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TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH Master Plan Steering Committee

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Approved 11.13.19

Master Plan Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes

June 4, 2019

Selectmen's Meeting Room

Members Present: Fran Bakstran, Chairman; Michelle Gillespie, Dave Putnam, Amy Poretsky, Jason Perreault, Mark Donahue, Norm Corbin, Justin Dufresne, George Pember

Others Present: Kathy Joubert, Town Planner; Geoffrey Morrison-Logan, VHB; Donny Goris-Kolb, VHB; Henry P. Squillante, 72 Crestwood Drive; Mark Bashour

Chairman Bakstran opened the meeting at 7:00pm.

Mr. Morrison-Logan explained that the process for the next two to three months will be a first draft of the Master Plan in August for the members, and the presentation of the Master Plan to the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board in September.

Ms. Poretsky asked who approves the Master Plan and Ms. Joubert stated there is no law as to what to do with it. She noted it is usually approved in a joint meeting of the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen.

Ms. Bakstran noted they will be finishing up the Economic Development, and Natural, Cultural, and Historic tonight; and will go through each goal.

Economic Development

ED1

Define Downtown in terms of its geography (e.g. Downtown Business District) appearance, branding, and function.

ED1-1

Create Downtown planning/revitalization committee made up of Downtown business owners, representatives from Town boards, and other stakeholders that will recommend the boundaries of Downtown, support the Town's Planning office, assist in proposing and overseeing plans to enhance the Downtown, and pursue Community Preservation Act funding and other sources to enable this enhancement.

ED1-2

Explore potential acquisitions or land deals to appropriately scale the Downtown.

ED1-3

Explore options for creating a fresh and cohesive identity or brand for the new Downtown area such as unified signage and facades, including wayfinding and marketing materials. Use signage to clarify the boundaries of the Downtown.

ED1-4

Conduct a parking study to assess and address parking activity and pedestrian issues in Downtown, and to plan for future needs.

ED1-5

Explore the potential for repurposing 4 West Main Street (the Old Town Hall) as an anchor for the Downtown. Conduct a feasibility study to identify options and recommendations.

ED1-6

Undertake a study to explore the potential of designating Downtown as a Business Improvement District, which would create a special assessment district where property owners would agree to organize and finance several above and beyond those already provided by the Town.

ED1-7

Look for opportunities to incorporate other public gathering places, such as the Town Common and Library, into the Downtown framework. Advance efforts to connect gathering places and business for improved walkability and accessibility.

Note: The original ED1-7 goal, “Utilize existing municipal buildings and open-space resources for innovative and attractive events and endeavors such as arts and crafts” was deleted.

All of the members voted in favor of the ED1-1 through ED1-7 goals.

ED2

Promote (re)development opportunities for vacant or underutilized commercial and industrial properties.

ED2-1

Evaluate the need for, and ability to sustain, a dedicated economic development staff to actively engage the Town’s business community, promote the Town’s economic attractiveness, and coordinate the Town’s economic development efforts.

ED2-2

Consider engaging a real estate advisory firm to create a redevelopment strategy for the Town’s business districts. The strategy should incorporate analysis of appropriate uses, scale/dimension/design, as well as the infrastructure and services needed to support these developments.

ED2-3

Explore the potential for District Improvement Financing, Tax Increment Financing, and/or grants to attract private investment in Town's business districts.

ED2-4

Engage more proactively with land owners in the Town's industrial districts, taking advantage of the aggregation of the property interests and working collaboratively to both market and develop industrial-zoned sites.

ED2-5

Explore the idea of fiscal impact assessments or mitigation funding from new developments that account for the development's added traffic, utility loads, etc., and utilize these funds for upgrades that are required to support the development or that benefit the community.

Note: ED2-4 and ED2-5 goals were added to the ED2-1, ED2-2, and ED2-3 goals.

All of the members voted in favor of the ED2-1 through ED2-5 goals.

ED3

Grow and connect the local business community and position it to be resilient in the face of changing economic conditions

ED3-1

Identify and encourage opportunities to incorporate office or incubator-like concepts into under-occupied spaces.

ED3-2

Use event and programming to feature local businesses. This can include markets, pop-up retail, and rotating restaurants programs.

