

Master Plan Committee

Jessica Porter, Co-Chair
Sarah MacDonald, Co-Chair
Alix O'Connell, Clerk,
Josh Donati
Shaw McDermott
Margaret Adams Whitfield
James Antonizick
Dan Hart
Andrew Tittler
Sharna Small Borsellino
Nathan Gauthier
Dieckmann Cogil
Daniel T. Maher
Justin H. Humphreys



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DEDHAM 2030 MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, April 28, 2020, Zoom

Present:

Jessica Porter, Co-Chair, Planning Board Member
Josh Donati, School Committee Member
Shaw McDermott, Attorney
Margaret Adams Whitfield, Teacher
James Antonizick, Civil Engineer
Dan Hart, ex. P&R Member, Open Space Committee Member
Scott Steeves, Zoning Board of Appeals Member
Andrew Tittler, Attorney
Sharna Small Borsellino, Human Service Transportation Director
Nathan Gauthier, Sustainability
Dieckmann Cogill, AICP, Transportation Planner
Daniel T. Maher, Dedham Youth Baseball
Justin H A. Humphreys, Architect
Alix M. O'Connell, Clerk, Municipal Attorney
Tye Donahue, Parks & Recreation Board Member
Jay O'Brien, Planning Board Member
Sarah MacDonald, Co-Chair, Select Board Member

Josh Fiala, MAPC: Mr. Fiala welcomes everyone to the fifth steering committee meeting. Mr. Fiala shares that the purpose of this meeting is to give progress updates on the workshop and the survey and to get the committees feedback on these items. He then goes over virtual meeting protocols. After protocols, Mr. Fiala welcomes the Co-chairs, Jessica Porter and Sarah MacDonald, to reintroduce the MAPC and give the committee a little orientation to where they are.

Jessica Porter: Ms. Porter welcomes everyone back and takes a moment to acknowledge that some people may find themselves with more time right now, while other find themselves with less time. She continues by acknowledging that many may be mourning either the loss of their old lives or are worried about friends and family who may be sick. Ms. Porter then brings up that there has been a lot of feedback from people in the community who are really appreciative that the master plan team is continuing its work. She closes by thanking everyone for attending the meeting.

Sarah MacDonald: Ms. MacDonald echoes Ms. Porter and thanks everyone. She acknowledges that there are a lot of moving parts and that it is comforting to see how many folks have shared the survey and the broader efforts of the master plan. Ms. MacDonald shared that it does become clear how planning, as an exercise, is particularly important in times of crisis. She appreciates everyone's commitment to keeping on the schedule and really doing the work that everyone knows needs to be done.

Josh Fiala: Mr. Fiala thanks Ms. Porter and Ms. MacDonald for their words. Mr. Fiala takes a moment to reiterate the committee values and expectations that were outlined in the first meeting. Since there was so much success with the Poll Everywhere interactive polls, Mr. Fiala continued the conversation by asking committee members and meeting attendees how many survey responses they thought were achieved. The answer was 1,132 responses. The survey was open between March 16, 2020 and April 27, 2020.

Mr. Fiala moves on with some of the survey results. The top 3 responses are listed in each survey question below:

Question 1: What set of words would best describe your top goals for the Town of Dedham?

1. Fiscally Responsible
2. Sustainable
3. Inclusive

Question 2: What features are most important for the future of Dedham?

1. Quality schools and education opportunities
2. Preserve open space, parks, and natural assets
3. Strong communities and neighborhoods/vibrant business districts and employment center

Question 3: What originally attracted you to live in Dedham?

1. Proximity to Boston
2. Born and raised here
3. Family lives here or nearby

Question 4: What are the greatest assets of the Town of Dedham?

1. Proximity to Boston
2. Convenient access to highways/rail
3. Attractive neighborhood

Question 5: What are the greatest challenges for the Town of Dedham?

1. Traffic congestion
2. Rising cost of living/housing
3. Local tax rates/municipal finances

Question 6: Please choose one area from the list below, then highlight its characteristics in the next two questions?

1. Dedham Square/Dedham Village
2. Greenlodge, Sprague, Manor
3. East Dedham Square

Question 7: What is the greatest asset of this place? (Dedham Square/Dedham Village)

1. Local
2. Small
3. Vibrant

Question 8: What is the greatest challenge of this place?

1. Parking
2. Traffic
3. Congestion

Question 9: Please rate the importance of addressing each of the topics in the Master Plan?

1. Investing in schools/education
2. Addressing traffic congestion
3. Managing town finances

Question 10: What is your vision for the future of Dedham?

1. Dedham
2. Town
3. School

Question 11: What are you?

