

Master Plan Update Committee 2023

Meeting Minutes

January 15, 2025, 6:30 PM

Third Floor Training Room

355 East Central Street

This meeting was available to be attended in person by members of the public. The meeting was also live-streamed by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast Channel 9 and Verizon Channel 29. Recordings have been made available on Franklin TV's "Franklin Town Hall TV" YouTube channel. Additionally, citizens were able to participate remotely via phone and Zoom.

Committee Members in Attendance: *Chair Glenn Jones; Vice Chair Cobi Frongillo; Clerk Melanie Hamblen; Joe Halligan; Rick Power; Gino Carlucci; Erin Gallagher; Eric Steltzer; Ginelle Lang; Jennifer Williams;*

Committee Members Absent: *Meghann Hagen; Bruce Hunchard;*

Others in Attendance: *Amy Love, Town Planner; Greg Rondeau, Planning Board Chair; Beth Wierling, Planning Board Vice Chair;*

Chair Glenn Jones called the meeting to order at 6:31 PM.

Subcommittee Updates

Member Carlucci provided an update to say that the Sustainability subcommittee had met on December 20, 2024 to finalize revisions and commented that they appeared to be incorporated into the final report before the Committee. The subcommittees provided updates to confirm that their comments and concerns from their most recent meetings had been incorporated into the Final Report, with Chair Frongillo saying that one item from the CSFC subcommittee was left with the intention of finalizing discussion of it at this meeting with the Main Committee.

Final Master Plan Review

Town Planner Love confirmed that all comments had been addressed and incorporated into the Final Report. The Committee discussed additional details of the Final Master Plan, with Chair Jones saying it would be a longer document than the previous one and has been in development for over 18 months. The plan was set to be presented to the Planning Board on January 27. Town Planner Love reiterated that the Master Plan is a moving document and would be likely to undergo changes over the next ten years.

Chair Jones then introduced Planning Board Chair Greg Rondeau and Planning Board Vice Chair Beth Wierling and invited them to provide their feedback on the Final Master Plan Draft to the Committee. Planning Chair Rondeau then provided a summary of the history of development he has witnessed in Franklin along with the current and expected challenges he see Franklin facing that the Master Plan should address. He expressed what he sees as a need for controlled growth and redevelopment of existing lots to preserve a quality of life for residents, adding that

the number of developable lots in Town is low and mostly consists of lots previously overlooked during the periods of major development that occurred around the 1980s and 1990s. He also discussed his concerns with parking in the Downtown Area, saying he was concerned about a potential shortage of residential parking spaces that could come about from the implementation of the Master Plan. Mr. Rondeau also emphasized that redevelopment of the central sections of Franklin, including the Downtown area, would require meeting with the major landowners of the lots in those areas and laying out a commonly understood vision of what to do. He added that thinking outside the box is necessary for transforming small lots into useful spaces, citing 19 Dean Avenue being recently proposed for redevelopment with an underground parking garage. Mr. Rondeau also discussed the challenges that Franklin faces with traffic and congestion from drivers who are cutting through to and from accessing I-495 that recent development has to contend with.

Planning Chair Rondeau and Planning Vice Chair Wierling also expressed concerns about the potential for shortcuts in the permitting process, which could lead to problems down the line. He emphasized the importance of maintaining the current regulatory processes and not rushing into changes. Vice Chair Frongillo responded by explaining the Committee's focus on improving transit and reducing traffic, including the potential for a fixed bus route and micro transit. He also clarified that the recommendations were not intended to force a more urban feel on the town, but rather to provide increased flexibility as well as reduce mandates on parking.

Planning Vice Chair Wierling thanked Vice Chair Frongillo for clarifying with her points and expressed hope that the Town would continue to evolve in a way that maintains its character. She then expressed concerns about the portrayal of Downtown in the Master Plan, suggesting it was overly negative and could deter businesses from investing in the area. There was discussion in response to Planning Vice Chair Wierling's comments that touched on challenges and needs faced by the Downtown area. Planning Chair Rondeau commented that he would want to see mixed-use space include more commercial business space on the lower levels of buildings zoned for it so that 10 to 15 percent of the actual square footage is used for commercial purposes and split the remaining square footage with residential purposes, saying that would help rejuvenate the Downtown area. Planning Chair Rondeau also commented that he wanted builders and developers that are going to stay in Town rather than move on once their projects are completed.

