

Master Plan Update Committee 2023

Meeting Minutes

September 27, 2023, 6:30 PM

Third Floor Training Room

355 East Central Street

This meeting was available to be attended in person by all citizens. 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; Meghann Hagen; Jennifer Williams; Kenneth Elmore; Joe Halligan; Ginelle Lang; Gino Carlucci; Bruce Hunchard; Rick Power; Erin Gallagher

Committee Members Absent: Eric Steltzer;

Others in Attendance: Amy Love, Town Planner; Jill Slankas, Barrett Planning Group LLC; Emily Farmer, BETA Group, Inc.

Chair Glenn Jones called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM.

Subcommittee Updates

The Chairs of the subcommittees provided updates from their previous meetings. Member Lang, Chair of the Land Use and Zoning subcommittee said their subcommittee had drafted their goals for the Master Plan, and they had also started a list of stakeholders related to their subcommittee topic that they would try to engage with during the process. Member Elmore, Chair of the Housing and Economic Development subcommittee, shared a report from the Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation concerning developments and predictions for areas, including Boston, with the rest of the Committee. Vice Chair Frongillo, Chair of the Community Services, Facilities and Circulation subcommittee, announced that all of his subcommittee's meeting have been planned out for the rest of the year to take place at 5:00pm before Main Committee meetings. Member Carlucci, Chair of the Sustainability subcommittee said they have submitted questions to be added into the survey over to Town Planner Love. Member Hagen, Chair of the Open Space and Recreation & Natural, Cultural, and Historical Resources subcommittee, announced that the Open Space and Recreation Plan had been adopted by the Town Council at the previous night's meeting.

Member Hagen then asked about a goal from the 2013 Master Plan, specifically objective 2.6 which concerned supporting artists in the community through affordable spaces for cultural associations, and the Land Use & Zoning subcommittee's thoughts on creating additional zoning to address the goal. Member Lang answered that there had been a component of the 2013 plan for worker-focused housing, but not artist spaces, but their subcommittee can look into the possibility of making changes to it. Chair Jones suggested the Committee should make one

of its goals be finding suitable locations around Franklin that could potentially provide affordable spaces to suit artists and other types of community members to live and work in. Member Hagen also suggested to Member Hamblen that the community involvement aspect should be giving more mention to the inclusivity of different cultures, which was not given attention in the 2013 Master Plan. Member Hamblen added that indigenous peoples should also be included.

Chair Jones then reviewed and explained how the subcommittees should put specific suggestions and questions they have relating to goals onto lists and then email them to Town Planner Love and Planning Director Taberner to review and respond to.

BETA and Barrett Update

Ms. Jill Slankas from Barrett Planning Group and Emily Farmer from BETA Group provided an overview of how they have been conducting research and gathering data since the Master Plan process started. A presentation with responses from the interviews was shown to the Committee, which was broken down into each of the subcommittees' areas of focus.

Clerk Hamblen asked for clarification about sidewalk snow-removal being a 'challenge/threat' or more of a positive element and opportunity for the Master Plan to address, to which Ms. Slankas answered that she had viewed the response as more of an opportunity.

Vice Chair Frongillo asked if they had been able to connect with students or anyone under the age of 35 in conducting their interviews. Ms. Slankas said they had not been, but commented that everyone they had surveyed had been positive and said they were grateful to work for the Town of Franklin. She added that reaching out to younger people and students would be a whole outreach effort that either the Committee or the Consultants can cover, if the Committee thinks they should. Vice Chair Frongillo said he would be happy to reach out to the student governments at Dean College and Franklin High School, and Chair Jones agreed that it would be good to extend the demographic coverage to them. Chair Jones also asked if the input of Dean students would be relevant when compared to Franklin High School students, to which Vice Chair Frongillo clarified that this step is the interviews and not the survey, so they would only speak with some student leaders and representatives at this point. Ms. Slankas weighed in to say that she would see value in interviewing students from Dean, as master plans are "thought of as a plan for everyone who lives, works, and plays in that town". Vice Chair Frongillo also asked if they had been able to find contacts and conduct interviews with people connected to the most vulnerable populations within the Town, such as in the Food Pantry, the SAFE Coalition, and the Franklin Housing Authority, to which Ms. Slankas answered that they had not. Vice Chair Frongillo then commented that it was great that they had been able to get the feedback that they did, but it appeared to be mostly staff feedback and he himself would be trying to keep an eye on the people who are not typically being heard in these processes.

