

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



Dedham Town Hall
26 Bryant Street
Dedham, MA 02026-4458
Phone 781-751-9242

Jeremy Rosenberger
Planning Director
jrosenberger@dedham-ma.gov



DEDHAM 2030 MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, July 21, 2020, Zoom

Present:

Jessica Porter Planning Board Member
Josh Donati, School Committee 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, Parks & Recreation Board Member
Jay O'Brien, Planning Board Member
Dieckmann Cogill, AICP, Transportation Planner

Not Present:

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

Jeremy Rosenberger, Planning Director, welcomed everyone to the 7th Master Plan Committee meeting. The meeting agenda items included the topics, the draft vision statement, meeting minutes, and a draft presentation. Mr. Rosenberger mentioned that Tye Donahue asked to resign and that Alix O'Connell will be representing the Parks & Recreation Board. Jessica Porter briefly went over how to use Zoom functions to participate in the meeting. The meeting was recorded, streamed on Facebook Live, and broadcasted on Dedham TV.

Josh Fiala, the Principal Planner at MAPC, introduced the main focus of the meeting – Economic Development. Mr. Fiala shared that the two surveys reached around 1,450 individuals, based on the unique IP addresses. Results from the survey were combined with the Visioning Workshop responses, and the answers were as follows:

Question 40: In what neighborhood do you live?

- Oakdale **109**
- East Dedham **70**
- Greenlodge, Sprague, Manor **67**
- Riverdale **64**
- Dedham Square/Dedham Village **37**
- West Dedham/Precinct 1 **18**
- Prefer not to answer **13**
- Do not live in Dedham **0**

Question 38: What age are you?

- 35 – 49: **142**
- 50 – 64: **111**
- 19 – 34: **70**
- 65+ **46**
- Prefer not to answer: **9**
- 0 – 18: **2**

Question 2: How close is Dedham for the vision you imagine for the Town? The town...

- ...needs some minor improvements **282**
- ...needs some major improvements **252**
- ...is far from my ideal vision **33**
- ...is close to my ideal vision **29**

Question 37: What master plan topic is most important to you?

- Public Health and Livability **78**
- Community Services and Facilities **76**
- Land Use **64**
- Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources **57**
- Transportation **47**
- Housing **41**
- Economic Development **40**
- Governance **25**
- Zoning **20**

Vision Statement

The Committee members discussed the draft vision statement.

Jay O'Brien had some issues with the vision statement and noted that he saw things that Dedham had already achieved. He recommended using language that includes the words "maintaining" and "continuing on." Mr. O'Brien noted that Dedham was the first to have public schools, public corn mills, and road systems. He believed the vision statement should state that a promise was made in the past and that Dedham will continue to maintain those promises and will continue to move forward on doing the things that have already been achieved.

Andrew Tittler commented that this vision statement seemed very generic to him. He said you could substitute the word Dedham for the word of pretty much any city or town in the Commonwealth in this vision statement, and it would read just as smoothly. He continued by stating that there was nothing in the vision statement that references Dedham in particular and that speaks particularly to this Town's ideals, history, etc. Mr. Tittler added that Dedham had the first tax-supported public school and that Dedham's inhabitants were the first to make a public investment in infrastructure in the form of having Mother Brook in the 17th century. Mr. Tittler believes the vision statement could be more specific to Dedham's particular history and circumstances.

Josh Donati echoed Mr. Tittler's comments about specificity. Mr. Donati added that the Committee should be mindful of painting a complete picture in terms of the vision and ensuring that people's feelings about the past are acknowledged. Mr. Donati shared that balance is important and that it would go a long way to include what makes Dedham unique.

Mr. Rosenberger reminded Committee members that Dedham's history can be weaved into the draft vision statement and that the vision statement is fluid and flexible and will change over time.

Nathan Gauthier shared that most vision statements could apply to any town. He did not like the sound of the first sentence and would like it to be more ambitious.

Jessica Porter commented that the vision statement will evolve and will be a dynamic statement as more data is gathered from the community and as the objectives are refined. Ms. Porter added that she liked the framing around how some of the historical accomplishments, previously mentioned, were really about making bold decisions for the well-being of the community. Ms. Porter wondered if there was a way to capture that in the upfront part, which would help set the tone around what Dedham is, its history, and what will be planned going forward.

Alix O'Connell stated that the vision statement may not be the right place to insert Dedham's history, but that it would be in the plan itself. She felt that there was extra verbiage that could be removed. She continued by sharing that the vision statement could be

strengthened by being a little bit more straightforward. Ms. O’Connell added how important it is to address the needs of residents, even if the Committee doesn’t necessarily see it.

