



# TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH

Master Plan Implementation Committee  
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**Master Plan Implementation Committee Meeting**  
**February 17, 2022**  
**Zoom Meeting Minutes**  
**Approved March 17, 2022**

**Members Present, Remotely:** Ashley Davies, Chair; Rick Leif, Vice-Chair; Julianne Hirsh, Amy Poretsky, Fran Bakstran, Eugene Kennedy, John Campbell, Dario DiMare, Tracey Cammarano, Jeanne Cahill, Bill Peterson.

**Others Present, Remotely:** John Coderre, Town Administrator; Scott Charpentier, Director of Public Works; Donny Goris-Kolb, VHB.

Meeting opened at 7:00pm.

**Discussion and Approval of the Downtown Master Plan Bid Scope**

Ms. Davies said the draft was sent to members along with questions and comments with answers that staff and VHB provided. There were no additional comments or questions from the board.

Mr. Leif made a motion to accept the draft scope of work as was distributed. Ms. Bakstran seconded. Roll call vote followed, all were in favor.

Ms. Davies asked Mr. Coderre to give a sense of a time frame going forward.

Mr. Coderre said there was a placeholder in the 6 year Capital Improvement Plan for a MPIC project. Staff will take the scope of services and place it onto a template for advertising, which will include the contextual information, regulatory requirements and a proposed contract. It will then go to the Financial Planning and Appropriation committees and, if approved, to Town Meeting. The RFQ will be advertised for about four weeks. Proposals will be distributed and discussed by this committee at a public meeting in accordance with the criteria contained in the RFQ. This committee will rank the proposals, vote to determine the top choice and then recommend that firm to Mr. Coderre for the contract negotiations.

Mr. Kennedy asked if VHB can submit a proposal or if they are excluded because they prepared the scope. Mr. Coderre said they would be eligible, these aren't proprietary specs.

Mr. Kennedy asked if they would get a cost itemized per task. Mr. Coderre said that a schedule of tasks and associated costs will go into the contract, the consultant will be paid upon completion of the task.

Ms. Hirsh said that if they were to know a firm to send this to, when the RFQ goes out to bid, is that allowed? Mr. Coderre said there is nothing that precludes this committee from sending it out to firms that may or may not be interested, but this will be advertised and firms will be watching.

Ms. Davies thanked Mr. Goris-Kolb for preparing the draft, Mr. Goris-Kolb left the meeting.

**Project Updates**

Ms. Davies wanted to note that there has been some discussion from other boards and committees about getting Master Plan Implementation Committee approval before moving forward on things, but this board is not an oversight committee. It is noted throughout the Master Plan who is the lead and in charge of that particular project, questions or comments should go to that committee or board handling the project. With that being said, she wanted to provide some updates on things that are happening throughout town that relate to the master plan.

Bartlett Road Safety Audit & Post Occupancy Study: Ms. Davies said the safety audit has been completed. It showed speeding is not an issue on that roadway, mitigation efforts improved conditions, the DPW will review suggestions for possible implementation for any improvements that were suggested within the plan. Mr. Coderre said that the post occupancy study has been done and is on the website, both reports are also on the CMRPC's website. Mr. Charpentier added that both reports are available on the DPW's Transportation Safety web page under Board Communications. Ms. Davies said those studies are relative to the Master Plan under goal T2-1.

Planning Board - Proposed ATM Sign By-Law: The Planning Board has some items they are bringing to Town Meeting, one of which is a sign bylaw that relates to Master Plan goal ED 1-3, regarding creating a cohesive design and identity for the downtown area, although Ms. Davies believed the bylaw was in relation to the entire town. The Planning Board will have a meeting for public comment on March 15, comments should be shared then. Ms. Davies said that as they continue to work on the downtown master plan, if the committee comes up with goals or suggestions relating to signage in the downtown, there will be an opportunity for adjusting bylaws in the future.

Design Review - Proposed Duplex Design Guidelines: Ms. Davies said there is a goal in the Master Plan about periodic review of existing design guidelines to ensure balance between community character, new development and redevelopment. Mr. DiMare, a member of the Design Review Committee, said when that committee last met, it was more of a question of if 'the right hand knows what the left hand is doing'; for example, the next time a duplex is being added, if the Design Review Committee requested that a sidewalk and trees be added, does that line up with the Master Plan's goals? Mr. DiMare wasn't sure what the process was, but being on both boards, he sees the opportunity to make it happen. Ms. Davies thought it might be a question for Mr. Charpentier and the Complete Streets program.

Mr. Charpentier said he had submitted a grant application to Mass DOT to aid the funding for the development of the prioritization plan which will identify gaps in the Town's sidewalk network; when that prioritization plan is developed and adopted, it will be an appropriate time for the DRC to see where connectivity issues exist, rather than have 'blanket requirement' that a sidewalk be in front of developments, because then sidewalks are constructed that go nowhere. If there is an opportunity to foster that connectivity with private development and municipal improvements thereafter, it would be fantastic. He's hoping that Mass DOT helps fund that plan. Mr. Coderre added that they have received very positive feedback from that application; he is cautiously optimistic.

