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By Karen Wilber at 6:45 pm, Oct 25, 2022

TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH

Master Plan Implementation Committee
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Master Plan Implementation Committee Meeting
September 15, 2022
Zoom Meeting Minutes
Approved October 20, 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, John Campbell, Dario DiMare

Others Present, remotely: Laurie Connors, Planning Director; Scott Charpentier, DPW Director; Brett Pelletier, Kirk & Co.

The meeting opened at 7:00pm.

Discussion with Kirk & Co Regarding Request for Proposals for White Cliffs Mansion

Ms. Connors explained that the Town is interested in finding a private or non-profit partner to assist with operating White Cliffs as well as the reconstruction and redevelopment costs. It's unclear if the Town will continue to own the property or whether it will convey or sell it to someone else. The Town hired Kirk & Co. to assist with the disposition of that facility and development of a Request for Proposals (RFP).

Mr. Pelletier, from Kirk & Co., said they are in the process of developing criteria to include within the RFP. Over the last six weeks, they've had a significant response as a result of reaching out to their database of about fifty individuals that includes real estate developers, end users of historic properties, professionals who might be historic preservation specialists or historic preservation architects and brokers.

Mr. Campbell, Chair of the Community Preservation Committee, said the CPA funded the purchase of the White Cliffs originally. He was encouraged by the number of responses that had been received and wondered what percentage of those might be considered viable partners. Mr. Pelletier said these deals are hard to predict but he thought it would be driven by an entrepreneurial effort and a creative problem solver, which is why they've cast such a broad net.

Mr. Leif, noting that the Town has already put significant effort and money into the building to stabilize it, asked if there will be more that has to be done on the Town's part prior to it becoming viable for sale,

or, when the RFP goes out, if it will become the responsibility of whoever takes it on to meet whatever historic requirements. Mr. Pelletier said he was not aware of any imminent stabilization work.

Mr. Pelletier explained that the process is uncertain in terms of what responses will be received once the RFP goes out and that they should not be offended if some, or all, of those responses offer very nominal amounts; the intent is to spend a lot of money to return the property to active use in the future but there may be limitations on how much can be spent to acquire it.

Ms. Davies remembered this building receiving a lot of community support at Town Meeting from people who would like to see it saved and restored. She wasn't sure how the RFP process works for a property such as White Cliffs but thought that would be remiss if they didn't include something about it needing full restoration or restoration to some degree and for the ability for some community partnership. She believes the community wants to see community use come out of it, not another commercial building.

Mr. Pelletier said there are mechanisms in place to grade proposals based on plans to address the historic rehabilitation and preservation aspect as well as access for the community.

Mr. Leif told Mr. Pelletier that this committee is working on a Downtown Revitalization plan and that while White Cliffs doesn't exist in the footprint of the study area, it's close enough and it would be a wonderful resource to have on the doorstep of the downtown.

Ms. Milton asked when the RFP needs to be submitted by. Mr. Pelletier believed that to be the second week of October with the response window open for about two months with a goal of having actionable recommendations after the start of the new year. Ms. Milton asked who will be evaluating the submissions, and Mr. Pelletier believed the White Cliffs Committee will be doing that under his guidance.

Mr. DiMare asked if the site had been tested for hazardous waste. Mr. Pelletier said there has been limited environmental review done and that he wasn't familiar to the extent it was done.

There were no further questions or comments. The committee thanked Mr. Pelletier for his time.

Update on RFP for Downtown Revitalization Strategy & Design Report

Mr. Leif said the representative from Weston and Sampson was ill and not able to attend the meeting. He asked members if they should reschedule that for October or sooner, but asked Ms. Connors to provide some information before they make that decision. He wanted to schedule a walk of the Downtown with the consultant and as many committee members as possible.

Ms. Connors said Weston and Sampson will be at the Applefest Farmers Market the next weekend to get community input on the survey and map they'd developed. Ms. Connors had forwarded that survey to members earlier and, at this time, shared it on her screen. Discussion followed. Ms. Connors said the survey will be added online and paper copies will be available at public buildings throughout Town.

Ms. Bakstran asked if business owners completing that survey should be asked whether they own the property where their business is located; if this committee is looking to revitalize those storefronts, there is a difference between a business owner that rents and one who owns as far as their interest in working with this committee. Ms. Connors will ask for that change to be made.

A site walk of the Downtown with Weston and Sampson and members of the committee was tentatively scheduled for 11am on September 27.

Mr. Leif said the expectation is that between now and the October MPIC meeting, the consultants will be working daily with Ms. Connors and staff, and to the extent there was a need to get input from the committee, that he and Ms. Davies would provide that input. Members were in agreement to wait until the next MPIC meeting in October to meet with the consultants.

