

Minutes
Master Plan Working Group
August 3, 2017

Meeting began at 7 pm

Present: Meryl Mandell-Chair, Mike Vinskey, Allan Hanson, Jeff Lacey, Tim Logan, Mary Anne Antonellis, and Michele Cunningham

Regular meetings of the MPWG will be held on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, with a 7:30 pm start time, beginning in September. The next meeting, already scheduled for August 16th will take place as planned, but with a 7:30 start time.

Meryl proposed the following “rules of engagement” for members to consider as they participate in this committee.

1. Arrive to meetings on time
2. Engage in respectful dialog
3. Speak up and be heard
4. Keep in mind that participation is for the benefit of the Town and not personal agenda
5. Bring up issues of disagreement in a timely manner
6. Focus on data collected

Meryl mentioned that she was disappointed by the reaction of the Select Board to the Community Visioning document, especially when some members of the MPWG who had voted to support the document then neglected to support it publicly.

Other related discussion was related to bringing up issues in a timely manner – sometimes one might have further insights when given time to reflect.

Meryl asked for a vote on her proposed “rules of engagement.” The vote passed with one abstention.

Discussion about role of MPWG going forward. Themes on which to focus, possible actions we might take. Themes discussed included fiscal sustainability and fiscal responsibility, community building and community relations and the expressed desire for a new municipal facility (library, community center, senior center).

Each member was asked to spend a few minutes discussing their own views about how we might move forward.

Mike Vinskey distributed a four-page letter outlining his thoughts. It is attached to these minutes.

Alan Hanson: The Town needs to take look at projected finances for the future. There are Town Committees charged with overseeing finances. Regarding building community, maybe we have built a mountain out of a molehill. Most people in our community get along. Alan also asked for direction from the Select Board about ongoing role of MPWG.

Jeff Lacy distributed a one page document outlining his thoughts – it is also attached to these minutes.

Michele Cunningham is interest in community building and would be willing to work with others. She also appreciates setting up ground rules for engagement.

Tim Logan: The Select Board would like the MPWG to provide guidance in implementing Option 2 from the Vision statement.

From the Vision Statement

2. Directly Implement the Vision

The Select Board could define a series of topics to be addressed through focused studies, community engagement, and recommendations leading to actions. This might best be achieved by appointing a new working group to mine the Vision to develop and articulate specific topics, then have the Select Board assemble working committees of interested citizens to address them. The working committees could be provided with specific assignments and schedules. Each working committee would then report their findings and recommendations back to the Select Board for subsequent actions. The committees could be comprised of representatives of other boards or commissions, interested citizens, and advocates associated with the individual topics. This approach would require some staff time and may require the use of grants or Town funds to provide specialized studies or research, or in some cases for construction.

There was discussion about finances versus needs.

There was discussion about property values and tax rates.

There was discussion about coming up with inexpensive ideas for creating community resources/events at low costs.

Many residents do not participate in Town government.

Discussion about looking into consolidating police/fire with other communities.

Much of the Town's budget is mandated by State statute.

Discussion about business versus residential tax rates.

Discussion returned to narrowing the MPWG's discussion to themes including fiscal sustainability/responsibility, municipal space and "a low hanging fruit committee" that would explore ways to improve life in town and create community building opportunities without spending a lot of money.

Discussion about the need to spend time reflecting on this meeting's discussion and continue at next meeting.

More discussion about how to make further recommendations to the Select Board.

Tim made a motion: The August 16th meeting would continue discussion about the direction/purpose of the MPWG's and at the end of the August 16th meeting we would have a list of topics to be discussed at subsequent meetings and a schedule. Jeff seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Tim suggested members take some time to write reflections of tonight's meeting and distribute them to the group via email or bring to the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9 pm.

Minutes taken by Maryanne Antonellis.