

Leverett Comprehensive Planning Steering Group
Minutes from the 1/15/24 meeting

Attendees: Jim Field, Gary Gruber, Arlyn Diamond, Andy Vlock, Nicole Vajda, Isaiah Robison, Bob Weitzman, Jenny Daniell, Kimberly VanWagner, Silas Ball; guests Tim Shores and Tom Ewing

Absent: Matt Boucher, David Henion

Meeting opened: 6:35pm

1. Previous minutes approved by unanimous consent
2. Discussion on December community data walk
 - a. Guessing about 50 people attended
 - b. People seemed engaged and interested, the format was educational and casual
 - c. Dropping in is a useful format, friendly but maybe not optimal for gathering data; however, it is a good way to capture unusual/outlier data points [quote from one attendee: "I don't want Leverett to become a wealthy enclave" vs. some people even on committee feel the town is already on its way to that vision]
 - d. But maybe the next event can be more discussion-based and accommodate different learning styles (not all text)
 - e. The Juggler Meadow stuff didn't hijack the event
 - f. The mapping format/walk around was better than the first event.
 - g. Other learnings: small group discussions with a focused topic have been better than larger or more general discussions; so, maybe next event should be more topical/limited in scope; maybe next event will be smaller, but more precise
3. Small Group meetings discussion
 - a. Request from Emily and group leadership to be more careful and consistent about documenting these interactions - send to Emily and copy leadership as soon as possible after event, not sending handwritten notes but using a format that more easily can be incorporated into ongoing document
 - b. Maybe have Emily train us in what she wants/needs, make sure to have worksheets and then be able to type those up
 - c. Even if what people say doesn't seem important, it may be and we need to send to Emily everything that people are telling us
 - d. Are the existing worksheets for dialogue still relevant? We may need a revamp or are they still leading to other questions that are interesting?
 - e. We could use the results of the first questionnaire as discussion topics and then record that discussion and the resulting follow up questions people are bound to have
 - f. The conversations with others are important - we are stimulating people, getting them to engaged, have dialogue - we are laying the groundwork for community involvement and understanding that will be critical to any changes we advocate for in the future and for the future implementation of the plan
4. What about small group presentations/info sessions on select topics? Eg. environmental stewardship, climate resilience, affordable housing, zoning, aging in Leverett, rural character, recreation
 - a. We need Emily to create fact sheets so we can have informed discussions

- b. Scheduling topical meetings - do we have the capacity for this?
- c. How about a library series, civic education, with experts such as UMASS faculty?
- d. Or sitting open hours for 2 hours on Saturday at library for casual conversations about certain topics such as economic development, ADUs, what other towns are doing and what is allowed?

The group debates:

- i. Topical info sessions sounds like a later project; right now we need to focus on the next community event, explaining what we learned so far from the questionnaire, and describe next steps/where we are going
- ii. What is our timeline now? What do we understand about the survey?
 - 1. 1/31 Emily presents to planning board on the survey
 - 2. 2/12 Emily meets with our group to plan next event
 - 3. 2/28 Next community event: Forecasting?
 - 4. Feb - Mar: wrap up data analysis and begin drafting plan
 - 5. 4/30: last day for 2nd questionnaire submissions (if we even do a 2nd questionnaire)
 - 6. 6/30 Deadline of comprehensive plan submitted to planning board
- iii. Rushing to finish by deadline vs. creating a sound document discussion:
 - 1. Our need to understand the survey results before making decisions;
 - 2. What obligation do we have to get this done by 6/30;
 - 3. The plan as a tool to codify zoning recommendations and town values

5. Action Steps

- a. Jenny and Andy will request Emily make a video for us summarizing the results of the questionnaire, information sheets on select topics from those listed above
- b. Let's wrap up the "listening" portion of our overall timeline by end of January, and make plans for the next stage
- c. Once we have the info from the questionnaire and a sense of what the listening sessions have yielded, let's prioritize the topics we will focus on in the plan
- d. The next Community Event should be a "gong show" or "speed dating" type; "Leap Into Leverett" more of a deep-dive of what's implied by certain decisions; eg. allowing ADUs vs environmental conservations/clean water/septic use etc.

Meeting concluded 8:15pm