Shaw McDermott agreed with some of the other Committee members. He believed that having a frame which talks about how Dedham weaved its way through the history of New England and Massachusetts is in order. Dedham has been part of some of the significant events of American history, and some of those parts have not been so noble. Mr. McDermott believed that having some historical references would be extremely attractive as a foundation for the vision of the future.

Dieckmann Cogill agreed with most of what other Committee members mentioned. She cautioned about putting history in a vision since the vision is forward-looking, however, referencing some of the history makes sense.

Mr. O’Brien discussed Brookline’s vision statement from 2015. He shared that Dedham’s progress is also something that had come from its past, and it’s a continuation of being a rich community.

Mr. McDermott added that there is no reference in the vision statement to all the natural beauty that Dedham has, as reflected through the Charles River, Wilson Mountain, Mother Brook, etc.

Mr. Fiala stated that he would take another shot at refining the vision statement, based on everyone’s comments before anything is done in a public setting. He suggested that this be reviewed again at the next meeting. Mr. Fiala shared that there would be a seven meeting series setup that will discuss a topic and will include a presentation from one of the staff members at MAPC. The last meeting will be a joint session between community services and governance.

Topic Area: Economic Development

The meeting shifter over to the presentation on Economic Development by Jen Kaplan, from MAPC. She focused on four main questions:

1. Who lives in Dedham?
2. Who works in Dedham?
3. Where is there opportunity in Dedham?
4. What’s next for Dedham?

Committee members and members of the public asked questions regarding the presentation.

Mr. Tittler asked: Where do the other 45% work? Mr. Fiala stated that 55% work in the priority development areas and that 45% do not. Ms. Kaplan guessed that they work in the local business districts and other areas that have clusters of economic activity but weren’t included as priority areas.

Dimitria Sullivan, Select Board member, mentioned that she didn't see any data for Riverdale, Oakdale Square. She asked where those areas of Town are. Ms. Kaplan stated that they were not included within the economic development priority areas and may not have been due to the priority areas being based on the business count, employee count, community feedback, and historical studies.

Ms. Porter asked Ms. Kaplan to talk a little more about the local business districts, particularly Bridge Street and Oakdale. Ms. Porter mentioned that Bridge Street seemed vulnerable for more development. If we are to accomplish some of the things in the vision statement, we will need to be encouraging the neighborhood's economic development centers to increase walkability. Ms. Porter wanted to know how the distinction was made between a local area and a priority area.

Ms. Kaplan stated that the local business districts themselves are a designation through Dedham's zoning, and that's where she initially gathered that data. She added that if there is any interest in hyper-local models of economic development and thinking about strategic growth in that sense, those are the next steps that should be spoken about. To avoid confusion, Mr. Fiala added that the metrics should be dubbed economic activity areas, rather than priority areas. The Committee will be establishing priorities with these discussions, and priorities have not yet, necessarily, been established.

Meg Duncan, Martin Bates Street, asked if there were any employee counts. Ms. Kaplan shared that if they are not a public institution, they should be included in the employee counts.

Ms. Cogill was surprised by the high unemployment rate and was curious about how Dedham compared to surrounding communities rather than Massachusetts as a whole. Ms. Kaplan stated that that was something she did not do within this presentation, but she will get back with more information. Mr. Rosenberger asked if there was more current data regarding the unemployment rate. Ms. Kaplan will get back to the group with more updated information.

Ms. Kaplan wrapped up the presentation and recapped some initial conversations that would hopefully inform and get the conversation started about what the next steps are for the Committee as they think about the economic development future of Dedham.

- Income, geographic and racial disparities
- The in-migration of workers who live outside of Dedham but work in Dedham
- Economic activity:
 - Retail office corridor of the Route 1 North to South down to the Corporate Center
 - The industrial arm from East Dedham Square to Readville

Committee members asked questions:

Ms. Cogill asked if Dedham could be celebrated as a place where you can have a high income or a low income and still buy, live, and participate in this community. She felt that

inclusiveness and economic diversity is a positive thing. Ms. Kaplan said there is economic diversity in Dedham and that economic development doesn't occur as a silo. It is at the intersection of housing, transportation, public space, resources, and amenities. Ms. Kaplan then asked: Can we celebrate this diversity of economic diversity in Dedham and observe that there may be some spatial disparities around other amenities because there are people who are very low income or very high income?

Ms. Porter questioned how much the Committee should be looking at where there was existing activity and focus there versus areas where there is a potential for there to be more development and where the Committee would want to welcome that and where they would want to be thoughtful about how to control it. Ms. Kaplan responded that it's important to look at multiple areas and that it also comes down to resources because we are thinking about a capital system. Ms. Kaplan asked the Committee, "So do you want to focus all of your resources on an area that really has the potential but doesn't have much going on now? Or do you want to pair that while also looking at how you can continue to leverage areas in your Town that already have a strong commercial tax base?" Ms. Kaplan believed it was probably a combination of both. She commented, "Look at all the economic development priority areas – they're determined because they have high economic activity right now."

