

**Planning Board Special Meeting Minutes  
March 30, 2021**

Attendance: Brad Hutchison, Chair; Diane Mulvaney, Vice-Chair; Melissa O'Brien; Member; Joanna Brown, Clerk; Nate Therien, Member; Michael Adelman, Associate Member; Richard Harris, Planning Director; Anne Capra, Assistant Planner

Chair Hutchison opened the meeting at 6:00pm with roll call attendance.

Mr. Harris discussed the agenda and time schedule for the upcoming regular Planning Board meeting.

Review of the draft Master Plan resumed in Section 5 Plan Recommendations on page 54 with "Preservation". Ms. Brown noted a typo. No other comments.

p.54 Plan Recommendations

Figure 5.7 Map of Preservation and Development Areas

Ms. Brown inquired about the National Historic Districts on the map and if they were accurate or the 40R Districts. Mr. Hutchison and Mr. Harris stated the map was accurate.

p.56 Recommendations

Mr. Hutchison noted the small open spaces served important uses connecting the larger tracts of open space, as wildlife corridors. He recommended adding "mapping small lots of open space and evaluating their function and value" to the recommendations. Ms. Capra noted that a student team from The Conway School performed an assessment of undeveloped and unprotected parcels within the watersheds to Bachelor, Stony and Buttery Brook. The report from that project could be used as the basis for an expanded study about the role of these lots within neighborhoods. Ms. Brown supported this concept. Mr. Therien suggested adding "for wildlife corridors" to the last bullet on pg. 56 after "open space network and connectivity".

Ms. Brown supports the recommendation to protect agricultural land and asked if the plan should consider promoting "organic" agriculture in the plan. She noted that the Board of Health has banned the use of glyphosate on Town-owned property, which is consistent with organic agriculture. Ms. O'Brien supports mention of promoting organic agriculture in the plan. Mr. Harris noted that it is consistent with resilient communities.

Mr. Therien discussed the language and tone of the plan, e.g., "encourage". How would the Town encourage organic farming through its regulations or bylaws, or would this just be a gesture showing preference. The Town should not do anything to make it harder for farmers to farm. Ms. Capra noted the plan could recommend re-activation of the Agricultural Commission to address such tasks, and Mr. Harris said they could develop plans for best practices.

Ms. O'Brien asked if "Pearl Street" should be added to the bullet about "Preserve Alvord Street as a scenic route". Mr. Harris recommended adding all three designated scenic roads: River, Pearl and Alvord.

Mr. Hutchison discussed the meaning of "preserve historic development patterns" and how it is not necessarily compatible with modern zoning. He recommended we should examine neighborhoods that are historic and desirable and identify what characteristics make them attractive. Mr. Harris briefly

recounted the history of zoning in South Hadley and the dimensional trends for lots over that time. Mr. Hutchison noted that dimensional standards for lots do not preserve or promote historic buildings, with cost being the biggest impediment to historic preservation. Mr. Harris suggested an assessment of the zoning bylaw to determine uses and dimensional standards that support or discourage historic patterns. Could also determine what uses could take advantage of grants or tax credits to make historic restoration affordable. Ms. Brown notes that the Falls district, restoration of the many historic homes is cost prohibitive for property owners. Mr. Hutchison noted that the Community Preservation Act would be a funding tool if the Town adopted it. Mr. Harris noted that this sort of comprehensive assessment of neighborhood characteristics would be the purpose of the previously proposed sub-area plans. Mr. Therien said the meaning of “preserve historic patterns” needs to be clarified or the rubric eliminated. Ms. Brown said a discussion about zoning is needed within this context and public input is needed. Ms. Mulvaney inquired what entity would take on this assessment, and is a full inventory of every area of town needed. Ms. Capra and Mr. Harris suggested a scope of work for the subarea plans be added to the appendix, and that a professional consultant is needed for the project so identifying a specific board in the Implementation Plan is just in an advisory capacity. Area colleges could play a role in assessments.

Ms. O’Brien noted that the plan is structured to embed “resiliency” throughout the recommendations. She asked where recommendations about encouraging energy efficiency and green infrastructure in design standards is added. Ms. O’Brien suggested codifying such recommendations would encourage more energy efficient and greener development and redevelopment. Should we have a place in the plan that makes recommendations toward other boards about the sorts of recommendations they should adopt?

Mr. Therien stated that the resiliency content in the plan needs to be brought forward and clarified in the plan. By not having specific actions assigned to boards around resiliency, they are just aspirations buried in the plan.

Ms. Brown supports the idea of preserving access to the Connecticut River and wanted to know how it could be expanded. Ms. O’Brien noted the 2010 SDAT report and the recommendation for a walking path along the CT River in the Falls. Mr. Harris noted that several conservation areas do have access to the CT River, and the Town does not own the waterfront on the river off Main Street.

Ms. Brown inquired about “developing activities that co-exist with golf at Ledges...” She would like more clarity about the covenants and restrictions on that land, and investigate long term options for that property. She referenced Look Park in Northampton as an incredible resource for the city.

