

Revenue Committee 3/2/2021

Susan M.; Tom E.; Tim S.; Pat D.; Susan L.; Dan E.

Tom H.

Dan won't make it.

Susan L.: have some time about how we might increase the group and have adjuncts. We should take a formal vote on those ideas.

Susan M.: the report has to be in by March 8

Tim: When is the warrant article is due ~ March 30.

Tom E.: Give Lisa copy of agenda and minutes.

Tim: we send to Lisa or post it?

Susan M.: I posted the minutes on the historical website. Lisa has to post it at the town meeting minutes.

Pat: post minutes if we vote on something?

Tom E.: Ask Lisa. Public needs to know if we met, etc. Lisa would know.

Tim: recording meetings...why?

Susan L.: it helps if people want to go back and listen to detail.

Susan M.: only been doing the past 4 meetings. The recordings are in the icloud file. I can explore that.

Susan L.; from a town perspective, anyone can come to an open meeting. We can use those for ourselves and write up the minutes.

Susan M.; I will follow up on where the zoom recordings go.

Tim: if we record, let's include the link to the recording in the minutes. Record when it's valuable, and outside speaker is visiting, and include in the minutes.

Roles

Tim: Pat and I will trade off with taking minutes and facilitator. Do we have other roles?

Timekeeper? Someone can call out when to come to a close on a certain topic?

Other roles?

Susan: informal roles of conduit to outside people, will come up with questions, and organize the call.

Susan M.: when Dan, when Jonathan Wright came, did you come up with questions or did we?

Dan: he spoke extemporaneously, giving free rein for questions worked.

Tim: scheduling—we were considering moving the schedule to later in the day

Dan: there is no perfect time for me; it's always hit or miss.

Susan L.: for ease of inviting people, evening is better. It gets better once we get out of COVID restriction.

Tom E.: traditionally all govt town meetings are in the evening (except for MLP) and that allows the public to come. Maybe we can be flexible.

Susan M: there are meetings every night of the week except Friday. I'm not sure if it makes a big difference. This time period worked better for Seth Seeger and the rest of us were flexible.

Tim: it would work better for me to meet in the evenings.

Susan L.: why don't you check to see what night would work best?

Tim E: postpone until new members join?

Susan L: may deter people joining

Tim: we don't vote on very much; do we want to vote on more agenda items, assignments,, etc. Would this improve effectiveness or add unneeded burden.

Susan L: I prefer to vote

Tim: we can experiment with that, and see how it works. Be more objective driven.

Susan M: sometimes I think it's helpful.

Susan L: I make a motion to accept minutes; Tim: second. All approve.

Finalize Rev Com Town Report, due March 8

Susan L: are you going to write up what we did with UMass people?

Tom E: I need to do that.

Tim: this is the shorter report blurb on what we've been working on.

Susan M.: This is going into the packet at Town Hall (Town Report) what every committee puts in.

Tim: one thing that caught my attention; I thought the community listening sessions were the on ramp to the economic development

Susan L: that should be included.

Tom E: Don't use 'master plan' because it has legal implications (statute)

Susan/Tom E: it is a political issue.

Tom E: I wouldn't say anything about a master plan.

Susan M.: could we mention partnering with fincom doing a financial history?

Tom E: that would be financial projections and Best Practices and that should be in there.

Susan L. One Stop Growth and Community Compact could be mentioned.

Tom H: expressions of interest are due April this year.

Susan L: mention that briefly.

Tim: Economic Study that was premature, do we still want to plan to pursue an economic development study?

Susan M/L: yes. That is the One Stop

Susan L: two town centers around town hall and Moore's Corner.

Susan M: moving towards an economic development study, we are approaching thru the possibilities: research with finance committee, the other is community compact. We are moving in that direction but we aren't formally contracting to do Econ. Dev. Study yet.

Tim: could we plan to create the RFD in advance of the next Town Meeting, then we would have proposals with estimates that we could bring to Town meeting

Susan L: if got one stop funding, and we did a plan with concom and a few other people in prep for our 250th we would be getting money for them, so a warrant article wouldn't be needed nor would we know how much we would need. The one stop sounds extremely promising: 250th, It would not change the town is set up and it would create amenities and a few other things, increasing the quality of life here to attract other to live here.

Tim: call time on this agenda, re-write, one review, and send to the group.

Tim: I'll re-write and Susan L can you review (yes) Will get sent to group and will all agree on it.

Big Report

Tim: Need description of contact with UMass professors etc. (section 4). Graphs, I did a big data dump from assessors, (CSD files) so I can analyze all kinds of things. I basically need the tax burden for homes. I communicated with (someone in town on fixed income) who has trouble paying annual tax, and this is a topic for the sake of paying attention to all stakeholders in town.

Susan M: those who own the biggest parcels are least able to pay their taxes.

