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Hamilton Master Plan Committee – MEETING NOTES

May 20, 2021 6:00 PM

Memorial Room – Town Hall - 577 Bay Road, Hamilton, MA 01982

In attendance

Town staff - Joseph Domelowicz, Town Manager; Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning and Inspections

Master Plan Committee Members (alphabetical): Dana Allara, Emil Dahlquist, Kristin Kassner, Jack Lawrence, Richard Luongo, Rick Mitchell, Kristin Pieper, David Wanger

Weston & Sampson Consulting Team: Caroline Wells, AICP; Ashley Sweet, and Sydnie Picard

The meeting began about 6:10 p.m.

Master Plan Overview

Committee members discussed what they like about Hamilton, their experience in the town, and what they hope for in the updated plan. Comments included:

- Make sure Hamilton continues to be a place where people can raise their families and where people can retire. To be a welcoming community for all.
- Hamilton has open space, there is a balance between small town life but also transportation options that provide access to other areas. Enjoys the sense of community.
- Likes the town the way it is. Keen on numbers, wants to see quantitative effects of implementation.
- Wants to see the Master Plan shape regulations.
- Very focused on supporting the school system.
- Interested in finding the proper balance between the various interests that drew people to the community and fiscal responsibilities. Balancing commercial development with small town characteristics. Afraid of the tax rate and forcing people out because they cannot afford the tax rate.
- Interested in the fact that the housing stock is too expensive for people to buy into Hamilton. Concerned about the financial sustainability in the town. About 63% of the budget costs for the town are the schools. There is a disconnect between different groups in town, hoping that this plan will be a vehicle for bringing people together under a common goal.
- Lack of commercial spaces adds to the tax burden on the residents.

What is a Master Plan?

The consulting team described the role of the Master Plan as a policy guide document and resource. Who is ultimately responsible for adhering to the Master Plan? How do you prevent this plan from just collecting dust on a shelf? → Implementation Plan. The plan should be clear and actionable.

Existing Master Plan & Updates

The group discussed the existing master plan, and ways to encourage more people to participate in the planning process. Key points:

- Would like to encourage more attendance at Town meetings.
- How to stimulate better participation?
- Appreciate that we are looking at the water and infrastructure issues. What are the issues that are hitting everyone (taxes)? How do we frame this Master Plan so that it resonates with a larger body of people?
- Could we include in the plan clear and concise ways for the community to get involved in the process, and why one should?
- There is a disconnect between the town government and communicating with the people, on a technological level as well.
- Want people to be aware that this effort is going to be very robustly engaging the public.

Meetings

- Will need to return to in-person meetings on June 16th
- Could participate in afterschool and youth sporting events.
- "I think it would be a good idea to reach out to various "interest" groups - the mother's club, friends' groups, etc."
- Likes a newspaper, get articles into the newspaper (Ipswich Local News)
- Two weekends / half-day events at the middle school got public input and working groups.
- Flyers in the kids' backpacks at school
- Would like to discuss opportunities for regionalization with Wenham or even with other towns around them.