



**MASTER PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE**  
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**Meeting Minutes**  
**March 25, 2015**  
**7:00 PM**  
**Grange Meeting Room, Town Hall, 29 Middle Road**

Members present:

Voting Members Present:

Les Fox, Vice/Acting Chair (Board of Selectmen)  
Marie Cannon (Board of Health)  
Bryon Clemence (Agricultural Commission)  
David Follett (Conservation Commission)  
Mitzi Garcia-Weil (Recreation Commission)  
Rebecca Morris (Energy Committee)  
Al Murphy (Housing Board)  
Frank Powers (Council on Aging)

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Adam Duchesneau (Town Planner)  
Kevin Mahoney (Historical Commission)  
Maria Neyland, (School Committee)  
Police Chief Warren Ryder  
Fire Chief Randolph White

Others in Attendance:

Manisha Bewtra, Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
Jeanne Kangas

Voting Members Absent:

John Markiewicz, Chair (Planning Board)

The Acting Chair called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

**Meeting Minutes of February 25, 2015**

Mr. Fox MADE a MOTION to approve the minutes of February 25, 2015. Mr. Powers SECONDED the MOTION. All members voted in favor and Mr. Follett and Ms. Garcia-Weil were absent from the vote.

At this time Mr. Follett and Ms. Garcia-Weil arrived at the meeting.

**Updates on Master Plan Website**

Ms. Bewtra indicated the Master Plan website, Boxborough 2030, went live approximately one to two weeks ago, however, she emphasized a lot of information is still being added to the site. Ms. Morris suggested putting the wording of the Vision Statement over the picture located on the front page of the website. Mr. Clemence felt the photo on the front page, which displayed a body of water, was a bit odd considering how the Committee had spent some time discussing how little open water there is in town.

Ms. Bewtra then generally went over the Vision Statement page and noted she had added disclaimers to every page indicating the entire site was still in draft format. Mr. Fox commented he thought it was a bit odd the tag line for the Vision Statement appeared before main portion of the statement. Ms. Morris noted she preferred larger pictures and images that were more vibrant

throughout the entire website. Mr. Follett suggested the consultant engage some of the residents in town that have a background in visual design or who are artists, as they may have some good input on the website layout. Ms. Bewtra indicated this could be explored but the project has time and cost limitations which are already challenging to meet, and coordinating with volunteers could make this task a bit more difficult. Mr. Duchesneau acknowledged those challenges but also felt there could be value in reaching out to people to at least solicit feedback.

### **Review of Boxborough Today Section**

Mr. Murphy asked if a font size test had been performed on this section as well as for the entire website, as he had concerns about ensuring the text was easy to read for everyone. Ms. Bewtra provided a description for what the section should entail. She noted this section should describe what Boxborough is today in 2015, the type of community it is, its local government, its regional affiliations, and recent planning efforts, among other items. Mr. Murphy commented he thought it would be preferable to break up groupings of tables, charts, and pictures, and instead have them interwoven into the text. Mr. Clemence noted the graph which displayed population change may not be best represented with a straight line and suggested looking into an alternative way to display this data.

Mr. Fox noted the section reads like a summary of the entire Plan and it would be good to have a one page summary about who/what Boxborough is. This language might also be used to enhance the “About Us” section on the front page of the Town’s website. Ms. Morris inquired if the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) had access to information about the community’s carbon footprint. Ms. Bewtra indicated she was not sure but could look into this further. Mr. Follett suggested that perhaps sub-links for each section could be implemented, perhaps even in the form of a drop down menu for each portion of the section. He indicated this would help people when searching for specific pieces of information. Mr. Fox added that a webpage format similar to that of Wikipedia might be useful in this situation. Ms. Kangas suggested softening the language which stated there were “many” working farms still operating in town, as she noted there were only a handful of active farms in the community.

Mr. Follett felt it would be a good idea to have a feedback button somewhere on the webpage to allow people to provide comments on the fly while viewing the website. Mr. Clemence asked about the Economic Development Surveys that were being conducted and wanted to know if a business had operations in town but were not a Boxborough business, should they still participate in the survey. Mr. Bewtra stated she felt they should still respond to the survey. Mr. Follett indicated he did not feel the Business Survey was particularly useful for businesses operating in Boxborough. Mr. Clemence noted the surveys are primarily trying to examine revenue leakage from the community.

### **Discussion Regarding Housing Section**

Ms. Bewtra stated she had created a draft Housing and Neighborhoods section. She noted the Housing Production Plan (HPP), which had recently been approved by the Housing Board, focused primarily on affordable housing but also provided substantial information on existing housing statistics in the community. Ms. Bewtra was curious to know if the neighborhood information she had added should be expanded or removed.

