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TOWN OF CHELMSFORD
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Town of Chelmsford
Master Plan Update Committee
50 Billerica Rd., Room 205 Chelmsford, Ma 01824
Regular Meeting
MINUTES
May 30, 2019
Approved June 27, 2019

Attending: George Zaharoolis, Donald Van Dyne, Kenneth Lefebvre, Scott Rummel, Joseph Ready

Not Present: Nancy Araway

Others Present: Evan Belansky, Community Development Director, Beverly Woods, NMCOG Director, Jay Donovan, NMCOG, Jeff Owen-NMCOG

Please note that all documents referenced in these minutes are on file at the Town Manager's Office, 50 Billerica Rd., Chelmsford, Mass. This meeting was hand recorded by the Recording Secretary.

This meeting was called to order at 7:03PM by Mr. Belansky.

Elections – Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk and Introductions

Motion: by Mr. Ready to nominate Mr. Zaharoolis as Chairman, seconded by Mr. Van Dyne. Mr. Zaharoolis accepted the nomination. **Motion carries, unanimous.**

At this time, Mr. Zaharoolis took over the meeting.

Motion: by Mr. Lefebvre to nominate Mr. Van Dyne as Vice Chairman, seconded by Mr. Ready. Mr. Van Dyne accepted the nomination. **Motion carries, unanimous.**

The Committee decided there was no need for a clerk at this time.

Members introduced themselves.

NMCOG – introductions / overview of services

NMCOG – scope of work discussion / process

Ms. Woods explained that NMCOG assisted with the last Town Master Plan, where the entire plan was re-written. It was understood that this will be an update to that plan, focusing on certain sections. The Committee was asked what they would like to address themselves, and what is expected of NMCOG, as well as what type of deliverable is desired.

Mr. Belansky noted that strategies surrounding land use, zoning, economic development and housing will be discussed and all of these things are intermingled currently.

Mr. Zaharoolis explained that many concepts have been implemented from the 2010 Plan; the Committee can create new and updated recommendations to make the overall plan work better.

Ms. Woods suggested looking at issues and opportunities through the lens of 2030.

The current budget of \$25,000 will accommodate work related to land use, zoning, economic development and housing. There is a possibility that additional funding could be obtained through CPA or DLTA funds. Several Town departments can be asked to work on sections relating to their course of work. NMCOG can supply some data on transportation, but not on the scale that was done in the previous plan.

Members were asked to review the implementation sections in the 2010 plan for discussion at the next meeting.

The Committee will create a list of stakeholders that can be interviewed as part of the data gathering process. There is a recently completed report around the Rt. 129 area that can be used as a reference.

NMCOG will compile the information from the Committee.

New chapters can consider themes such as age friendly initiatives, green technology, climate resiliency, LID development, and sustainability.

SWOT Exercise – facilitated by NMCOG

Committee members were asked to list items that would describe Chelmsford in the areas of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats.

Strengths:

- location near Routes 3 & 495
- Town amenities such as the Freeman Rail Trail, the CCA, Heart Pond, and other open space and parks.
- strong schools, proximity to a technical high school, a university, and colleges.
- diverse housing stock
- public safety, police and fire
- labor market is well educated
- water, sewer. and trash pickup services
- historic assets such as homes and buildings
- local businesses
- a will and desire to plan
- stream lined permitting
- development of a permitting guide

- strong sense of community, civic engagement and volunteerism
- diverse commercial base and well defined zones
- diversity in open spaces
- pet friendly

Weaknesses:

- lack of Chapter 70 funding
- a stream that cuts through the center; creates traffic issues
- limited road network
- proximity to New Hampshire, potential cut through traffic
- proximity to New Hampshire, tax free shopping
- vacancy rates on commercial properties
- state representation
- commercial land ownership is fragmented. Some owners are perceived to have no motivation for updating or changing their properties.
- lack of available starter homes for young couples. (conflicts with age friendly goals) lack of 55-plus housing, lack of turnover-older people are staying in their homes.
- rising taxes, especially commercial.
- lack of redevelopment, lack of developable areas.
- lack of use of open space areas and trails. Lack of awareness that these places exist.

Opportunities:

- improve public transportation
- address reducing traffic
- increase commercial tax base
- improve traffic conditions
- create an independent recreation department and more event programs; currently done through community education.
- strengthen local business community, diversity and capacity and support of local businesses.
- UMass West campus housing opportunities through zoning (local control)
- create zoning overlays to increase commercial tax base (includes commercial housing developments).
- drawing UMass Lowell and Middlesex Community College graduates for employment, spinoff companies come from these schools which could settle in Chelmsford as incubator companies
- improving state investments in roads infrastructure on state roads, signaling intersections.
- seek additional grant opportunities from the state

Threats:

- traffic (cut through traffic, too many cars, etc.)
- Regional competition, i.e. New Hampshire and Burlington
- aging infrastructure, school facilities
- economic viability
- preservation of historic buildings

- aging population in Chelmsford, tax concerns, not inclined to support schools
- OPEB and unfunded liability obligations
- conflicts between elders and millennials
- loss of younger population (different lifestyle, they don't want a car. They want more urban settings, better public transportation, nightlife)
- lack of affordable housing
- people wanting to live alone.
- condo lifestyle, people that work at home.
- increasing town budget
- land use conflicts, conflicting zones
- Rourke Bridge reconstruction
- commuter rail (opportunity and a threat) will create more traffic in Vinal square.
- increasing tax rates. Threat on services, won't attract new people (residential and commercial)
- state representation

Committee members were advised to send any additional ideas to Mr. Belansky or Ms. Woods. A list will be provided for the next meeting.

State Planning Grant – update

Uses for a grant were discussed at the last meeting. The grant is focused on traditional planning initiatives. A smaller scope was desired to increase the chances of receiving an award, as this is a competitive grant. This will look intersections in areas that have commercial exposures, as other exchanges can be looked at in future grant requests. The chosen interchanges are along Rt. 3, by Groton Rd., Drum Hill, and Chelmsford St. A focus will be on the future of retail-impacts of e-commerce on box stores. This will need baseline market analysis to determine whether they are complementary or competing with one another.

Rt. 129 and Rt. 40 are doing their own plans and have had their own dedicated studies. The request does not include Rt. 495.

Mr. Belansky expects to hear something in possibly 6-8 months.

Action Items

June 27, 2019 Meeting:

Review implementation section

SWOT analysis results

Provision of initial census data and projections out to 2040

Mr. Belansky & Mr. Zaharoolis will start coordinating work on the tables and sections.

Next Meeting Date / schedule moving forward

The Board of Selectmen are hosting a Traffic Listening Session at the Chelmsford Senior Center on June 12, 2019. People can tell the Board what bothers them about traffic, and they can share their questions and concerns.

The next Master Plan Update Committee meeting will be held on June 13, 2019, at 7:00PM.

Linda Prescott has resigned due to family obligations. The Planning Board will decide what they want to do with this position.

Adjourn

Motion: by Mr. Van Dyne to adjourn the meeting at 8:45PM. **Motion carries, unanimous.**

Respectfully Submitted,
Vivian W. Merrill,
Recording Secretary

Supporting Documents:
-2010 Master Plan document