

Minutes: Leverett Comprehensive Plan Steering Group meeting #3

June 27, 2023

Steering Group members in attendance (no members were absent)

- Silas Ball
- Matt Boucher
- Jenny Daniell
- Arlyn Diamond
- Sarah Dolven
- Jim Field
- Gary Gruber
- David Henion
- Isaiah Robison
- Kim Van Wagner
- Andy Vlock
- Nicole Vadja
- Steve Weiss
- Bob Weitzman

Others in attendance

- Emily Innes
- Chris Herlich, RKG
- Juliane Ding, RKG
- Traci Adamski, Tighe & Bond
- Tim Shores, clerk

Minutes taken by Tim Shores

Agenda

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. Approval of minutes from May 10, 2023
3. Discussion 1: Existing Conditions (40 minutes)
 - a. Presentation from consultant team
 - b. Q&A
4. Discussion 2: Community engagement and outreach (40 minutes)
 - a. Continued discussion of outreach process
 - b. Create schedule of outreach and engagement
5. Next steps: Meeting dates and task assignments

The meeting began at 7:02pm

1. Welcome & Introductions: Jenny and Andy invited everyone to use 10 seconds to introduce themselves and share something that made them smile.
2. Approval of minutes from May 10, 2023 (agenda item unintentionally skipped)
3. Discussion 1: Existing conditions presentation (refer to PowerPoint file provided by Emily Innes for the content of the presentation). Highlights of the discussion:
 - a. During the demographics and housing presentation, several Group members discussed the impact of Leverett's aging population and increased proportion of retired residents.

- b. During the housing presentation, the Group asked for more information about the increase in vacant housing in the “seasonal/recreational” and “vacant other” categories. Juliane Ding will look into this.
 - c. During the employment base discussion, the Group asked whether Leverett Elementary School employment was accounted for in the 2022 Jobs numbers (slide 33). Chris Herlich will look into this.
 - d. Also during employment base discussion, the Group asked for more information about the growth in home-based businesses and people working from home. Chris will look into this.
 - e. When the ‘red map’ of Leverett was presented (slide 42, showing the very limited soil suitability for septic tank absorption fields), Isaiah observed that a closer inspection of parcels would reveal more variation in soil suitability, especially with the permeability of gravel fields along route 63.
 - f. The Group learned that Town Hall lacks potable water.
 - g. When the open space and zoning maps were presented (slides 44-50), Group members discussed the conservation status of property owned by Cowl’s, which is one of the largest landowners in Leverett, and the recent controversy in Shutesbury over Cowl’s forest-to-solar development plan.
 - h. Also during the zoning map discussion, Group members discussed the history of the impact of high value residential properties on town finances.
4. Discussion 2: Community Engagement and Outreach
- a. Kim and Arlyn presented their work on the media strategy, which prioritizes these activities:
 - i. Begin with a small survey on livability, based on the research done by the Sustainable Economy Committee last year.
 - ii. Hold small community visioning discussions as previously discussed.
 - iii. Schedule library info sessions on specific Comprehensive Planning topics.
 - iv. Organize discussion with affinity groups.
 - v. Organize a celebration to culminate all of the community vision work.
 - vi. Present the report at the next Town Meeting.
 - b. Andy discussed the idea of the Group coming up with a Town Motto that expresses the town’s ethos synthesized with community-driven values. The idea is to come up with a way to promote town unity around the Comprehensive Plan. He invites Steering Group members to think of motto ideas for the next meeting.
 - c. Matt asked for clarification on scheduling: can Steering Group members start having community vision meetings, or do we need to wait until everyone is ready. Andy clarified that Group members are welcome to start organizing community vision meetings immediately – he asked that people take notes of what they learned so they the Group collects data.

5. The Group agreed to hold the next meeting at the Safety Complex meeting room, July 25 from 7pm to 8:30pm.