

HAMILTON PLANNING BOARD
577 Bay Road, Hamilton, MA 01936

April 2, 2025

Dear Caroline and Members of the Select Board

I am writing to respectfully request that the Select Board endorse and authorize the formation of an Implementation Committee for Hamilton’s 2024 Master Plan. As you may know, the Planning Board unanimously voted to approve the Master Plan on August 6, 2024. The Planning Board took its role in reviewing and adopting the Master Plan seriously and added paragraphs to expand discussion of critical topics and made other revisions to the organization and presentation of materials in the Master Plan to make information more compelling and readable by the Hamilton community. In so doing, the Planning Board did not make substantive changes to the document approved by the Master Plan Steering Committee which navigated the challenging transition from working with Weston & Sampson to working with Barrett Planning to complete the Master Plan.

In Chapter 4 of the Master Plan, captioned “Looking Ahead,” the 2024 Master Plan sets forth the following regarding an Implementation Committee:

Upon the successful adoption of a new Master Plan, the creation of an **Implementation Committee** comprised of Town officials and representatives from boards and committees to oversee the implementation of goals and to modify those goals as the Master Plan ages to reflect new realities and public sentiment is a necessity. The Implementation Committee would be charged with meeting regularly (one to four times per year depending on capacity) throughout the Plan’s lifespan to guide implementation efforts. Several existing boards and committees struggle to find and retain members, so it may not be feasible to introduce a new one. Hamilton, however, has many dedicated volunteers who might be able to assist. The existing bodies best suited to take responsibility for Master Plan implementation are the Planning Board, who voted to adopt the plan, and the Select Board, as the Town’s primary policy-making body. The Town should incorporate a standing Master Plan Implementation item into the Select Board’s agenda, as well as at regular Town Staff meetings.

At a minimum, important goals of the Implementation Committee should include:

- Creation of an Implementation Committee comprised of Town officials and representatives from boards and committees to oversee the implementation of goals and to modify those goals as the Master Plan ages to reflect new realities and public sentiment.
- Foster communication and cooperation among boards and committees to promote consistency with respect to overlapping responsibilities.

- Hire a full-time Town Planner to support the Director of Planning & Inspectional Services.
- Create a part-time staff position to apply for and administer grants to increase the Town’ ability to fund local projects.¹

At the September 17, 2024 and October 10, 2024 meetings of the Planning Board, members discussed formation of an Implementation Committee and formulated recommendations as to its membership, meeting schedule, and authority as set forth below.

Composition of the Implementation Committee:

The Implementation Committee should include members with a broad array of viewpoints who will act to check and balance differing perspectives to achieve results consistent with the goals of the Master Plan for the benefit of the entire Hamilton community. The Committee would be comprised of the following 11 members:

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| Town Manager | Select Board representative |
| Planning Director | Planning Board representative |
| DPW representative | Conservation Committee representative |
| Recreation Department representative | Capital Committee representative |
| | Finance and Advisory Committee representative |
| | Hamilton Development Corporation representative |
| | Environmental Impact Committee representative |
| | Community Preservation Committee representative |

If needed for specific Action items set forth in the Implementation Charts included in Chapter 4 of the Master Plan, representatives from the following “Leadership Parties” could be asked to attend Implementation Committee meetings on an as need basis:

- Council on Aging
- Emergency Management Service
- Energy Commission
- Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust
- Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee
- Historic District Commission

¹ Parenthetically, Mark B. Connors, the Town’s new Planning and Land Use Director who will begin employment on October 28, 2024, has qualifications that will assist the Town implement the goals of the Master Plan as he served as a staff liaison for all major land use boards, managed grant applications and was the primary author of zoning amendments

Information & Technology Department

Zoning Board of Appeals

The Planning Board also discussed the potential difficulty of having a single member of a board or committee permanently designated to serve on the Implementation Committee. Accordingly, it recommends that each board or committee make one of its members available to attend Implementation Committee meetings, potentially on a rotating basis, with the understanding that that member will have the authority to speak for all members and the duty to report back to other members as to what transpired at the Implementation Committee meetings.

Meeting Schedule for the Implementation Committee:

The Planning Board recommends that the Implementation Committee meet at least once per year and more often if needed. A meeting at the beginning of the new year or following Annual Town Meeting might be ideal times to conduct meetings of the Implementation Committee.

As you are aware, the Town has several on-going initiatives, including the adoption of a form-based code for the Town Center and potentially the creation of Section 3A districts that comply with EOHLC Guidelines. The Implementation Charts identify other action items that require action in the “short term,” including but not limited to, the reconstitution of an Open Space Committee, identification of high-priority areas for construction of bike paths and sidewalks, and design guidelines for multifamily dwelling units and accessory dwelling units (ADUs). Of course, this last task highlights the need to amend Section 3 of the Hamilton Zoning Bylaw to address the requirements of the Affordable Homes Act regarding ADUs. Thus, there would appear to be a need for the Implementation Committee to meet more than once per year in 2025 and 2026. Additionally, it may be appropriate to authorize representatives of boards and committees that are part of the Implementation Committee to request a meeting of the entire committee, when necessary, particularly if coordination among boards and committees may be needed or advisable.

Authority of the Implementation Committee:

The Planning Board did not envision a blanket authority for the Implementation Committee to vote on matters that might be within the purview of either Town officials or boards or committees. Rather, the Planning Board envisioned the role of the Implementation Committee to provide ideas, support, and expertise to those boards or committees charged with implementation of action items in the Implementation Charts. The Planning Board, however, did support the ability of the Implementation Committee to vote to amend either the goals or action items in the 2024 Master Plan when changed circumstances in subsequent years dictate the need for redirection of planning initiatives.

Transparency:

The Planning Board, as a final recommendation, expressed the view that meetings of the Implementation Committee should be open to the public and recorded on HWCam so that the community remains engaged in ascertaining how the Master Plan is being implemented and can

voice ideas about how action items can be implemented or whether changes to the goals and action items set forth in the Master Plan should be explored.

Should you have questions or concerns about the Planning Board's recommendations, I would be happy to answer them or welcome you to a Planning Board meeting to refine the ideas set forth in this letter with respect to the formation, schedule, and authority of the Implementation Committee.

Kind regards,

/s/ Marnie Crouch
Planning Board Chair