

TOWN OF ALTON  
MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE (MP)  
MINUTES OF 2020  
DECEMBER 9, 2020

APPROVED

Members Present: Paul LaRochelle, Selectmen's Rep.  
Kelly Sullivan, Citizen Member

Others Present: Jessica A. Call, Town Planner  
Amelia Cate, Recording Secretary

Others Attending Remotely: Bob Regan, Planning Board, Chair  
Tom Hoopes, Planning Board  
Russ Wilder, Planning Board  
Ron Rubbico, Citizen Member

Mr. Regan read the remote attendance instructions into the record.

*“UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE: To keep our members and staff safe, and to comply with RSA 91-A, the COVID-19 State of Emergency, and the Governor's Orders on restrictions at public gatherings, the Town of Alton is holding "remote audio participation meetings". If you cannot attend remotely, please contact the Planning Department at (603) 875-2162 or [planner@alton.nh.gov](mailto:planner@alton.nh.gov) for further instructions. To remotely attend the meeting, visit our website: [www.alton.nh.gov](http://www.alton.nh.gov) for telephone access and Zoom access instructions listed under News and Announcements on the home page the day of the meeting. If you are having difficulties accessing the remote meeting, please call (603) 507-1002.*

*\*As a reminder, at the Master Plan Committee's October 7, 2020, meeting, the Committee voted to temporarily suspend in-person public attendance. If the public has any comments on anything discussed at the meeting, they can email their comments to the Planning Department at [planner@alton.nh.gov](mailto:planner@alton.nh.gov), or mail them to: Town of Alton Master Plan Committee, PO Box 659, Alton, NH 03809.”*

Roll Call Attendance

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. +/-

Approval of Agenda

Mr. Regan started off the meeting with having a discussion on finalizing the RFP. Mrs. Sullivan thought that the RFP was well put together. Mr. Regan stated that the bottom of the first page, before the bulleted items, “that will influence the how the town will develop” delete the first “the”. The Committee thought that all of the changes proposed as last month's meeting had been implemented. Mr. Rubbico thought it was written well, but had a couple of questions. He asked about the background section, which stated, “The primary vision for the town is to retain its character while accommodating external changes that will influence how the town will develop.” He thought that the Committee would be updating their current Plan, and was part of this to reconsider their vision? Mr. Regan suggested that the Committee do a formal inspection of the existing Plan, which was where not everything got fixed, but an opportunity to identify things that looked okay, things that needed a discussion with the Committee, and things that should be excluded or rewritten. He thought that the current Vision statement was still valid and probably would not change that much. Mr. Hoopes stated that the Vision and the body of the Plan had to be in alignment with

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the Zoning Ordinance. If changes took place in the Master Plan that did not agree with what was in the Vision, then that needed to change as well.

Mr. Rubbico shared that he had read several other Master Plans and they were heavy with text, and he thought that the Committee should really make sure that the document engaged the town so it would not just be a documents that sat on a shelf. Mr. Hoopes shared a three (3) sentence definition of the Vision that was supplied by the Office of State Planning that the town used when they wrote the existing Vision, which was, "The Vision, this mandatory section serves to direct the other sections of the Plan. This section shall contain a section of statements that articulate the desires of the citizens affected by the Master Plan not only for their locality, but for the region and the whole state. It shall contain a set of guiding principles and priorities to implement that vision." Mr. Rubbico referred to Wolfeboro's Vision page and it all fit on one page. It made him interested in wanting to find out more about what Wolfeboro was doing. He thought that maybe the Committee could consider condensing the current one. Mr. Regan noted that he and Ms. Call went to the presentation that Wolfeboro had for their Master Plan. He thought that the RFP should include something that stated the consultant should recommend or facilitate what the format would be.