Update of Complete Streets

Mr. Leif said as he looked at the list of Complete Streets projects, his assessment was that a number of them addressed the topics listed under the Master Plan's transportation goals. He thought this committee's role was to make sure that the goals listed in the Master Plan relative to Transportation, Pedestrian and Bicycles are represented in Complete Streets projects.

Ms. Connors was asked to explain how the prioritization of the Complete Streets program works. She said there is a number of selection criteria that these projects will be going through. One of the key benefits of doing the prioritization plan is that it will help in getting funding. Certain projects are already in the queue and in their plans, but the Town may be lacking funding for those projects. She noted that it is important that if these projects are competitive projects, from a Complete Streets perspective, it's important that they appear high on the prioritization plan list. If they are asking for Complete Streets funding for a project that is at #24 on their list of 24 projects, it is not very likely they will be awarded funding for that project.

Ms. Connors said there will be a public input session at the Board of Selectmen's October 3 meeting. The presentation and the public input component hasn't been worked out yet. Mr. Leif said this committee will provide a letter to the BOS based on their view of which Complete Streets projects are most important, relative to the Master Plan, and any others they think should be added. Ms. Connors added that identification of their top 10 list of projects would be helpful, as well as any strong feelings about the selection criteria she had emailed earlier in the week.

Mr. Leif asked what kinds of projects the state favors for Complete Streets funding.

Ms. Connors said, in her experience, the state likes projects that achieve multiple goals, such as sidewalk gap projects. Additionally, they tend to favor projects such as bike lanes, safety improvements in high crash locations, wayfinding signage, and projects that benefit the low-income population.

Discussion followed regarding the various projects (numbered for identification purposes only), after which members voted to rank the Complete Streets projects in the following order of priority:

- #1- Bartlett Street Bike Lanes (7 votes)
- #2- Gale Street New Sidewalk and Crosswalk (7 votes)
- #3- Allen Street New Sidewalk (8 votes)
- #4- Maple Street New Sidewalk (8 votes)
- #7- Church Street Sidewalk Replacement and RRFB at Church Street Sidewalk (6 votes)
- #11- Bartlett & Maple Streets Intersection Improvements (6 votes)
- #17- South Street Shared Arrows (7 votes)
- #23- Aqueduct Bridge Multi-use Trail (6 votes)
- #24- Aqueduct Trail Multi-use Trail (7 votes)

The committee voted on the remaining projects as follows:

- 5 votes each for: #20- Blake Street Street Lighting, #21- South Street Sidewalk Replacement, #22- River Street New Sidewalk
- 4 votes each for: #10- Pierce Street Sidewalk Replacement and #12- Townwide Bike Racks
- 3 votes each for: #6- Howard Street Sidewalk Replacement and #9- Lincoln Street Sidewalk Replacement
- 2 votes each for: #8- Pleasant Street Sidewalk Replacement; #5- Davis Street New Sidewalk and Crosswalk; #19- Gale Street Street Lighting
- 1 Vote each for: #13- Lyman Street Bike Lanes and #15- Chesterfield Road Crosswalks Improvements
- 0 Votes each for: #14- Pierce Street Street Lighting; #16- Pinehaven Drive New Sidewalks; #18- Bearfoot Road New Sidewalks

Mr. Leif said he would draft the letter to the Board of Selectmen and forward to Ms. Davies and Ms. Connors for any further modifications. The Committee agreed to suggest a new project, which was creating a continuous sidewalk along Hudson Street from its intersection with Main Street to the Aqueduct Bridge.

Consideration of August 18 Minutes

Ms. Poretsky made a motion to approve the minutes from August 18 as submitted. Ms. Bakstran seconded. Roll call vote was as follows (Ms. Hirsch abstained, she was absent at that meeting):

Ms. Poretsky:	"aye"
Ms. Milton:	"aye"
Ms. Davies:	"aye"
Ms. Cammarano:	"aye"
Ms. Bakstran:	"aye"
Mr. Leif:	"aye"
Mr. Campbell:	"aye"
Mr. DiMare:	"aye"

Other Business

Next meeting: October 20 is the next MPIC meeting.

Mr. DiMare made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Poretsky seconded. Roll call vote was as follows:

Ms. Hirsch:	"aye"
Ms. Poretsky:	"aye"
Ms. Milton:	"aye"
Ms. Davies:	"aye"
Ms. Cammarano:	"aye"
Ms. Bakstran:	"aye"
Mr. DiMare:	"aye"

The meeting was adjourned at 9:38pm.

Respectfully Submitted By
Michelle Cilley, Board Secretary