1. 45-59 years (36%)
2. 35-44 years (27%)
3. 60+ (23%)

Question 13: How often do you use each of these methods to get around Dedham?

1. Drive a car (alone)
2. Walking
3. Take public transit (rail)

Question 14: How informed do you feel about issues the Town is facing?

1. Informed (56%)
2. Uninformed (21%)
3. Very informed (7%)

Question 15: How do you get information about what is going on in Town?

1. Neighbors
2. The Dedham Times
3. Community Facebook pages

Question 16: What would help you attend events or meetings?

1. Knowing more than 1 week in advance
2. Meeting in my neighborhood
3. Meetings in the evenings

Question 17: What other ways would you prefer to stay engaged with this process?

1. Email updates
2. Social media
3. Project website

Question 18 and 19: Additional participant information

- 403 participants provided email addresses to stay engaged with the process
- 74 participants would be willing to share thoughts on camera in a formal interview or self-submitted video

Mr. Fiala then moves onto a brief debrief of the Virtual Visioning Workshop. 108 participants joined on the Live Webex, and the meeting had 300 Facebook Live views and had subsequently received over 700 views. So, live on the WebEx, we had 108 participants joining us. The Facebook live broadcasts that was simulcast as this meeting has been had 300 live views and then has subsequently.

A companion to the Virtual Visioning Workshop, the Element Feedback Survey, was created and has 24 responses now. This survey was opened on April 4th, and the next focus will be on pushing people towards this survey.

The virtual visioning workshop video is available online, it's on the website, it's on the Facebook page. It continues to be up there for resource for people that want to go back to it. It does give a very good orientation to what the master plan is all about. In each of elements, MAPC gives a very brief overview of all of the components of the master plan, including the timeline, the committee, and where all the information is at. In the Virtual Visioning Workshop, MAPC also did have a few questions which are comparable to the questions that they have been putting out through the initial community survey, though, there are some questions which are different. The questions are as follows:

1. What Neighborhood do you live in?
2. Under normal circumstance, what destination was your most frequently visited in Dedham?
3. How close is Dedham to the vision you imagine for the Town?
4. What is your top priority for Dedham in the next 10 years?
5. What master plan topic is most important to you?

MAPC did answer some questions live during the session. Among, the outreach to boards and committees, invitations to connect with Livable Dedham, the Historical Commission, and Dedham Cycle Club were received. It was also mentioned in the workshop that it would be important to partner to outreach to community members who do not speak English (Spanish, Haitian Creole, Amharic, Greek, Arabic).

Mr. Fiala invites Carolina Prieto to talk about community engagement and outreach efforts.

Carolina Prieto: Ms. Prieto shows who has been a part of the Outreach Working Group. The list consists of Carolina Prieto, Jessica Porter, Michelle Tinger, Kerry Walkins, Janet Holmes, Margaret Adams, Dimitria Sullivan, Meg Duncan, and Mike Butler. A lot of these folks have been helping in other planning efforts and community based work. Ms. Prieto also thanked all those involved in pushing social media content to their networks and promoting the Master Plan.

Ms. Prieto goes over current tasks that include:

- Promoting the Designing Dedham Workshop/Element Feedback Survey;
- Creating a press release for workshop, survey results and promotion of Workshop/Element Feedback Survey;
- Exploring some type of non-digital engagement;
- Defining how to create partnerships during/post COVID-19; and
- Creating a 1-minute short video by committee members.

The Master Plan project website has been updated so people are able to understand why it is that we're we're moving to the elements survey.

Jessica Porter: Ms. Porter elaborated on the video teaser created by committee members. This could be a helpful way to share the excitement, in terms of the committee's work,

and it can also be used as a way to leverage all of the committee member's networks. These teaser videos could be a great way of giving the community a sense of just how varied and diverse the committee is. Ms. Porter will be following up with an email with more specifics around what the ask is and a sample script.

A question from a member of the audience, Chrisryan, came up:

Chrisryan (member of the audience): Is there anything in this whole entire vision thing that really focuses on some of those more societal problems, rather than the typical things like transportation and education? How do these societal problems get integrated into the support mechanisms to help folks that are in those predicaments?

Josh Fiala: Mr. Fiala responds by saying that we do see some of that content, and that it shows up more squarely in the public health and livability element of the master plan. Elements will be sort of a cross cutting feature for the plan that will be defining how it relates to each element. Elaine Zang, who is MAPC's public health planner, will be worked with on these topics.

Chrisryan (member of the audience): Is there anything in there associated with climate change, litter and trash? Also, is there anything about some of the issues that we haven't dealt with, such as homes that are just abandoned and they're just left in a neighborhood to sort of rot away?