Tom E: property tax is regressive. Also Kitteridge estate was paying 10% of our taxes. Skews the data.

Tim: look at median.

Tom E: screws up average household income. There are a few people in town that have large income and a lot who don't.

Susan L; the median is high, but I think it's important to have a few more graphs to tell that story. Also the town is worried if the K estate goes nonprofit. Also chart E, that chart is not effective bec it makes it look like less of a problem than it really is. I think it will throw people off. And they will think there is no problem at all. The other thing is about quality of life, tax burden, amenities,, what are the other factors? Do we have a budget reflective of good governance (80% of budget going to schools?)

Tim: the story I think this final graph tells, the first is looking at historical numbers, there are no alarm bells sounding pertaining to prop 2 ½ the tax rate is going down. We don't have the ability to know what keeps the green line going up so we ought not to rely on it. The economic dev. Study would help us with those two lines.

Susan L: what would average person in Leverett conclude looking at that chart?

Tim: I don't think it's a reason not to show it.

Tom: I agree with you both. This doesn't necessarily predict that but nonetheless the analyses is valuable. Maybe it is a econ. Devl analyses.

Susan L: that green line is the one that needs the economic development study.

Tim: the orange line stays flat because we have control over it. But it doesn't mean there aren't big costs looming.

Pat: describe all the things what this graph does and doesn't show. Create a more physically appealing graphic.

Tom E: we have to keep in mind, the purpose of the committee is not to address town spending (whole process for that). Another thing I think we have to remember that we want to make a case for an economic development plan. In the past we've been told we are reaching the cap and we've found that it is not a compelling problem in the immediate future. So if we are going to propose things that loosen zoning, spend money, then we have to have a strong case on why we need to do those things. If it's not the tax cap, then what is it? What is the compelling argument to convince people. Best practices finance projection study; that will go a long way towards this discussion in the blue zone. We should keep that in mind too. There are a lot of factors; I worry the most about what is going to happen to UMass; I'm worried about the cost of education, zoom learning, will there be people leaving the area. It drives what happens in Leverett.

Susan L: Maybe the placement of the chart is the problem; I just don't want to be confusing to people. We need to make the case that we DO need to do something, even though we are not falling off the cliff. Here's what we found out, what we don't know; not enough narrative around it. I am happy to help you with that.

Tim: I'll think about compelling rationale about a narrative. The other thing I wanted to say about this report, I thought it would be interesting, the buildability report, done by sustainability committee, we could add as an appendix.

Susan M: what happened with that, Tom E?

Tom E: I never saw that before. There wasn't too much in there I wasn't familiar with but I never saw the report. But like anything that is short, there are a lot of aspects that are misleading so it's useful but not complete.

Tim: Dan you could think about is if you have a similar description of the housing market (any granular data) look at what is happening in W. MA, Franklin County, etc.

Dan: I can look at trends, etc.

Tom E: if you have an idea about construction costs too

Dan: one page summary could you present at next meeting?

Tom E: It shows how quickly things can change. A year ago was the aging population, concern about whether home values would go down, area losing population. In a year it's switched around completely. Housing values are going up. It's hard to come to long term conclusions.

Dan: general consensus in my business that home values will continue to increase because people know they can work from home. People moving out of the cities, suburban areas growing, and people want space.

Susan L: any way you can get that trend into a document? These things don't always go in parallel (growth in rural decline in cities)

Dan: I can pull stuff up; anecdotally we talk about what is going on. There is a housing crisis and affordability crisis. Lack of affordability in US.

Tom E: grant applications go through town, we can't apply for grant but the SB can.

Susan L: we could pull together the ideas and give it to Margie.

Tim: we should definitely do that.

One Stop For Growth: portal, channel your ideas to the different programs.

Write up we think we need and give it to Margie.

Tom: we'll be talking about this tonight, and more ideas can come in as long as Margie has the time (or this committee). I can mention it tonight if the committee is interested. I can tell Julie, and the public that the Rev Com is actively reviewing this.

Susan L: you can mention the ideas I put in the restoring museums, and village centers for 250th ... maybe getting bonding, CPC funding, properties people could be convinced to sell, the things people normally do when they try to make things more appealing.

Tom H: encompasses two communities which matters. Esp if we can throw a little development in there.

Susan L: a couple properties, across from the lake, there could be a business that could rent canoes or bicycles.

Tim: Assign a task: you write up an EOI for next meeting.

Susan M: Community Compact Best Practice we want to work with Fin Com. Tom do you know if any other proposals have been made. Leverett gets two projects.

Tom H: I don't know. I don't think there are any.

Tom E: I don't think there are deadlines on community compact. A quick call to Margie would answer that.

Susan M: I will do that.

Next Meeting with Ann Delano 11th 7-8 we meet 16th @ 1:15.