



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH

Master Plan Implementation Committee
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Master Plan Implementation Committee Meeting
November 17, 2022
Zoom Meeting Minutes
Approved December 15, 2022

7:00pm—Chairman's Introduction to Remote Meeting

Mr. Leif, Chairman, opened the remote meeting. Mr. Leif stated that this Open Meeting of the Master Plan Implementation Committee was being conducted remotely consistent with Governor Baker's Executive Order of July 16, 2022, an Act Relative to Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency and that all members of the Master Plan Implementation Committee are allowed and encouraged to participate remotely. Mr. Leif noted that the Order allows the MPIC to meet entirely remotely so long as reasonable public access is afforded so that the public can follow along with the deliberations of the meeting. He added that ensuring public access does not ensure public participation unless such participation is required by law. Mr. Leif noted that this meeting will not allow for Public Comment. He indicated that the public may view the meeting via the link as listed on the posted agenda.

Members Present, remotely: Rick Leif, Chair; Ashley Davies, Vice-Chair; Julianne Hirsch, Amy Poretsky, Millie Milton, Tracey Cammarano, Fran Bakstran, Gene Kennedy

Others Present, remotely: Laurie Connors, Planning Director; Johnathan Law, Weston and Sampson

The meeting opened at 7:00pm.

Discussion with Consultant Regarding Downtown Revitalization Strategy & Design Report

Mr. Law provided an update regarding progress made since the last meeting.

Mr. Law said a proposal was submitted for a traffic study; it wasn't included in the RFP but the team believed that in order to get buy-in from MassDOT, they will need to show traffic counts and an analysis of the design that shows long-term sustainability.

Mr. Coderre had instructed Ms. Connors to contact the CMRPC regarding providing traffic counts for free. In speaking with them, there was concern about the ability of their equipment to function in cold weather but will follow up after conferring with their Traffic Engineer.

Mr. Leif learned that MassDOT might be amenable to the redesign of Route 20 through the Town's center if enough data is presented to substantiate it. The proposal before the Town Administrator is for \$10,000 to complete this traffic study. Although it's best to do this study sooner than later, if done during the holiday season, might not give the most accurate traffic count.

Ms. Poretsky asked if the MPIC should send a letter to Mr. Coderre indicating their support of Weston and Sampson performing the traffic study. She didn't think the price was prohibitive.

When asked by Ms. Connors if the traffic counts could wait to be done in Spring, Mr. Law replied that they'd hoped to be done by April, since they can't go into full design mode of the route 20 corridor without that data. They should be submitted by mid-to-late January.

Ms. Davies said many of the board members had anticipated big changes in the Route 20 corridor. She thought it was a small price for a something key to this design. Ms. Milton agreed.

Mr. Leif said he could reach out to Mr. Coderre the next day to relay the committee's position; Ms. Connors suggested waiting until she hears back from CMRPC.

Mr. Law didn't have the cost breakdown but believed the counts to be the cheaper part, as the analysis is the heart of that proposal. Mr. Leif asked him to get back to them with that breakdown.

Ms. Hirsh was concerned about the time lost between meetings while waiting for a response from CMRPC to draft a letter to Mr. Coderre.

Ms. Connors suggested that the letter state 'contingent on CMRPC's inability to perform the traffic study [within an agreed upon timeframe]...this board recommends that Mr. Coderre sign the traffic study with the additional service request for Weston and Sampson'.

Ms. Milton asked if it was common to have the traffic count and data analysis done by different parties. Mr. Law said that his firm subcontracts the traffic counts out anyway.

Mr. Leif confirmed that they are waiting for Ms. Connors to hear back from the CMRPC; Mr. Law will follow up with the what the cost would be if Weston and Sampson did not do the traffic counts; he will follow up with Mr. Coderre tomorrow to provide an update with the results of this meeting and the position of this Committee; and as long as the traffic study is completed in January, that it won't have an impact on the actual project schedule.

Mr. Law next shared examples of open space utilization in urban areas. He discussed the trend from years ago when businesses moved out of downtowns and into malls and how that trend is reversing now. He felt this was a possibility for Northborough due to its existing footprint.

Mr. Law shared images of a previous project he'd worked on, similar to Northborough in that there was a highway that went through that city's downtown. In that case, after performing a traffic study and working with the DOT, they were able to reduce traffic lanes, which allowed for wider sidewalks, more street trees, outside dining and wider ADA-compliant sidewalks.

Street trees and plans for sustainable plantings were touched on, as well as approaches to stormwater management.

Mr. Leif appreciated the streetscape shown that was similar to Northborough, with the resulting reduced traffic lanes and on-street parking. Mr. Law said that was dependent on the 'road-diet'; reduced travel lanes would provide space for more options. A similar project done in Concord, NH, approximately five years ago, produced dramatic results and a regeneration in their downtown, it had a much bigger effect than just a reduced road diet and nicer sidewalks.

The online survey was next discussed. Mr. Law asked if it should be closed as response levels have dropped. Members agreed to extend the survey until November 30.

Mr. Law continued. RKG will continue with market analysis and has begun stakeholder engagement; conversations have been held with Mr. Corbin and Ms. Milton, a meeting was scheduled with Mr. Coderre. More names were provided of people to interview. There will be a workshop in the future with a broader audience.

Update on Status of Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and Public Input

Ms. Connors said she and Mr. Charpentier had held a public information and input session at the BOS meeting on October 17th. The public outreach session was well attended, solid feedback had been received. A preliminary ranking of projects has been done, the last step is to see if it is in line with what the public wants. Once that ranking is complete, they will go to BOS and then submit to MassDOT for approval.

Based on her previous experience, Ms. Connors thought it may be a few months before getting a response. The next funding round in May is the earliest they can submit construction projects. They are capped \$500K over a four year time frame, and shouldn't rush to submit projects for the first funding round. She will update the MPIC members as to when she will be back before the BOS regarding the approval of the prioritization plan.

Mr. Kennedy asked, after the BOS approves the prioritization plan and the projects go to MassDOT, and the Downtown Study is completed, what happens if there are recommendations in that plan that could be on that list; is there a way to add some of those to the priority list?

Ms. Connors thought they will already be on there. Route 20 is not eligible since it is a state highway, but other roadways within the prioritization area are reflected on the plan list and are ranked very high. That was done on purpose to ensure those improvements would be eligible for Complete Streets funding.

Minutes from October 20, 2022

Ms. Hirsh made a motion to accept the minutes. Ms. Cammarano seconded. Roll call vote was as follows: Ms. Hirsh—yes; Ms. Poretsky—yes; Ms. Milton—yes; Ms. Davies—abstain; Ms. Cammarano—yes; Ms. Bakstran—yes; Mr. Kennedy—yes; Mr. Leif—yes.

Any Other Business Before the Committee

Ms. Poretsky asked if members could be provided with a copy of the slideshow so she could see the survey results. Ms. Connors will send that via email.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for December 15, 2022.

Ms. Milton made a motion to adjourn, Ms. Hirsh seconded the motion. Roll call vote was as follows: Ms. Hirsh—yes; Ms. Poretsky—yes; Ms. Milton—yes; Ms. Davies—yes; Ms. Cammarano—yes; Ms. Bakstran—yes; Mr. Kennedy—yes; Mr. Leif—yes.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:48pm.

Respectfully Submitted By
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary

