

Ayer Master Plan Steering Committee

Meeting Minutes – December 27, 2017, 6:00PM

Ayer Town Hall - Board of Selectmen's Room

In Attendance: Carolyn McCreary, Susan Tordella, Mark Wetzel, Ruth Rhonemus, Robert Pontbriand, Courtney Starling, Alan S. Manoian

1. Call to Order (6:04PM)
2. Approval of Minutes 10/25/2016 Meeting
Action: Tabled to next meeting.
3. Overview/Update on Master Plan Schedule – A. Manoian
C. Starling: Schedule in good shape; confident that process is on timeline for DRAFT Master Plan Document production.
M. Wetzel: December 2017 is the schedule completion date.
C. McCreary: Expressed concern about the Ayer Open Space Plan; Committee hasn't met in a couple of months; Technical problem with document from Conway School; (Cindy Knox IT Admin to subject review document).
C. McCreary: Transportation/Circulation Workgroup to meet in January. (M. Wetzel & C. McCreary)
R. Pontbriand: Policing/Community Policing
C. McCreary: The process should also address local issues of Restorative Justice.
4. Update on Economic Development Work Group & Housing Work Group Sessions
Manoian: Both the Economic Development & Housing Work Group Sessions proved most successful in terms of participation, active dialogue, and knowledge exchange.
C. Starling: Economic Development Work Group will schedule to meet one last time to review strategy.
C. Starling: During the Economic Development Work Group Sessions and One-On-One Interviews with commercial property owners & business owners, it was often expressed that Ayer owners did not want to invest in commercial building improvements so as not to incur escalated real estate taxes. Negative policy implications.
C. Starling: Business's in Ayer are looking to expand outside of the Town of Ayer, not in Ayer. Problematic. It will be increasingly important to understand Devens in a different context. Can't compete with Devens. Site Issues: Land/Facilities/Infrastructure related.
A. Manoian: Longitudinal Census Data (LED "On The Map") shows that Ayer's current population is 8,001. Workforce is approximately 4,000. Every morning approximately 3,800 people drive out of Ayer to go East/Southeast to employment. Simultaneously,

approximately 3,800 people drive into Ayer from the North/Northwest to their employment in Ayer.

C. Starling: Devens does not attract small space manufacturing; however Ayer could & should work to attract small start-ups.

A. Manoian: Local companies are expressing concerns with Pan Am Railway freight service.

C. Starling: Housing Work Group – Homelessness in Ayer is an important issue. Housing stock is diverse but “tired”. Not enough housing in Downtown Ayer. Many rental units in Downtown Ayer are obsolete and of poor quality. Top of Downtown Ayer’s residential rental market is low. Consider assisted family housing issues.

C. Starling: Ayer must work towards better design for traditional downtown neighborhood housing. Downtown Ayer needs more infill housing. Ayer needs to “clean-up” some of the housing in Downtown Ayer’s traditional neighborhoods.

C. Starling: Produce an Ayer Brownfields Inventory; environmentally contaminated site.

5. “Commitment To Implement”: Ayer Master Plan Inter-Board & Commission Invitational

Manoian: The “Invitational” is scheduled for Wednesday, January 25th at 6:00PM at the Great Hall, Ayer Town Hall.

(S. Copeland joined the meeting at 7:00PM)

C. McCreary: Implementation of past Master Plans/ Comprehensive Plans is overwhelming. Municipal staff has not been involved in the advanced implementation process in the past.

C. Starling: Invite them all to get them involved. Get a sense of priorities out of the gathering.

M. Wetzel: Make the 2017 Ayer Master Plan “implementable”; make the assignments as goals. monthly reports; staff implementation.

A. Manoian: Effective implementation and daily administration of the broad range and interconnected policies, goals, objectives, regulations, development standards, etc. of the new Ayer Master Plan will be possible only with a professional Town Planner in position.

6. Ayer Master Plan Logo: A. Manoian will contact Nashoba Valley Technical School Graphic Design Instructor Nathan Meharg to finalize the Logo design and production process.

7. Committee Member Comments/Observations: A. Manoian & S. Tordella engage in dialogue about conducting more compelling & dynamic events/gatherings to connect local community with the Master Plan process going forward. Generate greater

community cohesion. A. Manoian recommends proceeding into 2017 with Monthly Steering Committee Meetings. S. Tordella recommends and all agree that the Monthly Meetings should take place in different locations around the Ayer community. S. Copeland recommends that the Ayer Master Plan Steering Committee members should get on the Agenda of other local groups and organizations to inform, engage and partner.

8. Next Ayer Master Plan Steering Committee Meeting: January 25, 2017 at 5:30PM, then Committee welcomes partner Boards & Commissions for the 6:00PM “Invitational” at the Great Hall.
9. Meeting Adjourned: 7:07PM.