

# Master Plan Committee Minutes - June 14, 2006

## TOWN OF LINCOLN

### MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE MINUTES

June 14, 2006

#### ATTENDANCE:

Ken Hurd	Chair/ Planning Board
Mark Whitehead	Town Planner
Catherine Perry	Planning Admin Assistant
David Reece	15 Cambridge Turnpike ('at large' member)
Robert Sutherland	Council on Aging
Ben Horne	Conservation Commission
Peter Von Mertens	Conservation Commission
Angela Seaborg	Conservation Dept
Gus Browne	Zoning Board of Appeals
Paul Giese	Finance Committee
Astrid Glynn	24 Beaver Pond Road ('at large' member)
Bryce Wolf	Planning Board
Bob Domnitz	Planning Board
Sharon Antia	School Committee
Anita Scheipers	Assistant Town Administrator
Buck Creel	Water Commission
Tim Higgins	Town Administrator
Sarah Cannon Holden	Selectmen
Colin Smith	Historic District Commission
Dan Pereira	Recreation

#### INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed members to the newly-formed Master Plan Committee, and people introduced themselves. Mr. Hurd referred to the previous meetings where the setting up of a Committee had been discussed, and explained that a consensus emerged, that the various Town boards and organizations need to work together, supported by staff, to prepare for impending land use legislation and to think through land use and related issues before being presented with urgent decisions. The Planning Board, which has the lead responsibility for a Master

Plan, has certain expectations of the Committee's work, and anticipates a 21 month process leading to a 2008 Town Meeting.

Mr. Hurd expressed a hope that members will consider issues broadly (in terms of spatial framework, time horizon and political constituencies) as well as representing the perspective of their particular boards. The Committee will need to be a working group at times, to meet the requirements of producing a plan and to ensure matters are integrated. The starting point will be to think about Lincoln's values and goals.

### **WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?**

The Chairman outlined a number of characteristics of a Master Plan:

- It states core values
- It can be updated
- It provides guidance and coordination with other documents
- It resolves the balance of different interests
- It coordinates with regional frameworks
- It provides accountability, setting out responsibilities and guidance for implementation.

Mark Whitehead stated that a Master Plan should not be seen as a cure-all as it cannot solve every problem in detail, but it helps by setting a framework and a process for handling more detailed decisions in future. The statutory basis of a Master Plan is set out in M.G.L. Chapter 41, Section 81D. Copies were circulated. Mr. Whitehead pointed out that the wording is a little unclear in its variable use of "shall" and "may". Legally a Master Plan can be approved by a majority of the Planning Board, but it is hoped to achieve a document with broader input and support by involving Selectmen, Town boards and Town Meeting in the process. The statute lists nine elements to be included in a plan, covering a range of land use topics plus goals/policies and implementation. Although it is advisable to include these elements, they do not need to be considered a straightjacket; other elements can be added and there is scope for the Town to ensure that its plan addresses its needs.

Copies of Sudbury's Master Plan were distributed to give an example of what a Master Plan may look like. This plan was produced in 2001 and meets the basic requirements. Members were asked to review it to get a feel for the type of factual content and structure. The Sudbury planning staff has offered to provide a presentation and discussion for the Committee in July, covering both plan preparation and ongoing implementation.

A question was asked about the approval system for Master Plans. Mr. Whitehead responded that they are reviewed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). Under the provisions of the pending Community Planning Bill, after five years from its enactment, all zoning will have to be consistent with a Master Plan, so there is an argument in favor of working on a plan ahead of time. The proposed rule is believed to mean that any amendments to zoning will have to comply with the plan, or it can be used as a blueprint for new zoning.

## **WORK PROGRAM**

Mr. Whitehead distributed copies of an outline schedule that he had drawn up based on experience in Biddeford and Tyngsborough. Key dates are: a report to Town Meeting in November this year with a request for consultants as needed; public meetings early in 2007 with an update report to Town Meeting in March; preparation of the final plan by early 2008 for public hearings and the March 2008 Town Meeting. Implementation planning would follow. Mr. Whitehead said he considered the timeframe realistic provided people are prepared to put in the work needed.

