

**Winchester Housing Partnership Board
Minutes for the Meeting of January 17, 2018**

Present: John Suhrbier, Allan Rodgers, David Miller, Naomi DeLairre, Diab Jerius, Michael Bettencourt, Marty Jones, Jerome Garciano

Absent: Felcity Tuttle, Cathy Boyle, Susan Verdicchio, COA representative, DAC representative

The meeting began at 7:30 PM in the Waterfield Room of Town Hall. John Suhrbier, Chair, agreed to prepare minutes.

John Suhrbier has been in communication with both the Council On Aging and the Disabilities Access Commission about their appointment of replacement liaison representatives, but so far without success. These discussions will continue.

Draft minutes for the meeting of December 13, 2017 were not completed in time for distribution and review at this meeting. They will be distributed prior to the February meeting.

The primary topic for discussion was a review of the *draft community survey* to be conducted by the Planning Board as part of their *update of the master plan*. A summary of this discussion was submitted on January 19, 2018 to Brian Szekely, Town Planner, and is provided as an attachment to these minutes. Detailed suggested wording changes were recorded by Diab Jerius, the Planning Board's representative to the Housing Partnership Board, and will be communicated directly to the Planning Board.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to brief updates on the following housing-related topics.

John Suhrbier updated the plot of *Winchester's changes in population* between 1970 and 2017 in response to the errors contained in a previous graph. The peak population of 23,258 occurred in 1972. The low population of 20,828 occurred in 1997. The 2017 population was 22,397.

The public hearing conducted on proposed Bills related to the *Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Law* was held by the Massachusetts State Legislature on December 19, 2017. Written comments focussing primarily on the proposed legislation submitted by Representative Michael Day were submitted on December 14. Representatives from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, MassHousing, and the Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) expressed their appreciation for these comments and supported the concluding recommendations.

Work by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) on the development of a *Housing Production Plan (HPP)* for Winchester is proceeding more slowly than originally anticipated. The first public forum now is being planned for either March 5 or 6. The next meeting of the HPP working group is scheduled for February 13. Additional effort is being given to the Housing Needs Analysis, in part to respond to the emailed comments submitted by the Housing Partnership Board.

For the proposed housing located on the *Highland Avenue* property that Craig Miller would like to purchase, the Planning Board has decided to hire Dennis Carlone to examine alternative design layouts and configurations for a housing development that would combine Mr. Miller's land with a portion of the adjacent town-owned land. One objective is to replace the current town-owned house located at 22 Highland and leased to the Winchester Housing Authority. The aim is to have a proposal completed in time for consideration by Spring Town Meeting.

The housing proposed for the existing Tighe Logistics site located off *Holton Street* continues to be under discussion. A meeting recently was held with Mill Creek to discuss ways in which their initial proposal could be reduced in size.

Michael Bettencourt reported that work on the potential re-development of the *Waterfield Parcel* is waiting for completion of an updated design by the MBTA for their new Winchester Center Commuter Rail Station.

The closing date for the sale of *55 Harvard Street*, the first floor unit of this three-family First Time Home Buyer (FTHB) house, currently is scheduled for February 14. John Suhrbier is in discussion with representatives of the Winchester Co-Operative Bank and the Winchester Savings Bank, the holders of the three mortgages, to identify ways in which the management of the condominium association could be improved. Allan Rodgers suggested that after the re-sale of the first floor unit is completed, the Housing Partnership Board should step back and examine the experience of the town purchasing existing housing stock and then reselling these units as deed restricted condominiums. In the current housing market, is this an effective way of utilizing linkage payments made to the Town's Affordable Housing Fund?

Regarding the *Winning Farm* age restricted housing proposed by Bonvie Homes, John Suhrbier met with Town Manager Richard Howard on November 16 to discuss the location and design criteria that need to be satisfied by the two agreed upon affordable units in order for these units to be acceptable by the Massachusetts DHCD for inclusion on Winchester's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). These criteria subsequently were documented in an email memorandum submitted on December 21 to Mr. Howard and Michael Bettencourt, Chair of the Select Board, including the reasons why the two triplex center units presently proposed by Bonvie Homes do not comply with DHCD's criteria for a proportional distribution. In the November 16 meeting, Mr. Howard agreed to include this topic on the list of remaining items where agreements between the Town and Bonvie still are necessary before a Building Permit can be issued.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Housing Partnership Board would be held on February 14, the second Wednesday of the month. The normal third Wednesday, February 21, falls within school vacation week and several members will be away at that time. A number of people also have conflicts by waiting an additional week, until Wednesday, February 28.

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 PM.

Attachment: January 19, 2018 memorandum from John Suhrbier to Brian Szekely, Town Planner.

TO: Brian Szekely, Town Planner

FROM: John Suhrbier; Chair, Housing Partnership Board

DATE: January 19, 2018

RE: Housing Partnership Board Review of the Draft Master Plan Survey

Members of the Housing Partnership Board spent approximately 90 minutes of our January 17, 2018 meeting reviewing and discussing the January 8 draft master plan survey. The discussion, which for reasons of time was largely but not completely limited to the first eighteen questions, included high level observations and questions, as well as detailed level comments regarding the current wording. Diab Jerius recorded detailed notes and will provide these to the other members of the Planning Board and yourself. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide a few overarching observations reflecting the overall conversation. In addition, a small number of specific items are included that we did not have time to discuss as part of the Wednesday meeting.

The specific purpose of the survey was unclear to us and should be articulated at the beginning. How specifically will the results of the survey be used?