ED3-3

Work with existing community and business organizations to collectively increase visibility of the business community and advocate for improvements in the business environment.

All of the members voted in favor of the ED3-1 through ED3-3 goals.

ED4

Position the Town to attract more visitors and commercial tax revenue.

ED4-1

Explore the possibility of attracting hospitality uses to the Route 9 commercial node through market analysis and discussions with local operators.

ED4-2

Encourage mixed-use development for appropriately position private land assets. Develop a strategy for the provisions of public utilities, as necessary.

ED4-3

For publicly-controlled sites such as the Westborough State Hospital in Northborough and the Boundary Street property, develop a master plan to address key needs to include economic development, housing, recreation, and other possibilities as appropriate.

All of the members voted in favor of the ED4-1 through ED4-3 goals.

NATURAL, CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

NCH1

Preserve and enhance the natural landscapes of the community, including farmlands.

NCH1-1

Continue to explore adding permanent protections to all Town-owned open spaces.

NCH1-2

Continue supporting existing local farmlands and promote Conservation Restrictions and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions as a means to protect the Town’s agricultural resources.

NCH1-3

Evaluate the removal of obsolete dams in order to facilitate habitat restoration and waterfront access.

NCH1-4

Improve accessibility to information regarding resource protection efforts, successes, and community benefits.

NCH1-5

Evaluate the potential to increase protection of local floodplains, wetlands, and water resources in order to preserve natural resources and provide hazard mitigation.

All of the members voted in favor of the NCH1-1 through NCH1-5 goals.

NCH2

Maintain and expand the protection of Northborough’s historic resources including: buildings, structures, landscapes and documents.

NCH2-1

Prepare an Historic Preservation Plan for the Town of Northborough.

NCH2-2

Continue to promote an awareness of Northborough's history by publishing and facilitating the publication of articles in local community papers and social media, installing history-related signage, and collaborating with other town organizations and agencies.

NCH2-3

Promote the protection of antique properties, which includes buildings, structures, documents, artifacts, landscapes and agricultural lands.

NCH2-4

Expand the Historic Assets Inventory to include additional resource types, time periods, and geographic locations. Utilize the expanded inventory to identify additional assets for protection.

NCH2-5

Explore ways to incentivize restoration, rehabilitation, and beautification efforts for historic properties throughout Town.

All of the members voted in favor of the NCH2-1 through NCH2-5 goals.

NCH3

Repurpose surplus Town-owned buildings and facilities for community needs.

NCH3-1

Identify short-and long-term planning goals for properties for such as White Cliffs, Westborough State Hospital, 13 Church Street, Boundary Street, and 4 West Main Street (the Old Town Hall).

NCH3-2

Where appropriate, utilize surplus municipally-owned properties as community spaces while reuse studies are in progress.

NCH3-3

Identify and support reuse efforts for Town-owned historic properties, prioritizing future use of the Town, community groups, and cultural organizations.

All of the members voted in favor of the NCH3-1 through NCH3-3 goals.

NCH4

Coordinate efforts among cultural, historical, and environmental organizations.

NCH4-1

Continue cooperating with local organizations and committees for the education and preservation of our historic heritage. These groups include: the Northborough Historical Society, Northborough Free Library, Northborough Trails Committee, Northborough Open Space Committee, Housing Partnership Committee, as well as schools, religious organizations, and local businesses.

NCH4-2

Evaluate the potential of becoming a Certified Local Government, which will allow Northborough to participate directly in the review and approval of National Register nominations, as well as provide additional access to preservation funding and technical services, improve coordination with the planning and building departments regarding notifications of potential antique demolitions, and prompt investigation of zoning changes to promote antique property restorations.

NCH4-3

Work with the Downtown planning/revitalization committee to avoid and mitigate potentially adverse impacts on historic homes along Main Street and neighboring streets.

NCH4-4

Investigate opportunities to hire interns who have an interest in natural, historic, and cultural resources to support our local preservation projects, which will include seeking possible funding sources.

All of the members voted in favor of the NCH4-1 through NCH4-4 goals.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Approval of Minutes: Ms. Poretsky motioned to approve the minutes of May 9, 2019, Mr. Putman seconded the motion and the vote was unanimously in favor of the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Debbie Grampietro
Administrative Assistant