#### p. 57 Connections

Mr. Hutchison inquired about plans to utilize the old trolley bed along Route 116 to connect South Hadley to Amherst on a greenway. Mr. Harris stated the line is in Granby and runs through the Lane gravel pit. Mr. Harris referenced the Bike-Ped Plan and its vision for a network of trails within South Hadley. Ms. O’Brien expressed concern that the Bike-Ped Plan was developed several years ago and has many recommendations that are not being implemented. Mr. Harris noted that plan is a significant resource in implementing the complete streets work, the OSRP, and other grant projects that are being constructed.

Mr. Hutchison stated that 95% of people will read this plan online and could hyperlink to other community plans. Ms. Mulvaney agrees and provides access to all the other work that is done and corral

all these plans. Ms. O'Brien said this would be consistent with "be a leader in communication" which is a goal of the plan.

p. 58 Figure 5.8: PVPC 2016: Existing Bike Network

Typo in the upper left-hand corner of the map. The bike stations are not correct, all are shifted too far north. Layer was offset incorrectly on map. The bike lane on Route 116 is too short, and shows a gap at Lyman which is incorrect. Not clear if the PVPTA routes are accurate. Ms. Mulvaney recommended removing "PVPC" from "Designated hiking trail".

Mr. Hutchison reviewed the PVPC MS4 stormwater map and noted it is a great data source. Ms. O'Brien stated that Figure 5.8 has so many errors that maybe it should be removed from the plan? Ms. Brown noted that Figure 5.9 was also very hard to read, not clearly digitized which gives it no value.

Mr. Therien noted that destinations and places targeted for redevelopment are not on maps and should be. Mr. Harris recommended not adding them to these maps.

p. 60 Social and Virtual Connections

Mr. Hutchison noted this section is very COVID heavy and should be edited back some. Remove "current pandemic". Ms. Mulvaney suggested the COVID pandemic should be mentioned but not be at the top of every sentence. Mr. Harris suggested the tone be updated but keep the essence of the section which is the pandemic created significant social and economic divide, and recovery from COVID does not change that. Keep the lessons learned from COVID in the plan.

Ms. Brown stated the first paragraph is not fully accurate. People that call into virtual meetings cannot see the visuals and are at a disadvantage. Virtual platforms increased participation by some but not all. Ms. O'Brien recommend removing the smart phone ownership fact.

p.62 Recommendations

Ms. O'Brien recommended adding exploring free internet access spots at multiple locations across town. Mr. Therien would like to preserve access to town events via virtual platforms. Ms. Brown brought up the matter of decreasing contributions by Comcast to the discussion. She recommended that SHELD have a method of collecting a fee (as Comcast does) that would support Channel 15 Cable Access Mr. Harris recommended adding "recognize as Comcast loses customer base to SHELD Fibersonic, needs to be a means to support Channel 15 cable access".

Discussion on the draft plan stopped at Section 6 Implementation Plan. Mr. Harris stated that we will have a compilation of town boards and committee comments for the next meeting. He stated the process is that the Planning Board will review the entire document, then hold a public hearing for public comment.

Any specific typo edits should be emailed to Anne and Richard.

Ms. Brown motioned to adjourn at 8:02 PM, Mr. Therien seconded. All in favor via roll call vote.

**REMINDERS – THINGS TO COME BACK TO -ITEMS TO CARRY FORWARD**

P.54 Preservation

- Typo – "hear" should be "heat"

p. 56 Recommendations

- Columns need to be re-formatted; not clear if bullets are sub headers or sub-bullets in the second column.

Protect Natural Resources:

- Add “Identify and map small open space lots and evaluate their value and function”
- Add “for wildlife corridors” to the last bullet on pg. 56 after “open space network and connectivity”.

Preserve historic buildings and development patterns:

- Add “Analyze historic neighborhoods to identify desirable characteristics that should inform zone code changes and new design standards”
- Add “Assess use restrictions within the Zoning Bylaw to determine role in preserving historic development patterns”
- Add “Develop sub-area plans to determine desirable form and character of neighborhoods, and make recommendations to amend zoning code and develop design standards to achieve preferred forms”
- Add “*River Road, Pearl Street* and Alvord Street as scenic routes”
- Add “promote organic agriculture, integrated pest management and/or other sustainable agriculture practices” as part of 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet
- Add “Reactivate an Agricultural Commission to support farming in the community”
- Edit bullet which starts with “Develop appropriate guidelines....,” to include assessment of ways historic neighborhoods no longer conform to current zoning and examine how these neighborhoods can remain viable

Include a scope of work for the subarea plans in the Appendices. Would include all the assessment and concepts discussed in tonight’s meeting.

Resiliency – create a formatting callout in the plan to bring these issues and recommendations forwarded.

p.57 Connections – Circulation, Recommendations

- Add reference to the Bike-Ped Plan and recommend seeking funding to implement recommendations within the plan.

Hyperlink existing community plans in online version of the Master Plan.

p. 58 Figure 5.8: PVPC 2016: Existing Bike Network

- Typo in the upper left-hand corner of the map.
- The bike stations are all are shifted too far north. Layer was offset incorrectly on map.
- Multiple errors on map. Add a statement that this is a best estimation but not accurate??

p. 59 Figure 5.9 map hard to read, not accurate. Consider removing both figures and add hyperlink to Bike-Ped Plan?

**NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at 6pm – Special Planning Board Meeting

Respectfully submitted by,  
Anne Capra, AICP  
Assistant Planner/Conservation Administrator