We thought the purpose was to support development of the individual elements of the master plan, including providing the basis for guiding specific land use and economic development decisions. Members commented that the current survey design does not permit a ranking or prioritization of individual considerations. The majority of items are likely to be scored as being either very important or important. In practice, decisions require the balancing of multiple complex important considerations and the making of difficult tradeoffs. As currently constructed, the survey is not likely to provide significant assistance in this decision-making.

Diab explained that the survey has a much less ambitious objective. It is not intended to be comprehensive, or even internally consistent. Rather, the purpose is to obtain general input on only a few select considerations.

An observation made by several people is that the current introduction provides the answers that the Planning Board would like to hear in the responses. The suggestion is to eliminate the current description of Winchester, replacing this with a description of what a master plan is and the specific purpose of this survey. At a minimum, the word "unique" should be eliminated. Each community in Massachusetts is unique in one or more ways; at the same time, there are important similarities and it is important that we try to learn from those aspects that are in common.

Pre-testing is one of the standard, and even required, steps in the development of a survey, but apparently has not yet been considered. The recommendation is that a pre-test be conducted before the final survey is released.

The current topics, sequence, and wording reflect the results of a "design by committee," and even the specific interests of individual Planning Board members. It would be beneficial to have the survey reviewed by both a professional editor and a professional skilled in the design and conduct of community surveys.

The current sequence of questions is confusing. After the introductory demographic questions, there is an "importance" question followed by a where do you visit question, and another "importance question. These three questions then are followed by a general "most needed" question and three more specific "needed" questions.. The survey then returns to an "importance' question. After two Town Center questions, the survey then asks a zoning "importance" question. After Questions 18-21, the survey returns to another "importance"

question. Housing is addressed in both Question 11 and Question 22. Shouldn't these two housing questions be sequentially located? The recommendation is to come up with a more logical and smoother flow.

Many of the terms contained in the current draft are either ambiguous in meaning or interpretation, or may not be familiar to the general public. A few examples:

- Does Town Center refer to just the geographic area covered by the new CBD zoning or to a larger, and currently undefined area? For example, are the Unitarian, baptist, and Congregational churches considered to be part of the Town Center? Are the High School, Middle School, and Lincoln Elementary School part of the Town Center?
- Many people are not familiar with the ADA law and associated regulations and guidelines. Does the current use of ADA refer to physical accommodations for public buildings and facilities, or does it include designing housing that is livable for people with a variety of physical and mental limitations?
- The term traffic calming will mean different things to different people, is not normally thought of for situations presently existing in Winchester, and is not well or consistently understood by the general public.
- In Question 17, members did not understand that “increased density” meant, or at least included, various forms of multi-family housing, and in locations other than the downtown. Increased multi-family, especially within suburban communities is viewed by many as being a high priority housing need within the Boston metropolitan area. As such, the recommendation is that multi-family housing should be explicitly addressed as part of this survey.
- In Question 21, even the majority of business owners may not understand what a Business Improvement District is.

To some, “neighborhood character” is a reference to the physical characteristics of an area. Unfortunately in today's political climate, “neighborhood character” has become code for resisting change of any type, especially in welcoming a diversity of races, ethnicities, and religions. This was very apparent, as one example, in the public hearing conducted for the proposed 416 Cambridge Street housing. Since Winchester is perceived as being an upper income, largely white community that resists change, the recommendation is to avoid this type of coded language.

Asking about “additional parking” in Question 12 and “parking near my workplace” in Question 19 is problematic and likely to provide little useful information. As the NelsonNygaard Town Center Parking Study determined, the primary problem within the Town Center is the manner in which current parking resources are allocated and managed. An employee always will want the closest parking possible, not realizing that this may be at the expense of parking for customers and visitors. If parking is of interest to the Planning Board, a whole series of detailed parking questions could be added.

Winchester is primarily a residential community, yet housing is not identified in Question 8 as a potentially important town asset. (With no disrespect intended for the town's DPW, I suspect that the majority of town residents value their home more than they value the Transfer Station.) The recommendation is to include in Question 8 something along the lines of, “Housing that meets the needs of a range of household ages, types, and incomes.” In Phase I of the master plan, the highest priority housing objective was to provide a range of housing options that serve a range of ages, income levels, and household sizes. This finding of Phase I should be carried over into the current master planning work.

Nearly all members of the Housing Partnership Board had a “visceral, negative” reaction to including “low-to moderate-income housing” as a choice in Question 11, where the other listed items refer to specific building types. The recommendation is to, instead, include the more encompassing housing wording

suggested for Question 8. Recent housing construction throughout the Boston region has focussed on higher income households. In contrast, a wide range of middle income persons and households are not now being served, especially those that would like to move to the Boston region to take advantage of growing employment opportunities. Within Winchester, the emphasis has been on the construction of larger houses. Should a broader range of housing sizes be provided, including smaller houses?

The realtors on the Housing Partnership Board pointed out that townhouses can be either rental or condominium. The current wording assumes that all townhouses are condominiums.

What does “independent senior housing” mean? What specific types of housing are meant to be included as part of this category?

As Diab Jerius will elaborate upon, members had considerable difficulty with the choices presently listed in Question 16, “What brings you to the Town Center? Missing options include the banks, living, working, exercise, the post office, gas stations, and Fells Hardware. Does dining include smaller scale take-out restaurants? On a personal note, the majority of my trip purposes are missing from the survey’s list.

In the list for Question 23, include “newspapers,” either print or on-line.

The closing Question 24 references public forums to be conducted during the first quarter of 2018. The first Housing Production Plan public forum currently is being planned for early March. What steps are being taken to coordinate these republic community outreach activities?

Will the current master plan effort result in a new comprehensive master plan, or does the scope only include those elements that were not part of the earlier Phase I product? Specifically, is a new, updated housing plan part of the current scope?