

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, June 16, 2020, Zoom

Present:

Jessica Porter Planning Board Member
Josh Donati, School Committee Member
Sarah MacDonald, Select Board Member
Shaw McDermott, Attorney
Margaret Adams Whitfield, Teacher
Daniel T. Maher, Dedham Youth Baseball
Andrew Tittler, Attorney
Nathan Gauthier, Sustainability
Justin H A. Humphreys, Architect
Alix M. O'Connell, Municipal Attorney
Jay O'Brien, Planning Board Member
Tye Donahue, Parks & Recreation Board Member

Not Present:

James Antonizick, Civil Engineer
Scott Steeves, Zoning Board of Appeals
Dieckmann Cogill, AICP, Transportation Planner
Dan Hart, ex. P&R Member, Open Space Committee Member
Sharna Small Borsellino, Human Service Transportation Director

The meeting began with Sarah MacDonald sharing her excitement about a couple of interesting and new ideas on how to engagement people. She shares that the old way of doing business and inviting people to meetings, as well as showing up to their meetings, is not going to work. Jessica Porter seconded Ms. MacDonald's statements.

Jeremy Rosenberger gives a brief update on the past meeting minutes and asks if anyone has any comments. He also explained that Zoom Webinar is a safe and secure format, and for these reasons, meeting will be held via this platform.

Ms. Porter went through each of the meeting minute dates to seek approval by each committee member. These meeting minutes included:

- December 11, 2019
- January 28, 2020
- February 25, 2020
- March 24, 2020
- April 28,2020

All meeting minutes were approved by the committee members.

Mr. Rosenberger then passed on the conversation to Josh Fiala, MAPC Principal Planner. Mr. Fiala began with going over the meeting agenda and then reiterated the Committee's values and expectations that guide each of the committee conversations. These are open-mindedness; respect; communication; address conflict internally; energy and creativity; organization; transparency; inclusivity; and respect history, but do not fear change.

Mr. Fiala then welcomes all members to answer a Poll Everywhere questions: How would you prefer the Master Plan Committee meet over the summer? Seventy percent of the Committee responded with "Meet in July and August." Mr. Fiala mentioned that continuing to meet monthly would be helpful in order to keep momentum going.

Mr. Fiala then shifts the conversation to a presentation he put together regarding an initial draft of the vision statement. The purpose of the vision statement is to capture inspiration and to really provide a view as to where the information from the master plan is headed. It can be ambitious; however, it should also be pragmatic. The vision statement should articulate the community's values and sentiments. It should be aligned enough with everything else to show that it is clearly organized. It should be a guide. The vision statement will sit on top of each of the topic areas. Each of the goals and strategies of the topic areas will point back to the vision statement. The vision will provide a big enough umbrella that will provide a guide for each of those topics.

The next topic Mr. Fiala discussed was the Initial Community Survey, which received over 1,100 responses. There was also great feedback for the Virtual Visioning Workshop. There were about 400 participants and more that are participating in the online survey, which, at this point in time, has over 200 responses.

Mr. Fiala then showed some of the results of the survey responses:

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

1. Fiscally Responsible
2. Sustainable
3. Inclusive
4. Accessible
- 5/6. Equitable/Active
7. Other

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

1. Quality schools and educational opportunities
2. Preserved open space, parks, and natural assets
- 3/4. Strong communities and neighborhoods/Vibrant business districts and employment center
5. Effective zoning and management of growth
6. Efficient public services and facilities
7. Safe travel and commuting options
8. Affordable and attractive housing options
9. Other

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
4. Improving safety for pedestrians/bicyclists
5. Strengthening neighborhoods
6. Access to open space
7. Climate resiliency
8. Proactively managing and directing growth
9. Improving access to public transit
10. Investing in municipal services
11. Improving public safety
12. Investing in municipal facilities
13. Addressing housing affordability
14. Strengthening arts and culture
15. Civic and social engagement
16. Creating a greater variety for housing types
17. Other
18. Workforce training programs

In Massachusetts there are 77 communities, out of 101, that have completed master plans. 42 of the completed master plans were reviewed by the MAPC in the last year of two for the regional planning update process, Metro Common 2050. 30 of the master plans have vision statements. Dedham's previous master plan did not have a vision statement. Mr. Fiala give examples of vision statements from other locations in Massachusetts. These include Arlington; Burlington; Manchester by the Sea; Melrose; and Wellesley. Mr. Fiala shared that the common component in each of these examples is that they have a statement of shared values somewhere as a separate format or tied into the narrative. They each have an overarching description of what the community is or has achieved in the end of the timeframe of the master plan.

Mr. Fiala then went over the components of the vision statement, which include:

- Statement of shared values;

- Overarching description of what the community is or has achieved at the end of the 10-year timeframe;
- Highlighting specific assets or achievements that are of the highest priority for the community;
- (Optional) High level statement that ties to each of the topic area goals (or top priorities); and
- (Optional) Additional guiding principle statements or value statement.

He then went over the vision statement draft:

Dedham is a fiscally responsible, sustainable, and inclusive town with a strong foundation of distinct neighborhoods and engaged communities. Dedham is committed to upholding these values as it seeks to:

- Continue to provide a focus on education through quality schools.
- Provide high quality amenities through the preservation of accessible parks and natural, cultural and historic assets.
- Enhance quality of life by balancing distinct neighborhoods, vibrant business districts, and thriving employment centers.
- Connect these assets with a safe and convenient access for all modes of transportation.
- Proactively manage and direct growth where it benefits the town the most.
- Reinforce the unique assets of each distinct neighborhood, while building unity in the Town as a whole.
- (Optional) [Add other statements be developed in the next phase of work as topic area goals are defined.]
- (Optional) [This could build from the committee values and expectations that have been expressed: open-mindedness, respect, address conflict, organized, transparent, goals minded, respect history without fearing change.]

Mr. Fiala then opens the conversation and invites co-chairs to give their input to get the conversation going on how to refine the statement and what they think about this initial draft.

Sarah MacDonald doesn't want to overhype what a vision statement should or should not be. She liked that the MAPC drew from the community data that has been gathered so far. Ms. MacDonald shared that it's not just what the committee thinks, but rather the feedback that the community shared.

Jessica Porter states said "It seems that having this will help us communicate with the community going forward."

Jay O'Brien agrees with Sarah regarding that the community's feedback is being used to construct this visioning statement. One thing that he brings up is that he thinks that Dedham has always been forward looking and it is inherent with Dedham through its founding fathers.

Justin Humphreys likes that the statement is easily digestible. He says the statement reads a bit as to what is now as opposed to the direction that we would like to go.

Margaret Adams shares that there needs to be changes to the verbiage.

Nathan Gauthier shares his input that “fiscally responsible” is not as aspirational as sustainable and inclusive. He shares that he thinks of “fiscally responsible” as a way of getting there. “For fiscally responsible” to be our top goal seems unambitious. I would add it to the end of the vision statement.” Mr. Gauthier also adds that it would be odd to have a master plan where the top bullet is “make quality schools” and then have nothing in the rest of the plan that contributes to talking about quality schools.

Josh Donati mentions that he would not want to lead off with the current opening.

Andrew Tittler added that when thinking about these kinds of statements, his view is almost always that shorter is better. He also says that when he thinks of “fiscally responsible,” it conflates and overlaps with “sustainable.” “And so, I would say, in the future, we want a forward-looking statement that is a fiscally, socially, and environmentally sustainable community.” Mr. Title adds that he likes the idea of having a vision statement and a then a separate list. He would also add the committee’s values that were previously mentioned and the piece about looking to history but not being afraid of the future. He would also add more about inclusiveness and respect to the vision statement.

Alix O’Connell worries about using distinct neighborhoods because it might highlight the kind of division that there is in the town.

Shaw McDermott shared that one of the things that attracted him to the Arlington statement was a reference to the maintenance of the historic character of the town. He goes over some examples that show how rich in history Dedham truly is.

Jessica Porter adds that the vision statement should be more aspirational. It struck her that it’s not that exciting or visionary. She discusses the role of the schools in the master plan. This master plan will not outline how the school will manage their decision. Part of what this vision should include is that the community is invested in the importance of education.

Margaret Adams added that she did not see information on bringing the town together in the bullet points. She believes that improving accessibility for residents to quality housing, better transportation, and including how Dedham is an inclusive, cohesive, even community should be reflected somewhere.

Mr. Fiala takes note of all the comments and shares that he will be synthesizing another draft. He reiterates that the vision statement will continue to be a working, living statement throughout the process.

Mr. Fiala gave an update on board and committee meetings and getting in front of them to discuss the Master Plan in more detail. Ms. Prieto then pauses to answer any questions from the public.

Carolina Prieto gives a review on the community engagement that has and will continue to take place. She displayed a list of those that are on the working group. These include Michelle Tinger, Jessica Porter, Margaret Adams, Kerry Walkins, Janet Holmes, Mike Butler, Amy Paxon, Dimitria Sullivan, Meg Duncan, Alix Voyajopoulos, and Danielle Deluca. The group has been meeting since April 13, 2020. They have been meeting every week and the schedule has just shifted to meeting every 2 weeks. Their goal is to support the outreach for the community engagement plan.

Ms. Prieto shared that the second survey will be closing on June 30th. At this time, there are over 200 surveys that have been filled out. A flyer was sent out to members of the community. Currently, there are 475 subscriptions. The newsletter will be used to keep people in the loop and inform them on how they can stay engaged. She also discusses that community outreach plan to engage with community members that do not speak English. These include people that speak Spanish, Creole, Amharic, Greek, and Arabic.

Ms. Prieto pauses to answer questions asked in the chat function. She then brings up that Emma Bost is the artist in residence that will assist in the poster campaign. Ms. Prieto goes in more detail about the poster campaign. The poster campaign is intended to create a physical presence for the plan to balance digital engagement. Ms. Prieto then went over the youth engagement efforts. There will be two focus groups in July or August. Rob Blaney will help facilitate these virtual events. The focus groups will focus on the vision and topic areas.

Dan Maher shared that he does not think posters are the best method at this time and wondered if there is a better idea or if there are other thoughts. Jessica Porter added the importance of location to the conversation.

Shaw McDermott added the idea of having a celebratory component added to the posters that includes something like “Hey folks! This is your town. We need your input this week.”

Justin Humphreys asked what people are supposed to do after they have been intrigued by the posters and what is the method for getting information from them. Ms. Prieto responded by saying that there would be some type of messaging that would connect the person to the content itself, in a creative and fun way that is appealing to different people who having been a part of the process.

Mr. Fiala goes over next steps, which include:

- Refining draft vision statement;
- Defining the topic area problem statements;
- Discussing each topic area in a committee meeting;
- Defining topic area goals and strategies; and
- Facilitating a community conversation with each topic.

The next committee meeting will be held on July 21, 2020.