Peter Von Mertens expressed concern about when the non-profit organizations in town would have an opportunity to be involved. Mr. Whitehead responded that this would occur during the public meeting and outreach stages, which the Committee would shape.

## **EXISTING PLANS: INTEGRATION AND UPDATING**

In relation to the conservation element of the Master Plan, it was reported that the Conservation Commission is keen to update the Open Space and Conservation Plan, so they are hoping to incorporate initial work on that. Copies of guidance governing the Open Space and Conservation Plan was circulated. Both the Master Plan and Open Space Plan can tie into bids for grant funding; both gain a town points on its Commonwealth Capital score. It was explained that, while part of the reason the Town has not scored well on grant formulas in the past relates to community needs, there may be cases where we can hope to qualify for grants in future.

Much of the Town's past planning activity has been reviewed and conveniently summarized by Angela Seaborg, reducing the amount of work needed. However, Tim Higgins suggested that members will need to take stock and think about the need for coordinating different areas of activity or resolving balances in some cases. Copies of the 'History of Lincoln Planning' summary were distributed. Mr. Whitehead commented that these are very informative and interesting. Some of the quotations from earlier times still have a familiar ring.

Buck Creel expressed the view that there is a need to reach out periodically to ensure that the rest of the town is on board with official plans. Mr. Whitehead confirmed that this is part of the intention in the process of preparing a Master Plan. There will be several presentations to Town Meetings along the way, and suggestions or inputs to these will be welcome.

## **'WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH?' ANALYSIS**

Mr. Whitehead distributed a sheet of questions for members to answer in their own time. Copies will be emailed for those who did not receive one. The questions progress from general to more specific. The first is intended to begin to form a visioning statement for the Town; the second is to pull in the goals of boards and

committees, including the need to rewrite or update any plans, and the third is to identify current issues on people's minds. Mr. Whitehead asked members to try to address the questions in this order as the idea is to think long term and make the issues serve the goals and not vice versa. Answers should be sent to him by the end of July. In addition it would be helpful to have short 'situation summaries' from boards.

#### **NEXT MEETINGS**

Meetings will be once a month for now, but are likely to be more frequent as important deadlines approach.

The following dates were set:

July 18 – Sudbury Planners' presentation and discussion

August 8 – Committee meeting

September 12 – Committee meeting (tentative)

All dates are Tuesdays and meetings will start at 7:30pm.

#### **FURTHER DISCUSSION**

Mr. Higgins informed the Committee that similar towns he has spoken to have found it useful to include non-traditional elements in their plans. Susan Brooks, the new Town Clerk, has suggested that one such element might be how to strengthen local democracy and participation. The Selectmen hope that the Master Plan process will create a real forum for discussion in town, including new challenges, constraints, conflicts and opportunities. Buck Creel suggested that the plan should set forward-looking criteria rather than solving short-term issues; he thought a ten-year horizon would be good. Mr. Whitehead advised that most plans cover at least five years, and some ten to twenty. Paul Giese commented that an example of the kind of problem that might be avoided by coordinated planning is the difficulty in progressing the desired development by New England Deaconess Association because of a broader water supply/ conservation issue. Mr. Creel also observed that the Town's far-sightedness in the past has provided benefits for many decades. Mr. Hurd commented that the pace of change may have increased; nevertheless it is desirable to look as far ahead as possible.

Mr. Hurd said that turnover in the town's population suggests a useful role for the Master Plan in educating residents about the history of Town policies and reaffirming or amending agreed values. Bryce Wolf thought it was good to periodically assess what has been achieved and what hasn't, and why.

Peter Von Mertens suggested that key documents relating to the group's work be put on a website. Mr. Higgins undertook to ask Chuck Miller to set up an area on the Town's website. The possibility of a limited-access working website was also discussed; Mr. Higgins and Mr. Whitehead will investigate this.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm.

Submitted by Catherine Perry