Mr. Murphy pointed out the town has an aging population but there are few housing options available for those households looking to downsize. Additionally, there are not many options for

seniors in terms of rental versus ownership units. Mr. Follett felt housing units in the community could be lumped into four categories: senior cluster housing; multi-family/condominium buildings; 40B developments; and three to four bedroom, colonial, single-family residences. Mr. Murphy indicated the HPP shows there is a gap in Boxborough's housing market.

Mr. Fox then asked if the Boxborough Today section would be a "living" section and require updating each year. He was curious to know if the section should be declared static or if it needed to be refreshed each year to reflect the Town's current situation. There was some conversation about having a blog on the website and Mr. Murphy noted there are significant pros and cons of allowing people to freely comment on a webpage. Ms. Bewtra indicated it would be good to do something other than just push out information and she was looking for ideas on how to receive feedback from people.

Mr. Follett noted there are two distinct pieces to the conversation. There is the Master Plan, which is finite and has a date stamp, and then there are on-going activities and actions which help to implement the Plan. Mr. Powers suggested changing the title of the section to Boxborough 2015 to lock in a timeframe for the community's description. Mr. Clemence felt the Plan should contain implementation tables where different goals and objectives could be checked off as they were fulfilled. Chief Ryder agreed and suggested there could be a page on the website which speaks to the objectives of the Master Plan each year. Ms. Morris stated the Master Plan needed to relate to the average citizen as much as possible.

### **Review of Local Services and Facilities Section**

Mr. Duchesneau asked the MPUC to provide comments on the latest draft of the Local Services and Facilities section. Mr. Follett asked for a more detailed breakout of the Fire Department statistics. He wanted to know how many fires the Department responds to, the threats to life, and other service calls to which they respond. Chief White indicated they have that information on their Department webpage and Mr. Duchesneau stated he could incorporate that data into the section. Mr. Follett also wanted the section to include information about the average surface life of roadways in town.

Mr. Follett also noted the Master Plan should look at the future of the Police and Fire Department facilities. He pointed out how both of these structures are nearing the end of the useful life and the Town is going to have a major issue in figuring out how to address this problem. Mr. Follett also wanted to see more information about recycling efficiency and how much recyclable material was going into the Town's solid waste.

For the Education portion of the section, Mr. Follett felt the Parker Charter Essential School should be mentioned as an additional institution. Ms. Neyland added that all area charter schools should be included as well. Mr. Follett requested the section note the Regional School Agreement with Acton states the Blanchard School cannot be closed due to downsizing in the region and that one school needed to remain in each community. Mr. Follett also pointed out there is a significant amount of land which is under conservation restriction and this should be mapped out or included in the Master Plan. Mr. Clemence noted this information is in the Open Space & Recreation Plan and could easily be inserted. Mr. Follett also had additional comments about how the Conservation Commission uses Orders of Conditions to protect wetland areas and their buffers, and how the Commission also places specific conditions on the use of hazardous materials near wetland buffer areas.

Mr. Follett suggested the zoning provision which allows for senior housing cluster development should be mentioned under the Senior Services discussion or perhaps in the Housing section of the Master Plan. Mr. Powers felt the references to sidewalks and trails did not belong in the Senior Services portion of the section and suggested they be moved to the Transportation section. Mr. Powers also felt the reference to seniors with regard to the trails and walking paths should be dropped as sidewalks and trails are recreational opportunities for all residents, not just seniors. He continued on to note that seniors, in fact, may likely be the smallest segment of the population to use these facilities in many cases because of their lower mobility than other segments of the population. Ms. Morris wanted to know if information regarding how each building in town was heated could be included in this section. She felt the town needed to look ahead at how all of the structures in the community were being heated and how their heating efficiency could be improved. Ms. Morris also felt there should be more of a focus on the wireless communication transmissions and this item should be explored in greater detail. Mr. Fox noted this service was not provided by the Town, but by private companies instead. Ms. Neyland noted that technology is always changing and it can be tough to pin down what will be relevant in the future. Mr. Murphy added he felt the Technology section was somewhat confusing and could be improved by adjusting the language to make it more readable to a lay person.

At this time Ms. Morris departed from the meeting.

#### **Scheduling of Future Meeting Dates**

The MPUC confirmed their April meeting date of Wednesday, April 22, 2015 at 7:00 PM in Town Hall, 29 Middle Road. They also set a May meeting date for Tuesday, May 5, 2015 at 7:00 PM in Town Hall, 29 Middle Road.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 PM on a MOTION by Mr. Clemence, SECONDED by Ms. Cannon, with all members voting in favor.