and understand, so he hopes to generate enthusiasm for it on the Planning Board.
  6. Swan, though new to the process, thinks that any organization needs a strategic plan. It's important to get the data and oral history in planning. She's glad to be able to contribute to this process. She sees a lot of potential for a Comprehensive Plan that serves the town as a living document.
  7. Tim is very much in favor of this process. He has been concerned about the lack of shared understanding at public meetings that have an impact on how policy decisions are made in Leverett. For example, he is concerned about how school budget and administration decisions have been made without adequate evidence of the impacts of these decisions. He recognizes that it is a complex matter, but his hope is that the Comprehensive Plan will help the town make policy decisions with better evidence.
5. Van asked if one of the points of the plan is to enable us to get money (i.e. from the state).
    1. Tom replied that he feels it's more important to think of this in terms of an opportunity to examine our zoning and change our zoning in response to a community-driven process.
    2. Richard replied, yes, having an organized and professionally produced Comprehensive Plan will open more doors to grant funding for Leverett. Richard also pointed out that zoning is just one piece of the Comprehensive Plan.
  6. Van asked if the recommendations and goals of the final Plan are time-bound, i.e. will there be a time when all tasks related to the recommendations are completed? (As there would be with a lot build-out analysis, for example) Tim suggested that some components would not be time-bound, such as goals established with respect to climate change, social justice, history and culture -- these elements would be more appropriately served by ongoing programming rather than time-bound goals.
  7. Discussion of organizing the Steering Group:
    1. Tim suggested we consider a nomination process that allows people to nominate their hero for the Group. Then if the top

- several nominees are willing, that's the Steering Group. We can include a nomination question on the planning survey that Tim would like to develop and keep open for two or three months (until Thanksgiving, or thereabouts).
2. Swan and Tim will work on a draft of survey questions for the Board to review in August.
  3. To help inform survey question writing, Swan will email Planning Board members to invite their own written expression of what they each see as the purpose or benefit of the Plan. For example, Ken finds exciting the thought that we are exploring what we want Leverett to look like in 50 years.
  4. Tom would like us to consider whether we want this outreach to include a survey, or whether we should omit a survey to focus on content that will get people excited about this. Swan replied that we could include a question on the survey: what would make you feel excited about the Comprehensive Planning process?
8. Ken moved that we approve Margie to pay Emily Innes' most recent invoice for \$20,000 which will be paid from the Community One Stop for Growth grant. Richard seconded. Unanimously approved.
4. Call-in business:
    1. Ken got an email from a Northampton realtor requesting the April 2021 minutes. *{Deleted sentence, erroneous assumption by yr secretary: 'She was in attendance at that meeting.'}* See below for his email reply to her with the minutes attached.
    2. Eva Gibavic asked about stone wall protection and whether the Planning Board would revisit this issue. She provided a Pamphlet from DCR entitled "Terra Firma - Putting Historic Landscape Preservation on Solid Ground". Ken reviewed with the Board that the Planning Board, after discussion with the town attorney, has interpreted our Scenic Roads provisions (Section 4600 of the zoning by-law and G.L. c 40, s 15C) as requiring Planning Board prior consent to stone wall removal only when related to "repair, maintenance, construction reconstruction or paving work done with respect to a Scenic Road".
      1. Ken has called and left messages for representatives of DCR and is waiting for a call back and will follow up with the Planning Board.
  5. Next Planning Board meeting will be August 10 at 7:30pm, to discuss the Gulick-Sherrill Site plan at 124 Montague Rd, submitted by Claire Chang at the Greenfield Solar Store to Ken on June 29. Claire will join us on August 10 online at 7:45pm.

**Footnote a)** It remains unclear to Tim why Ken pointed out this section of the report. Tim attempted to clarify during the meeting.

**Footnote b)** During email discussion of requested revision to these meeting minutes, Tim reviewed the Affordable Housing Trust web page and found links to documents for

promotional assets, applications, survey results, and minutes recording three meetings to do with Affordable Housing. In other words, the website shows clear documentation of the need, availability, and requirements of the Affordable Housing program, but no report or similar document that describes the outputs (e.g. number of applications received), outcomes (e.g. number of beneficiaries), or impact (e.g. demographic changes in Leverett) of the Affordable Housing programs. It's reasonable to assume that we can find these in the Trust's meeting minutes, but they do not seem to be in the minutes available on the website, and exhumation of meeting minutes is a resource-intensive project that is outside the scope of Comprehensive Planning. While Tim has admired the work of the Affordable Housing Trust -- for example, he is aware of the Habitat for Humanity plan, he met a beneficiary of the Trust's programs at the LifePath Town-to-Town Zoom meeting at the end of May 2022, and he is looking forward to learning more about the upcoming affordable housing development in the works with Cinda Jones -- and Tim does intend to make sure the Trust's work is represented in the final Comprehensive Plan, it remains unclear how we can verify or communicate the outcomes or impact of the Trust's work if the evidence is not made available.

**Footnote c)** Tim disagrees that this sentence represents what happened during the meeting: "When no one stepped forward, Ken asked, without disagreeing at all with Tom, if Tim or Tom wanted to take on this task". The original minutes read, "Ken asked why Tim or Tom would not take on this task". Tim observes that Ken's question was preceded by only a couple seconds of meeting silence, and that Ken phrased his question using the words "why not" (in an interrogative manner seeking an explanation) rather than the words "would you" (or a similar construction that could be interpreted as a request seeking acceptance of a task).