Member Halligan asked if they would be talking to the Franklin residents who pay taxes and vote in the Town's elections. Town Planner Love and Ms. Slankas responded with explaining that the survey would be used to ask for information from the public in Franklin and that the interviews are part of the earliest stages of the project where they are not yet ready for

collecting that amount of data. Member Elmore recommended that canvassing Dean College could involve group interviews, and possibly focusing in on students who are from Franklin or who have a more long-term interest in the Town.

Chair Elmore asked if it would be too much trouble for Barrett Consulting and BETA Group to add some more people to answer questions in the interview process. Ms. Slankas said it would be fine. Member Carlucci weighed in to say that the perspective of Dean students who are from out-of-state could be interesting for seeing what they think of Franklin from their outside perspective, because they also will share their opinion of the Town with people when they move back home. Town Planner Love answered that they might not have enough familiarity with the Town to know of its inventory, but Chair Jones responded by saying that such outsider feedback would be interesting nonetheless.

Member Hagen asked Vice Chair Frongillo about pulling in some small business owners in Town into the interview who might not be residents themselves, to which Ms. Slankas said that she could reach out to the Chamber of Commerce and the Franklin Downtown Partnership.

Member Lang asked for clarification on if some of the groups of people they are considering adding to the interviews would instead be focus groups later in the process, to which Ms. Slankas then explained how there is also a lot of space in the future for them as focus groups, but for now the interviews will be growing the circle of people who know about the Master Plan and foster engagement. Chair Jones followed up by asking if there were many responses to the interviews from the School Department, Ms. Slankas answered the Superintendent, the Principle, and IT had responded.

Member Gallagher asked if someone on the Committee could personally connect the Consultants to people who have not responded to requests to be interviewed.

Vice Chair Frongillo and Chair Jones then discussed with Ms. Farmer of BETA Group questions regarding data collection.

Harvest Festival

Town Planner Love briefed the Committee about having their setup at the Harvest Festival and making sure that Committee members would be there to staff it. Members who would be at other booths said they would still be willing to talk about the Master Plan with any people who ask them about it and direct those people to the Master Plan booth. Vice Chair Frongillo emphasized that although getting people to sign up for the survey so that they can also enter themselves into the raffle would be one thing, getting them to fill out the survey itself would be another.

Draft Survey Review

Town Planner Love presented the first draft of the survey to the Committee, saying that it was a version that members could directly make suggestions of edits to. She added that Barrett Consulting will be having a look at the final draft before it goes out.

Vice Chair Frongillo provided recommendations that survey takers should be prompted to provide their experiences more so than their expectations of outcomes. He also suggested that

most of the prompts would be agreeable to most survey takers, and thus should ask more for the survey taker's degree of agreement rather than simply whether or not they agree.

Member Halligan asked how seriously the Committee would be taking the results of the survey, adding that the results may convey a message against making any changes whatsoever, which Vice Chair Frongillo answered is why they should not ask such questions in their survey. The Committee continued discussing formats for the questions to be put on the survey, with Vice Chair Frongillo reiterating his emphasis on questions that ask people what they have experienced and what they value in the community rather than ask them to prescribe a solution to a problem which is not in their role.

Member Elmore asked how the surveys would be distributed, which Town Planner Love answered would be available on the Town website and accessible through QR Code, as well as paper copies and social media links. Chair Jones asked the rest of the Committee to review the survey so that it can be finalized as soon as possible.

Next Meetings (Main Committee)

October 25, 2023 at 6:30PM

Next Meetings (subcommittees)

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

Community Service, Facilities & Circulation: October 25, 2023 at 5:00PM

Land Use and Zoning: TBD

Housing & Economic Development: TBD

Sustainability: October 16, 2023 at 6:30PM

Additional Comments

Adjourn Meeting

Member Hamblen motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Member Power. There was a unanimous vote in favor of adjourning. Meeting adjourned at 8:10 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tyler Paslaski

Administrative Assistant

--Master Plan Update Committee approved minutes at November 29, 2023 meeting