Josh Fiala: We did have a question about town resiliency and sustainability. That was showing up as a middle or so range priority. And then we had some questions pointing to historical or cultural resources. Those are showing up as priorities, and some of the questions relate a little bit, tangentially, to some of the resources that Chrisryan brought up.

Jeremy Rosenberger: Mr. Rosenberger followed up on Chrisryan's question and mentioned that as we get through this process, we're going to be getting into more of the finite things like abandoned homes and quality of life. As we move forward, we're going to be going into housing and seeing what the issues and opportunities are.

Josh Fiala: Mr. Fiala reinforces that at this point, we should make sure that the overall vision, goals, priorities, and framing language can guide us to get to the very specific issues that are important to the town.

Jeremy Rosenberger: Mr. Rosenberger took the conversation back to climate change and mentioned that sustainability coordinator is wrapping up Dedham's vulnerability assessment, which plays into climate change. So, in some regards, we don't want to reinvent the wheel, and we're able to absorb that as part of our larger effort. That actually allows us to provide more time on certain topics, like transportation, where there really isn't a transportation master plan, and housing. Mr. Rosenberger reinforces that climate change is not being disregarded in the master plan process.

Josh Fiala: Mr. Fiala shares the Elements Feedback Survey Flyer and that there will be a few advertising or promotional type items. These will be formatted and getting out the door both through Facebook and through emails.

Dieckmann Cogill, AICP: Ms. Cogill had a question about the elements, the workshop element feedback survey, and the public engagement process. She is worried about burn-out. If we have more than one survey, she feels like she's going to want to be able to explain to people, who I am reaching out to, where this fits in the process. Mr. Dieckmann would like to make it so that people understand that these surveys are not going to end up in a black hole. Ms. Dieckmann also asked if the committee thinks the public understands that what the term "element" means? The master plan is made up of a number of elements that include transportation, land use, housing, etc. Ms. Dieckmann would like to know is there is a better name for the survey.

Josh Fiala: Mr. Fiala asks if the word "topic" would be better. "Topic" may be an improvement and will give a little more clarity. He then moves on to discuss the engagement plans regarding the survey. Mr. Fiala believes that there might be a little more bandwidth for an online survey with people spending so much time sitting around the computer. MAPC is also figuring out ways to make sure that the second survey is clear that this is a separate and non redundant survey.

Mr. Fiala then moves to summarizing the process outline and approach that will take place between 2020 and 2021.

Jeremy Rosenberger: Mr. Rosenberger takes a moment to encourage committee members to take the second survey if they have not already done so. He also encourages feedback and thoughts on the survey.

Josh Fiala: The second survey does cover is each of the elements in more detail. All of the topics are in the survey, which does make it a little longer than the initial survey. Mr. Fiala then opens it up to questions and comments.

Carolina Prieto: There are some comments about how we should engage students and whether we should think about doing that now or if we should wait until the end of the school year. Some folks think that we should think about giving kids activities to do now because they're at home and they have time. Other folks think that it's too much.

Jessica Porter: Ms. Porter brought up reaching out to Rob Blaney of the Youth Commission. Before COVID, the schools had been eager to share all of our materials, but now they're really focused on what the students and parents need, in terms of learning. If we were going to do some kind of kids activities, it would be a campaign that would not come be in any way publicized through the schools at this point.

Jeremy Rosenberger: We were lined up to meet with the Dedham High School Council, and then things went off the rail. We're definitely lined up in the fall to engage with the youth, in person. Mr. Rosenberger states that we have to be sensitive, since it's a tough time. However, the good thing is that we have just started this process.

Chrisryan (member of the audience): Ms. Ryan mentioned the idea of doing some kind of scavenger hunt as an activity. She asked if there was a way to make this into a game by neighborhood and see how many kids can come out and engage in this topic.

Carolina Prieto: Ms. Prieto mentioned that MAPC has used Photovoice before as well, which has a similar concept to having people go around a neighborhood and take pictures of things they want to improve.

Dieckmann Cogill, AICP: Ms. Cogill asked about the previously mentioned vision statement and how this is going to be done and what the committee should be prepared for. She would like to know if it is going to be an interactive process or if the committee will just be commenting on something that will be provided to them.

Josh Fiala: Mr. Fiala explains that the approach would consist of having a presentation devoted to the components that the MAPC has seen go into a vision statement. The vision statement will be based on all the data seen in the initial survey results. A proposed draft will then be put together and the committee will be invited to give their feedback. The vision statement will then be adjusted as needed. Mr. Fiala asks if there are any further questions.

There were no further questions. Ms. Porter and Mr. Rosenberger gave closing statements, and Mr. Fiala closed the meeting.