Mr. O'Brien expressed that there many people from the East Dedham neighborhood area that work in the businesses around that area. Mr. O'Brien mentioned that a priority of the Planning Board, when new businesses come to Town, is to ensure that they are hiring locally.

Mr. Rosenberger expressed that it's good to try to offer folks jobs; however, as the graphic showed, these retail jobs do have employees who are probably are not living in Dedham, at least not without some housing subsidy. This is a good illustration of how folks can live in Dedham, making a certain wage and based on the housing costs.

Mr. McDermott wrote a paper on the major drivers of the Massachusetts economy in the 2030s. One section he wrote about was called a Triumph on Biology. It talks about the aggregation of capital based on McKinsey and the Brookings Institution studies and other. His point relative to Dedham was that the cost of doing business in major centers that have attracted the forward-looking knowledge-based industries has gotten extraordinarily expensive. Mr. McDermott's second point was that healthcare would be increasingly decentralized in its delivery over time. The New England Baptist and Harvard Medical Faculty physicians have the facility on the edge of the Dedham Corporate Center, where they're delivering care that otherwise would be doing in the major tertiary care centers. There are industrial buildings around that could be subject to redevelopment. Mr. McDermott believed that the Dedham Corporate Center, being a note of a transit unit, could be a possible site for some of the knowledge-based industries of today and the future.

Ms. Porter expressed that if we were to attract more of a knowledge economy here, what does that do to our existing neighbors who are housing burdened who may not have access to that knowledge economy and aren't's going to change their roles necessarily? And does that have the potential to be a less inclusive community because all of a sudden, we're just going to keep increasing housing costs? Ms. Porter commented that if a concerted effort is going to be made to bring in a knowledge economy, we'd also want to be continuing to work on housing prices, and maybe also look at bringing in other jobs as well. She mentioned that you have to be careful not to commit to one particular sector because it could run the risk of increasing gentrification and driving our existing residents out. Ms. Kaplan commented that if it is important for the Town to become a knowledge industry hub, while not displacing folks who are already cost-burdened, then the intentional allocation of resources should be considered to maintain folks that are cost-burdened within the Town with access to resources and amenities.

Margaret Adams asked, "What are the ways that you address disparities in equity and income and without leading to gentrification?" Mr. Fiala responded that there isn't a silver bullet or easy answer discovered, and to avoid unintended consequences, the techniques that seem to show promise are the ones that are focused on workforce development and increasing the human capital of certain populations directly and giving and building skills that are needed to increase the earning abilities of these groups. Mr. Fiala believed that looking at the housing side of the equation and the production of affordable housing in the community is also important.

Mr. O'Brien commented that it seemed that if you're successful, you almost become a victim of your success. He gave an example of the technology companies in Portland and how rents must have increased when these types of companies arrived. Mr. O'Brien stated that if we're going to entice certain types of businesses to come to Dedham, the Committee should be forward to set certain types of real estate off to stabilize the rent for success on enticing businesses to come here. Ms. Kaplan mentioned that there are communities that are also discussing, given the dilute in the office market right now, using that as an opportunity for strategic investment to create a larger housing stock and that these are all paths that can be pursued.

Ms. Kaplan ended her presentation.

Mr. Fiala commented that the goal, based upon the previous conversations, Ms. Kaplan's presentation, MAPC would develop a one-page, front and back, summary of Economic Development. This will be circulated back to the Committee for feedback. At a certain point, this summary will become polished enough to share with the public to get their input and engagement. Transportation will be the topic of the next meeting, and there will be a similar presentation from Mr. Fiala's transportation colleagues, Travis and Mara. These topic area discussions will go through the end of the year.

Next Steps

Other next steps to discuss included youth engagement results, the poster campaign, and continuing to define these goals and strategies as described. Carolina Prieto, MAPC's

Community Engagement Specialist, along with Rob Blaney of the Dedham Youth Commission, Jessica Porter, and Michelle Tinger, organized some of the middle school and high school youth in the Town and got them into a virtual youth session. Each session attracted about 14 to 16 participants of those middle school and high school cohorts. Next, the poster campaign will consist of physical posters that would be printed out. Each of the posters will be put in different places around Town for people to engage with. They would involve the ability for people to scan a QR code, which would take them directly to a specific website, which is linked to our bigger project website that would allow people to enter a response to these prompts. Text message responding will also occur here. Everyone can still refer to DesigningDedham.org for more information.

The meeting minutes from 6/15/2020 were reviewed and approved by the Committee.

The next meeting will be on August 18th at 7pm.

Members of the community were invited to take part in the public comment. No comments were made, and the meeting was adjourned.