Senior Affordable Housing CPA Application: Mr. Leif said the Northborough Affordable Housing Corporation partnered with the Northborough Housing Authority to present a project for funding for this year's Town Meeting, he felt it fit a couple of the Master Plan recommendations (H1-1, H1-3) pretty closely. The Housing Authority has a development of senior affordable housing, one-bedroom units at their Colonial Village site. There is an open parcel on that site and the NAHC has been working with the NHA to see if there is some potential to develop another building and add some additional units. The NHA works off a statewide list of people waiting for this type of housing which typically has more than 1,000 people on it. In 2020, the State Department of Housing Community Development (DHCD) informed local

housing authorities that they had a fund of money available to help offset the cost of creating this kind of housing, one-bedroom apartments for low-income seniors. Another state agency provided some funding to do a feasibility study on that lot which showed that it was able to be developed. The Housing Authority then hired an architect to do a conceptual design and a cost estimate of the project, it was determined that a two-story building with eight units could be built, with the bottom four units being handicapped-accessible. The Housing Authority is working with DHCD to secure the state portion of the funding and has gone before the CPC to fund the balance. There will be a warrant article explaining this and asking for Town approval.

### **Continued Discussion and Approval of the Downtown Master Plan Bid Scope**

Ms. Davies said that she can send around an updated tracking spreadsheet; there still isn't a central place on the town's website to share that.

Mr. Campbell said the Master Plan Implementation Committee has approved its priority project and approved a scope of work, while we wait for that to come through, are there actions that we can work on together so that we can move forward on our own, or produce another committee to take action? Ms. Davies said at their next meeting they can review what they can do in terms of the next steps of moving those forward.

Mr. Leif said that the committee changed the scope of work for the downtown to put the onus on the consultant to help them figure out the boundaries. He suggested having a general discussion amongst the committee to get a sense of what those boundaries should be before that consultant is hired.

Mr. Kennedy said that it might help to circulate a base map of the downtown and members could draw what they think the study area might be. Mr. Charpentier said the town's GIS was 'fairly robust' and that they could print a pdf, send to one member to compile into a slide with names.

Ms. Cahill said, with regard to the senior housing project, building to net zero standard in terms of energy use would be beneficial to low-income people because it reduces the operational costs associated with public housing. From what she understood, it was only 1-3% higher initial cost to build to a much higher efficiency standard and asked if there is a place in the process of planning this public housing for them to do research around that. Mr. Leif can bring that up to the Housing Authority Director, but he knows that new construction in the state will be trying to meet those guidelines. Tenants do not pay utilities in this housing, so that would be a benefit to the state and the Housing Authority to keep those costs down. Mr. Leif was not sure if the contract would specify that kind of information when the bid goes out, but he will check with the Director.

Mr. DiMare said in his experience, it actually costs more for the utilities because they often mandate all electric which isn't necessarily more economical although it is greener; you would have more insulation and all green materials, it depends on where you are, with respect to the availability of utilities, the cost of utilities, and the utility's source.

### **Local Planning Assistance (CMRPC)**

Ms. Davies said the Planning Board currently has about 24 hours available to them for consult with the CMRPC. She was considering asking the Planning Board to request an hour long meeting with the CMRPC consultant to discuss the downtown process. MPIC members could email Ms. Davies with relative questions to be discussed. Mr. Peterson asked if the CMRPC might be an applicant for the downtown plan. Mr. Coderre said that would be out of practice, they are more of an ongoing consultation than a bidder

on a project, perhaps they would be used if they didn't have VHB to help provide or review a scope of service.

### **Consideration of Minutes from January 20, 2022**

Minor edits were suggested by members. Mr. Coderre suggested that for future reference, any non-substantiative typos can be sent to the Planning Admin to be corrected and redistributed before meetings so that time isn't taken up over minor things that aren't substantive.

Mr. Leif made a motion to accept the minutes as amended. Ms. Cahill seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Hirsh said she was thinking about Mr. DiMare's line of thinking with the 'left hand being in sync with the right hand'; Complete Streets will be a big part of the downtown development and the whole master plan. She was listening to an Urban Streets symposium the other day and they were discussing the health of trees built along streets, it occurred to her that as the town builds and repairs sidewalks, at the same time, can they be considering tree placement and tree health? Is that a given or do we have to have a separate allotment for money?

Mr. Charpentier said New England is beginning to move street trees from the grass strip between the sidewalk and roadway to behind the sidewalk. From a design review perspective, that one of the things to consider; where there is adequate right of way or concurrence from the abutter, having street trees placed behind the sidewalk is the preferred approach. If the downtown ends up being the route 20 corridor, that is Mass DOT, which in his experience is not a big fan of tree wells along their state routes.

Ms. Hirsh asked about the term 'pervious asphalt'; is that commonly used or a new technique?

Mr. DiMare said it doesn't work unless it is meticulously maintained, there are other surfaces that can be used to absorb water. Mr. Charpentier said one of the challenges is that the maintenance is required under the stormwater management bylaws and DEP regulations, it is not a viable alternative in this region with the freeze/thaw cycle. Mr. Coderre said that creating rain gardens and things of that nature are a better approach.

### **Old/New Business**

- Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for March 17, 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54pm.

Respectfully Submitted By  
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary