

**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 Cogill  
Dan Maher  
Justin A. Humphreys  
Jay O'Brien  
Scott Steeves



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**DEDHAM 2030 MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING**

**Tuesday, January 19, 2020, Zoom**

**Present:**

Jessica Porter Planning Board Member  
Shaw McDermott, Dedham Resident  
Andrew Tittler, Dedham Resident  
Nathan Gauthier, Conservation Commission Member  
Sharna Small Borsellino, Dedham Resident  
Sarah MacDonald, Select Board Member  
Alix M. O'Connell, Parks & Recreation Board Member  
Justin A. Humphreys, Dedham Resident  
Jay O'Brien, Planning Board Member  
Margaret Adams Whitfield, Dedham Resident  
Dan Maher, Dedham Resident  
James Antonizick, Dedham Resident

**Not Present:**

Scott Steeves, Zoning Board of Appeals Member  
Dan Hart, Open Space Committee Member  
Josh Donati, School Committee Member  
Dieckmann Cogill, Dedham Resident

Jeremy Rosenberger, Planning Director, opens up the 13<sup>th</sup> Master Plan Committee meeting with a quick overview of the Master Plan process, Zoom meeting protocols, the agenda for the evening, and the Committee values and expectations.

Josh Fiala, Principal Planner at MAPC, welcomes participants and showcases the full list of Committee members. Mr. Fiala asked an ice-breaker question: Of the choices, what is your most frequently visited town building? Mr. Fiala showed the open house flyer for January 26, 2021. He also displayed the topic summaries, which included Public Health, Housing, and Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources.

### **Topic Area: Governance**

Brian Luther, Municipal Services Specialist at MAPC, gave a presentation on Governance. Mr. Luther went over the data sources that were used to put the presentation together. These included the Designing Dedham Community Survey; Designing Dedham Master Plan Topic Area Survey; United States Census Bureau; Dedham-ma.gov; DataCommon; and Interviews with residents and staff.

#### Existing Data and Analysis

Mr. Luther looked into the Town's budget to understand the health and well-being of Dedham. He noted that there are a few key budget indicators that he usually takes a look at and that Dedham is one of the region's strongest positioned places when it comes to addressing budgetary challenges. Dedham has a large commercial tax base, there's a fair amount of commercial growth, and it has the willingness of the residents to invest in large infrastructure projects that have needed override approval.

Dedham has embraced resident focused technology tools, such as OpenFinance budget dashboard, and CGIS Citizen Service Request. Dedham also has the proper tools to reach residents. There's a full-time Public Information Officer; the Town website; Facebook; Twitter; and Dedham TV.

#### Initial Survey Results

"Local Tax Rates and Municipal Finance" and "Issues with Local Governance" ranked among the most critical challenges. Two-thirds of survey takers ranked these in their top three challenges. 93% of survey takers ranked "efficient public services and facilities" as "important or most important."

Survey Question: Do you have any additional reflections on this topic or governance data?

- "No town employee should report directly to an elected board; all should report to town manager and consult with relevant elected boards"
- "There seems to be no single committee or person you can go to when there are problems. There is resistance to accepting new voices at the table."
- "There should be an annual goal setting meeting each year. Every committee should provide input, and the Select Board should provide leadership to make sure they all get done."
- "Dedham Committees work in silos. I have seen them time and time again say something can't be done because it's under jurisdiction at another committee. Dedham is one small town. Get the committees on the same page."

- “There are too many neighborhood boards.”
- “Why is every committee/board carrying out planning independently?”
- “All emails for ALL Town leaders should be readily available on the town website – including meeting members.”
- “More communication about progress/action of local government with the community would be greatly appreciated.”
- “The town should prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, including funding the Human Rights Commission”
- “The town should do whatever it can to increase the number of people of color in town government”
- “Increase Civic Engagement”
- Consider limiting the number of people per family who can be elected to town meeting, boards/committees/etc. The goal of town meeting isn’t to copy & paste like-minded people; it’s to get a diverse, representative sample of Dedham residents.”
- “Get new people in office, particularly women and minorities.”
- “Let the Townspeople know what is happening. Underwrite a newspaper.”
- “The town is dated in many-ways. The website is unmanageable despite being revised. It just got a Twitter and Facebook page after many years.”
- “Having a point person at the town hall that would meet regularly with neighborhoods would make the residents feel as though our voices have meaning.”
- “The town website is better than it used to be but still relatively poor compared to neighboring municipalities.”
- “Communication – is very hard to figure out what is going on – the newspapers are terrible and the town does not have a newsletter so information is buried”
- “There can be no back tracking on the technology now being used to attend board meetings. It has greatly increased participation”

Mr. Luther showed the different Boards and Commissions in Dedham, appointed and volunteer.

### Challenges and Opportunities

Some of the challenges in governance include that there’s a perceptions of exclusive participation; time consuming meetings are typically hosted at night; and structure is difficult to navigate, lack of communication. Opportunities lie in online meetings, which have opened a new way to engage with residents and encourage participation. Goals of governance include Board representation reflects the population of the community; Boards and Commissions have clearly defined roles and annually reviewed goals; and Boards and Commissions work together and are supported by professional staff. Other areas of potential recommendations include IT Infrastructure and Tech Tool Enhancement; Charter Advisory Commission Survey; and Workforce Development.

### Defining Topic Area Goals

Mr. Luther asks a few questions when thinking about goals for governance. These include:

1. In what ways can the town government reach residents?

2. In what ways can the town show residents that diversity is important to them and that efforts are being made?
3. In what ways can the town be more transparent and accountable?

Mr Fiala held Zoom breakout rooms for about 15 minutes.

Committee members shared some of the highlights of their group discussion. Alix O’Connell shared that her group spoke about communication and integrating it into a central place and how good a communications officer would be in getting that done for the Town. Sarah MacDonald stated that her group also spoke about the communications officer role and the potential for that role to have a cross-department/cross-functional support role. Her group also spoke about the opportunity to have Boards and Committees work more collaboratively, whether it be formally or through joint sessions. Lastly, the group discussed using pre-pandemic in-person meetings as well as the pandemic adoption of virtual meetings. Justin Humphreys shared that his group spoke about the idea of having some kind of mobile town hall or something that brings the services and updates to the people at different times. He also mentioned the possibility of holding a Citizens Academy. Mr. Luther also shared the potential for students to be a part of these Committees or Boards where they are able to write a paper for school about their experience.

### **Topic Area: Community Facilities and Services**

Courtney Lewis, Regional Land Use Planner at MAPC, gave a presentation on Community Facilities and Services. Mr. Lewis went over the data sources that were used to put the presentation together. These included the Census and American Community Survey (5-year estimates); Town of Dedham FY2021 Preliminary Budget; 2020 Sustainable Dedham Climate Action and Resiliency Plan; 2019 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program Report; Survey results; and Previous planning studies.

The Community Facilities and Services element of the Designing Dedham 2030 master plan will seek to identify infrastructure investments that support and implement many of the goals and objectives and other elements of the master plan. The Town’s public facilities and services are important to the quality of life for residents and can also create a more vibrant realm as the Town continues to grow. Planning well-designed facilities and providing dependable and high-quality public services will be essential to the Town’s future success.

### **Community Facilities and Services**

Community facilities and services are major components of Dedham’s physical, social, and economic fabric. They help define the identity of the town and contribute to quality of life, as well as social and economic prosperity. Community services cover a broad spectrum of services, such as safety, public education, arts and culture, libraries, and often require capital investment and operating costs.

The Community facilities and services topic area has two main components: public facilities and community services. A public facility is a town property that has been developed for a particular public purpose and provides a base of operations for community services.

The term also includes other non-building facilities such as parks, playgrounds, and cemeteries. Community services include municipal services and utilities such as public water and sewer or municipal light service, and partner organization and contracted services such as solid waste and recycling, public health, housing assistance, recreation, etc.

Dedham has some newly renovated buildings that includes the Ames Building, which houses the new Town Hall and the Senior Center. Dedham also has two public libraries, seven public schools, two fire stations, and one police station. Dedham also has some unique facilities, such as the Endicott Estate.

The Town of Dedham currently owns and manages 19 public buildings, a majority of which are 50 years or older. These facilities include administrative buildings like the Ames Building, Dunn Public Works Facility, as well as community gathering spaces like the Endicott Estate. They also include some accessory structures like the Recreation Department Garage and the Brookdale Cemetery Maintenance Building. The Town also owns and manages public safety facilities (Central Police Station, the Central Fire Station, and the East Dedham Fire Station); public schools (Avery Elementary School, Dedham Middle School, Dedham High School, Early Childhood Education Center, Greenlodge Elementary School, Oakdale Elementary School, and the Riverdale Elementary School); cultural and recreational facilities (Dedham Main Library, Endicott Branch Library, Dolan Recreation Center, and Anthony P. Mucciaccio Dedham Pool); and parks and open spaces that are dispersed throughout Town.

Over the past several years, the Town has made substantial investments in its human and capital resources, including hiring a full-time facilities manager to oversee Town and school properties; the construction of the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC); renovation of the Ames Building for Town Hall; Establishing a Senior Center Roadway and sidewalk improvements along Elm Street & Rustcraft Road Corridors; Construction of a new Public Safety Building (currently underway); and developing a long-term facilities master plan for Dedham (currently underway).

Mr. Lewis showed a breakdown of the Fiscal Year 2021 proposed budget. The total general fund budget, including all sources and uses of funds, is \$120,182,820. The budget includes

- Dedham Public Schools – Education (40.9%)
- Employee Benefits (15.4%)
- Public Safety (12.5%)
- Debt Services (9.2%)
- Public Works (6.7%)
- General Government (5.4%)
- Culture & Recreation (2.2%)
- Town Facilities (1.7%)
- Human Services (1.1%)

### Capital Improvements

One of the key issues facing the Town is how to prioritize and pay for its many capital needs. The Capital Expenditures Committee is a five-person committee that performs an

annual review and makes recommendations on the Town's capital improvement projects. This Committee also allocates funds for town projects and studies. In Dedham, capital projects are usually funded by a special purpose stabilization fund, called the Robin Reyes Fund. This is a local hotel and meals tax that provides funding to pay debt service for capital improvement projects in Town. One thing the Town lacks, and would greatly benefit from, is a formal capital improvement plan (CIP). A CIP is a road map for planning and funding public facilities and infrastructure. It typically incorporates both the construction of new facilities and the rehabilitation or replacement of existing capital. Typically, these types of plans cover a period of three to six years and serve as a formal declaration of intent by the Town to make capital expenditures on an indicated schedule. These plans may or may not consider multiple forms of funding.

### Survey Results

- What planning objectives should the Town prioritize through its municipal facilities planning?
  - Increasing energy efficiency and sustainability – 27%
  - Renovating or repairing existing Town facilities – 23%
  - Building new facilities equipped with modern technology – 17%
  - Increasing regional collaboration, such as collective procurement or shared – 17%
  - Collaborating with external partners to meet facility needs through public-private partnerships – 13%
  - Other – 3%
  - Writing Comments
    - Parking in Dedham Square
    - Tap into community preservation act \$
    - Green building and retrofitting
    - The town should prioritize spending projects that will reduce racial inequity in the town
    - The new town hall is a perfect example not to renovate an existing building. New building are designed increasing energy efficiency and sustainability.
    - Create a multi-generational community center. I have thoughts I am happy to share on how this might work. Additionally, we could development some partnerships with local employers, like Amazon and ask them to invest in our community.
    - Improving capital projects management
- Do you have any additional reflections on this topic or community services and facilities data?
  - After COVID there will be a lot of vacant office space. Maybe consider using some of this space for municipal or school use rather than building.
  - Let's be very careful about privatizing public facilities and services. Privatization has a long history of serving shareholders at the expense of residents

- Refurbishment of existing facilities should be prioritized when it is an option, rather than building new facilities. As well, the town should prioritize increasing sustainability in existing buildings or new construction: think of how much roof space a school like Dedham High School has, space that could be home to solar panels!
- The parks we have aren't taken care of well. Before building new things, we should revamp what we have. Riverside park is an example.

Mr. Lewis breakdown the assets and challenges of community facilities and services. Assets include AAA Bond Rating; new town hall and senior center facility; and Robin Reyes Special Purpose Stabilization Fund. Challenges include no established Capital Improvement Plan; facilities constraints; and limited funding sources for capital improvements.

#### Draft Goals

1. Establish a formal capital planning process and maintenance plan.
2. Develop asset management policies to dispose of surplus municipal property and to inform maintenance and upgrade routes.
3. Design, locate and provide public facilities with features that support the environment, energy efficiency, sustainability, technological innovation, livability, and equity goals of the Town.
4. Continue to scope the town's funding needs, match them with prospective grants, and dedicate staff time to pursue them.

Sharna Small Borsellino asked about the funding of roadway improvements and improving walkability and bikability in the Town. She also asked if any other towns have looked into grant opportunities, through their master plan, from MassDOT and if there is someone within town government that these responsibilities can fall under. Mr. Lewis responded by saying that other master plans do create implementation teams that oversee and ensure that the goals and recommendations are followed through. Mr. Lewis also mentioned that there are several programs specifically geared to making pedestrian and streetscape improvements, and that staff time can be allocated to pursuing these opportunities.

Sarah MacDonald mentioned in community facilities and services, the presentation and the goals are very heavy on the facilities and are hard assets of the community, but doesn't address the programs that take place. We have a lot of public facing organizations – Parks & Recreation, the Library, Council on Aging, the Youth Commission – where we're not really looking at programmatically what services we're providing and how we're resourcing for them. Since everything went virtual, a lot of the programs we were providing to the residents had to be rethought. Ms. MacDonald wanted to know if context could be added around the programs.

Nathan Gauthier asked if the master plan would look at the Police Station and the Keystone lot. He wanted to know how the master plan influences spaces like these. Mr. Lewis mentioned that proposals like the ones Nathan mentioned will overlap with several chapters in the master plan.

Mr Fiala held Zoom breakout rooms for about 10 minutes. Once breakout rooms ended, Mr. Fiala welcomed everyone to share what their group discussed. Justin Humphreys stated that the Town needs a Capital Improvement Plan. Jessica Porter added that the group didn't really see a goal that emphasizes the importance of community services. One of the things that covid has further exposed is that there is no safety net for people who need housing and food assistance. She mentioned that this is something the Dedham can become more strategic and programmatic about. Margaret Adams added that there's no place, if you're a struggling family, for social services. There are no social service agencies in the area. She also added that you have to travel quite a bit to get to youth centers, teen programming, boys clubs, or the YMCA. Shaw McDermott asked what projects might be identified for the future.

Mr. Fiala shared the results of how people learned about the Open House on December 7. The results are as follows:

- Facebook (29%)
- Word of mouth (20%)
- Email newsletter (19%)
- Other (19%)
- Dedham Times, Dedham Patch (9%)
- Town website (4%)

### **Chat Messages**

Jessica Porter to Everyone : LOVE the citizen's academy idea. I've talked to folks in other towns who do that and it's been very successful in helping people a) understand how to navigate town services and b ) get involved when they want to

Andrew Tittler to Everyone : Thinking more on that and students; what if each board had 1-2 Student Associate members per month/semester, etc. Nonvoting (of course) but able to shadow the board. Work with the civics education program.

Courtney Lewis (MAPC) to Everyone : Are these goals close to what should be addressed for the Community Facilities and Services topic? Do additional goals need to be defined?

Margaret Adams to Everyone : I have school committee that night.

Margaret Adams to Everyone : I won't be able to attend

The next meeting will be on Tuesday, February 23 at 7:00 pm.