Mr. Rubbico shared that he collected several links of other resources that the Committee may be interested in that he would share with Ms. Call. Mr. Hoopes both stated that everything should be going through Ms. Call so that way an accidental meeting was not taking place. Mr. Rubbico was curious if the Committee had a sense of what it cost other towns to get the Plan completed. He thought that it might be feasible to ask other towns what they paid. Mr. LaRochelle stated that the warrant article was for \$25,000, and that was only intended to be to start the process because it could cost up to \$80,000-\$90,000 total. Mr. Regan stated that the Committee might have to go back to the town meeting to ask for additional funding to finalize the Plan. Mr. Rubbico pointed out that when reading the RFP, it stated that the consultant would be assisting for an 18 month period of time, and it might be mistaken that the Committee was asking the consultant to work for 18 months to develop a Master Plan; it was not clear to him. He thought that maybe it appeared that a "Phase 1" was for the 18 months. Ms. Call thought the same thing. She thought that by not divulging that the town had \$25,000, how would the consultant know what to put in their proposal.

Mr. LaRochelle pointed out that there were a few Selectmen that were not in agreement because they were not sure that the Committee even needed a consultant at all; they thought that the town was capable of doing it on their own. Mrs. Sullivan wanted to go on record stating that the town could not do this on their own. She assisted in the All in for Alton profile and she assisted in the current Master Plan. Ms. Call stated that was why a Master Plan Committee was created because it was a lot of work. Mr. Rubbico stated that if the RFP was written to clarify the scope of work, then it would be better to do that over a three (3) month period that way it would outline things like the process, the overall objectives, the scope for the entire plan, and whatever else that may be included. That way the Committee would have clarity early on, assess the fit with the consultant, and then have some time to make adjustments with that feedback so when it comes time with the full implementation, the Committee would be better armed with more information. Mr. Regan stated that there were time constraints because there was only one town meeting where budgetary issues were addressed. Ms. Call pointed out that in the first paragraph in the RFP, it talked about the 18 months, and if there was a proposed shorter time span then that language needed to be changed. Mr. Wilder thought that there should be an opportunity to propose an additional warrant article because he was not sure that the town had the capability to put the whole plan together along with the graphics that would be engaging and make a difference. He stated that some preplanning needed to occur

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in order to be aware of how much it would cost to produce the actual document in the end. Mr. Rubbico thought that having some deliverables in about five (5) months' time would be reasonable, but he did not want to see a booklet dropped off at the end, he wanted it to be as interactive as possible, and to have some intermediate milestones. During the first meeting with the consultant, a list of dates/milestones should be drawn up. Mr. LaRochelle thought that within three (3) months the consultant should be able to tell the Committee what direction they were headed in and how long they thought the process would take, and how much more funding would be needed. Ms. Call pointed out that she would change the first sentence under "Purpose" to state six (6) months instead of "18" months. Mr. Wilder pointed out what Mr. Rubbico stated that under "Background", instead of "The primary vision.....", state "The current vision of the town is to retain the character.....". Ms. Call would also add page number to the RFP.

Mr. Hoopes wanted the Committee to look at Page 2. #5 where it stated, "This is partially due to the high assessed value of residential properties in town." He thought that it should state the "high assessed lakeside residential properties." Mr. Regan had a discussion with the Town Assessor and the Assessor mentioned that the tax rate next year might be under \$10.00. The assessment might be going up by 25% for all properties in town. The assessed value was not just the lakefront, it was the whole town. Mr. Wilder thought that the second sentence should be deleted, "The fact is that we have one of the lowest property tax rates in the State of New Hampshire."

Mr. Hoopes wanted the Committee to look at Page 4, that everything should be submitted to Ms. Call. Mr. Wilder noted that the RFPs usually went through the Selectmen's office. Mr. Regan pointed out that on Page 3, it had a "TBD" about project completion. He thought it should state "engagement completion" instead. Mr. Wilder thought it should state, "each work task including key dates in a timeline for the duration of this contract." Ms. Call thought that sounded okay because the Committee was clarifying the six (6) month period at the beginning of the RFP.

Mr. Regan was hoping that the RFP would be published in January of 2021. He wondered what the submission date would be. It was suggested to be 30 days, which would be Monday, February 15<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Call asked about the question submittal deadline, which was Monday, February 1<sup>st</sup>, and it was noted that all answers to questions would be submitted to all bidders. She also noted that the remaining sections in the RFP had already been looked at by Town Counsel and he agreed with the format.

