

PLYMOUTH MASTER TASK GROUP

Master Plan Task Force

Meeting: Meeting: via Zoom 8:30 a.m. – March 9, 2023

Attendees:

Members: Steve Bolotin - Chair, Kathy Castagna, Darice Wareham, Glenn MacGregor, Evelyn Strawn, Lorenzo Pizarro, Don Williams and David Peck.

Staff: Lee Hartmann

Guest:

Joanne Zygmunt, Old Colony Planning Council

Mr. Bolotin opened the meeting.

Minutes:

Mr. Williams moved to approve the minutes of February 23, 2023. Seconded by Ms. Castagna. The vote was unanimous 6-0.

Master Plan Scope of Work

Mr. Bolotin reviewed the group's previous discussion about breaking the master plan into various components and seeking funding in different timeframes. The main issue relates to the availability of funds.

Mr. Hartmann said that he discussed the issue with Lynne Barrett, Finance Director. The funding source will be Free Cash. The amount of free cash available for Fiscal Year 2024 will be identified in August and certified by the State in September. She suggested looking for the full amount of funding needed for the update. When I mentioned the price tag of between \$400,000 and \$500,000 she was concerned about such a high number but did not change her opinion about moving forward with the full request. Free Cash is the major funding source for the Town's Capital Improvements Process.

Mr. Peck noted that a number of other planning efforts are either underway or under consideration and he is encouraged by the support these efforts are receiving in the community.

Mr. Hartmann noted that the amount of Free Cash available from year to year varies but it is usually around \$3,000,000.

The consensus of the group was to seek the full amount of funds needed to complete the entire master plan process.

Mr. Williams suggested creating a position-paper supporting the funding request. The paper could be circulated to all community decision makers.

Ms. Strawn noted that the effort will also require Task Group members to attend caucuses, Advisory and Finance Committee, Select Board, Planning Board, Committee of Precinct Chairs and Village Center committees meetings.

Ms. Castagna said that the Task Group needs to stress that the Master Plan will incorporate and build off all of the planning studies now underway.

Mr. Bolotin said that the Master Plan should focus on sustainability related to: land use, environmental and financial issues.

The Task Group should develop a mission statement identifying what the group is trying to achieve and how the Town will go about it.

He noted that the Lincoln Institute for Planning has a subsection that is focused on scenario planning. He noted that Mr. Donaldson has also reached out to his professors from Boston University and they expressed their willingness to help in certain aspects of Plymouth's planning process. It is something that we will work on to try and coordinate.

Ms. Zygmunt noted that OCPC has not used scenario planning nor is she aware of it being used in Southeastern Massachusetts. It has been used on smaller projects such as the City of Brockton's efforts to look at a parcel of land for redevelopment. The public workshop looked at different scenarios for what that piece of land might look like. It was a mixed use piece of land that had proposals for both residential and commercial industrial use. The various scenarios were laid out showing what different redevelopment scenarios could look like.

As a cost saving measure, she suggested an option where scenario planning could be used on specific study areas and not throughout the entire master plan.

Mr. Bolotin recommended looking at other scopes from many Massachusetts communities. Most of these scopes do not have additional sections Plymouth is considering.

Ms. Zygmunt agreed. In general, 70% of planning documents just sit on a shelf. Board and committee members do not necessarily understand them and many communities do not have staff to assist in implementation. She noted that the traditional master plan categories do help boards and town departments focus on these topics under their jurisdiction.

The implementation table is the most important part of a plan. It lists the issue, responsible parties and funding options.

Mr. Peck noted that job descriptions for various department heads should reference the goals of the master plan and their department's master plan responsibilities.

Mr. Hartmann suggested a next step of costing out various scenario planning options.

Mr. Bolotin noted the uniqueness of Plymouth's scenario based master planning process. Perhaps it would be a model grant providers would want to fund.

Mr. Pizarro noted the potential outcomes of scenario planning and if a systems approach is used it can build awareness of interconnectivity of issues, unintended consequences and how it can reduce silos. It can illustrate the trade-offs related to complex issues.

The purpose of the master plan is to be a strategic plan, and in a strategic plan you are looking at some of these bigger issues that lend themselves quite well to a scenario planning approach.

Ms. Zygmunt agreed. The biggest challenge that Plymouth has in coming to a consensus right now is about how the community wants to use land. Plymouth's issues include housing, water resources, protection of open space, coastal erosion, and the impact on properties along the coast. These are all issues that scenario planning can definitely help to address.

She noted that OCPC has created a share library for the Task Group. It will include various resources and example of scopes.

She said that traditional methods of public participation like surveys can be used in new ways to engage the community. The consultant used by the Town needs to look holistically at the issues. For example, more housing will generate a greater demand for water.

Mr. Hartmann said that by state law, the master plan is adopted by the Planning Board but we seek acceptance by the Select Board and Town Meeting to generate more community buy-in.

Ms. Strawn said the Task Group should focus on participatory planning verses scenario planning.

Mr. Hartmann noted that a hybrid approach might work.

Ms. Zygmunt said that public participation is challenging. Several tools should be used; survey, open houses, workshops, tabling exercise at civic events and just talking to people. The scope should emphasize getting good public input but public participation takes time and is expensive.

Mr. Bolotin said he would share the scenario document from a town in Arizona just outside of Tucson. It is a town-wide plan.

Mr. Bolotin said that at our next meeting on March 23th we will continue to look at scopes of work and begin drafting Plymouth's scope.

Mr. Peck moved to adjourn. Seconded by Ms. Wareham. The vote was unanimous.

Approved: March 23, 2023