

Minutes: Leverett Comprehensive Plan Steering Group meeting #4

Tuesday, July 25, 2023

Steering Group members in attendance

- Silas Ball
- Jenny Daniell
- Jim Field
- Gary Gruber
- David Henion
- Kim Van Wagner
- Andy Vlock
- Bob Weitzman

Steering Group members absent

- Matt Boucher
- Arlyn Diamond
- Sarah Dolven
- Isaiah Robison
- Nicole Vadja

Note that Steve Weiss announced his resignation from the Steering Group earlier in July 2023. This reduced the number required for quorum from 8 to 7 members.

Others in attendance

- Tim Shores, clerk

Minutes taken by Tim Shores

Agenda

Tuesday the 25 th of July at 7 pm at the Safety Complex meeting room the Comprehensive Plan Committee will meet to discuss:

1. Current and Existing Conditions in Leverett;
2. Public Outreach;
3. Town Motto

The meeting began at 7:00 PM.

1. Andy explained that the consultants would not be at this meeting. The contract with Emily Innes includes a limited number of meetings with the consultants, and it's important to not use those up too quickly. Jenny explained that it's also important for the Steering Group to not let the project

become led by the consultants, as this can create a conflict with the goal of a community-driven project.

2. Jenny and Andy asked Silas to begin with a question that he wanted to ask the group to prompt discussion.

Silas asked, Why are we here? What is this group trying to achieve, what is its connection to past initiatives like the Revenue Committee and other initiatives currently happening in town? And, are we on track to achieve whatever it is?

The group went around the table to discuss.

- Bob: We're here out of concern about how to solve the town's big problems.
 - Gary: We're here as visionaries on what can be done to maintain the town in the future. After the vision is complete, it will be up to the town to figure out how to achieve that vision.
 - David: We're here to understand existing conditions, but also to explore different ways of interpreting information about existing conditions, and to use this understanding to develop proactive bylaws that prepare the town to contend with big interests, like big solar installations. Also, the current zoning bylaw has been developed primarily by one person, as a way to protect the town from overdevelopment.
 - This led to discussion: Bob asked about the zoning history. Gary explained that the town worked with a consultant in the 1980s to revise the zoning in such a way that it would slow the sudden growth of housing development that began early that decade or late in the 1970s. Maintenance of zoning bylaw since then has been a matter of tinkering in response to specific issues, but no overhaul of zoning since then, which brings the town to the question of how to adequately prepare zoning for future needs.
 - Jenny: We're here to learn the town's vision and values and treat them as guardrails and guides to what is important for the town to prioritize as we plan for the future.
 - Kim: Highlighted Silas's second question, which is: Are we on track? To her, this includes the question: Are we including enough people?
 - Jim: We're here to figure out how to stimulate a reasonable amount of growth. The town was fiscally conservative in the past. Families who lived here purchased land and held onto it. The zoning changes Gary referred to made it difficult for those families to build on their investments. He asked, how much more land can we afford to take from the tax roll through conservation?
3. Jenny and Andy asked everyone to break out into small groups to discuss topics from the existing conditions presented by the consultants at the previous meeting. After 15 minutes, everyone rejoined the larger group and presented what they discussed on the topics of housing, land use, employment, and demographics.
 4. Public outreach: Kim asked for clarification on what Steering Group members are allowed to do at this stage, and reminded everyone of discussion at a previous meeting that Steering Group members work together in pairs or small groups when conducting outreach and dialogue about community vision. Andy responded that Steering Group members should feel free to discuss the plan for community vision meetings, but hold off on collecting data or treating these discussions as

community vision meetings until the Steering Group is further along in the process and has received more supporting materials from the consultants.

5. Due to time constraints, the Town Motto topic was shelved until the next meeting. Jenny and Andy encouraged everyone to think more about the motto and come prepared with ideas.
6. The next meeting will be Tuesday, August 22, from 7pm to 8:30pm, at the Safety Complex meeting room.
7. The group reviewed a diagram that Tim drew on the whiteboard as an answer to Silas's question at the outset of the meeting.