The Committee discussed the need for smart growth, the importance of maintaining the Town's character, and the potential for increasing density in the Downtown area. Member Steltzer reiterated ideas from Vice Chair Frongillo of creating "neighborhood areas" that would allow people to be connected from their homes to local businesses without needing to travel by car. The concept of "by right" was also discussed, particularly for by right four-family residential lots, with concerns raised about the potential for subleasing and the need to promote family residences. The discussion moved on to the challenges faced in terms of affordable housing and Downtown revitalization. Member Halligan expressed concern about the state overriding certain zoning laws, saying it could lead to investors buying up properties and creating issues as

a result. He also expressed concerns about the possibility of Governor Healey changing the required percentage of 40B affordable housing from 10% of units to 15%.

Discussion moved to how a more vibrant Downtown can be created, with Member Halligan sharing his personal experiences in facing challenges with trying to sell a property in the Downtown area. Planning Vice Chair Wierling weighed in to say that everyone involved in the Master Plan Process wants to see a more vibrant Downtown, but expressed concerns with how the wording in the Plan itself may be exploited or manipulated by individuals to suit their personal needs. Member Halligan made the statement that the Master Plan is not a bylaw itself and does not necessarily give anyone the right to building anything that it might be interpreted as supporting. The discussion also touched on the issue of impervious coverage, with a proposal to increase it in key areas such as downtown and cul-de-sacs. The idea of promoting turnarounds instead of cul-de-sacs was also discussed, to which Planning Chair Rondeau weighed in to comment that the benefit of cul-de-sacs was their benefits with safety and emergency vehicle connectivity.

Town Planner Love weighed in to emphasize the challenges of planning for future developments, such as the potential impact of autonomous vehicles and drones on road infrastructure. Chair Jones touched on the need to consider the EPA's MS4 Permitting requirements in the Town's Master Plan, as new developments could increase impervious surface and trigger stricter regulations. Planning Vice Chair Wierling inquired about if the Committee had considered upcoming regulation changes from the EPA concerning properties over one acre and how that might impact existing and future developments in Town. Vice Chair Frongillo responded that he believed CSF Section 3.4 of Actions at least partially addresses those changes from the EPA, with Member Lang adding that the Town's association with the Charles River Pollution Control District is outline in the Report among other relevant associations and regulations that they have to adhere to regarding environmental impact. The Committee moved on to discuss the Implementation Plan and requests to adjust certain language and confirm the inclusion of an indigenous land acknowledgement in the plan. Vice Chair Frongillo mentioned the ongoing debate on approaching metrics to progress in the school system that had originally been brought up by Member Elmore, to which Town Planner Love suggested leaving out specific metrics and referred to the School Department's own reports on what they expect for their academic metrics. The Committee then began a conversation about ideas and whether or not there is a need for the Master Plan to include language concerning support for the School Department's goals and/or a request for the School Department to track certain metrics that might be used to measure academic success. Vice Chair Frongillo proposed that a sub-action be added under an existing goal to establish such metrics.

The Committee summarized the requested changes that would be made ahead of January 27 Planning Board meeting, with it agreed that an official vote on the Master Plan document would be taken prior to the Planning Board meeting itself to approve it. Member Lang asked to confirm if they would be adding an action item for school academic performance, to which Town Planner Love suggested that they bring the list of changes before the Planning Board to confirm that they approve of them. Chair Jones added that having a brief meeting prior to the

Planning Board meeting would ensure that the changes discussed had been correctly implemented.

Next Meetings (Main Committee)

January 27, 2025 at 6:00 PM (Presentation to Planning Board at 7:00 PM)

Next Meetings (subcommittees)

Open Space & Recreation, Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources: TBD

Community Service, Facilities & Circulation: TBD

Land Use and Zoning: TBD

Housing & Economic Development: TBD

Sustainability: TBD

Adjourn Meeting

Member Carlucci motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Member Williams. There was a unanimous vote in favor of adjourning. Meeting adjourned at 8:23 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Tyler Paslaski

Permitting Specialist

--Master Plan Committee approved minutes at February 5, 2025 Meeting