Mr. Wilder thought that the RFP should be given to bigger firms as well because it seemed that the consultants on the list were smaller companies. Ms. Call stated that she compiled a list of potential consultants by sending out an email to Planlink last year when the CIP Committee had presented the warrant article, and again just recently and she mostly got the same names. She explained that just because they were listed once that did not mean that she received several email responses for each one of them. Ms. Call stated that the RFP would get sent out to the four (4) consultants on the list, plus it would be posted on the Town's website, and the NHMA website as well, so it got out there more than just the four (4) on our list. She noted that two (2) consultants had contacted her and were very interested in looking at our RFP.

The Committee's next meeting was Wednesday, January 6, 2021, at 6:00 pm.

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Mr. Regan had an idea to have each Committee member perform a formal inspection on the Vision section starting on Page 2 of the Master Plan up to Page 11 to identify what needs work, and what has value. He did not think that they needed to reinvent the wheel. Each paragraph would be given a designation of, "Okay", "Delete", or "Rework". He wanted the members to be prepared to share each other's notes at the next meeting on January 6<sup>th</sup>. This exercise may contain some valuable information to share with the consultant. Ms. Call asked each member to send her their comments so she could compile it in a spreadsheet and then share it before the next meeting so they could all see what each other thought. Mr. Rubbico thought that this information would be relevant, but if the Committee limited themselves to thinking that a paragraph was ok, that would limit the thinking that the Vision would be in paragraph form like it is currently. Mr. Regan stated that it was not necessarily how it was it was physically presented, it was more the idea of what was presented.

Mr. Rubbico wondered if part of the engagement process for the Committee was to engage with members of the town with what they thought the Vision should be. Mr. Regan stated that the consultant would help them with that. Mrs. Sullivan stated that it was the townspeople that contributed to the Master Plan. Ms. Call stated that Mrs. Sullivan had a good idea that she brought up during her interview that the Committee interview the different associations in town by getting a point person to engage everyone, and then be able to gather all of the information. Mr. LaRoche stated it was important to get a consensus from everyone to see what direction the town would be going in, and what they needed and did not need. Mr. Rubbico stated that he thought that the process Wolfeboro used to engage their community was excellent and thought that the Committee might take some of that into consideration, not that he wanted Alton to be like Wolfeboro, but because he was impressed with their process.

The minutes were being transcribed and would hopefully be available to approve at the next meeting.

Mr. Regan asked each member their final thoughts.

Mr. Wilder thought the Committee made good progress tonight. He appreciated Mr. Rubbico jumping in with some fresh ideas. Mr. Wilder was confident that on January 6<sup>th</sup>, the Committee would be ready to kick off the RFP.

Mr. Rubbico thought that sounded great. He appreciated the fact that the Committee took his questions into consideration. He clarified that the next meeting was January 6<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Wilder asked if it would be at 5:30 pm instead of 6:00 pm. Ms. Call stated that she could not attend at 5:30 pm meeting, so it would have to be 6:00 pm.

Mr. Hoopes was refreshed by the fact that it seemed to be a lot of open minds approaching this from a pleasant point of view, and that they felt free to interchange with ideas. He stated that the dumb question was the question never asked.

Mrs. Sullivan agreed with everything previous stated. She appreciated the open minded round table discussion and liked how people brought new ideas and a different perspective to the table. She was confident that the RFP would get released after the next meeting.

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Mr. LaRochelle thought that this Committee has been fantastic and thought that this group worked well together. He thought that everyone had good ideas and being able to bounce those ideas off one another helped our progress. He thought that we had a good team leader and a good planning leader, and that the Committee was off to a good start. He thanked everyone for their input because it was very important.

Ms. Call wanted to clarify with the Committee that she would be meeting with Liz Dionne, Town Administrator, to go over the RFP to have ready for the Committee's January 6<sup>th</sup> meeting. She stated that she appreciated each and every Committee member with assisting in getting the RFP together so she did not have to do it alone.

Mr. Regan noted that he was all about consensus, and even though consensus did not always mean agree or compromise, it meant that everyone understood and accepted how they got there, and he thought that they were getting there. He thought everything was all good and thanked everyone.

**At 7:20 p.m. +/- Mr. Wilder MOVED to adjourn the meeting.  
Mrs. Sullivan seconded the motion.**

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica A. Call  
Town Planner

Minutes approved as amended: April 29, 2021