



TOWN OF ADAMS

SELECT BOARD WORKSHOP MINUTES

SATURDAY, September 12, 2015 – 12:00 PM
HOOSAC VALLEY REGIONAL SCHOOL
125 SAVOY ROAD, CHESHIRE MA

On the above date the **Board of Selectmen** held a workshop meeting at the **Hoosac Valley Regional School** at 12:00 p.m. **Chairman Richard Blanchard** presided the meeting. Present were, **Members Joseph Nowak and John Duval**. Absent were *Vice Chairman Jeffrey Snoonian* and *Member Arthur Harrington*. Also in attendance were **Town Administrator Tony Mazzucco**, and **Collins Center Consultants Monica, Sarah and Cam**.

The Select Board Meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Strategic Plan Discussion

The Select Board reviewed the tabletop charts created by participants in the first Strategic Plan Session earlier in the day at *Hoosac Valley High School*.

Collins Center Staff reviewed the Strategic Planning Session with the Board. Board Members noted how productive the process was, and how surprised at both how many people participated and how many things were things that the Board had already discussed. The World Café design was praised. It was noted that the more people that participate, the stronger the plan is and that it energizes progress.

The twenty to thirty year old age group of the population that was noted as being absent and it was suggested that this age group be targeted before the next meeting to find out why they stayed in the area and got a job here, or why they look for work elsewhere. This age group is more challenging to engage, and using an online service like *SurveyMonkey* would be ideal for this group. The slides used in the presentation are the property of the Town and can be utilized to do other events with to try to engage this age group or high school students.

Repeated topics and themes came up and were reviewed. They included themes like the recreational outdoors, revitalizing downtown, preserving the natural beauty of the area, developing the Greylock Glen and tourism, creating more jobs to keep college students from leaving, preserving the small town feel, educational and school advancement, having a safe place to live, housing stock revival, the addition of cultural venues, and the historical relevance. Other items that came up were changing the bylaws and making it easy for businesses to start in town.

Collins Center Staff Monica pointed out that Adams has a strong downtown core surrounded by phenomenal hills erupting every way you go and this is a great physical opportunity already here. Beauty and historic intensity was created from the downtown area because there was a lot of activity.

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Assets

The town's assets were identified as its beauty, the downtown, historic architecture and the history of both its people and culture. Also noted were its small town feel, business environment, cultural venue and arts.

An observation was made that the community that doesn't have an identity that people want to support, or vision or goal to get behind, other than youth and high school athletic teams. A vision needs to be identified.

When Adams matures, it will be a more welcoming and diverse community, with a vibrant downtown. The town would have places where people would gather for food and have experiential gatherings, and every need would be able to be provided for in the downtown area.

Culture and Arts

Culture and Arts were discussed as being able to lift up their community because artists have more energy. In the short term this is the best opportunity to get people in the community until there are more jobs to attract people.

Artist infrastructure

Regionally Adams is between the Clark Institute and Mass MoCA, and other options in South County, so it is a place where artists feel welcome. Adams has an inspiring historical environment. By working with neighboring communities that already have art venues, Adams can work with them to help become the "North Berkshire" for Arts. This would attract people from Boston to stay for multiple days and create a joint marketing attraction. Each area would have a piece of something to look at.

Regionalization

Small towns are protective and don't like to regionalize but it is an important part of helping one another and not being an island. Adams can be the hub of the network, and already is centrally located geographically.

Transportation Infrastructure

The *Massachusetts Turnpike* immediately grabs tourists into Great Barrington, Lenox, and Lee. Those coming from upstate New York go to Williamstown and North Adams. If people are given a reason to come here and have a great time, they will have a reason to come back.

Jobs

Jobs were a frequent question, mostly revolving around what good paying jobs there are in the area and how to get the economy going.

Economic Development

Adams must be ready for economic development because wanting it is not being ready. It is important to recruit B2B, bio-technology and medical technology businesses. A business that makes a product and needs lower overhead cost may recruit more economically from residents here, which is an area that people want to go to for environmental attraction and quality of life.



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Adams is not that far from New York City or Boston. Businesses are looking for quality labor and have to move to where people want to be. People want to be where they go out to lunch and see music on the street, and if they are happy in their environment they statistically work longer hours. One large business will not be the answer, because if one business hires 100 people and goes out of business it seriously impacts the town. It is better to have a number of smaller businesses with 10 people each.

Economic Development Commission

The *Economic Development Commission* is being developed to think of 'out of the box' ways to bring business forward. Medical marijuana, having a water-bottling plant and a slaughterhouse were discussed as options for creating jobs. If there are no jobs, anything new is a 100% addition to the economy.

Clean Energy and Environmental Sustainability

The water quality in this area is good and food processing historically needs a lot of good water. This area is moving toward being designated a green community and creating more solar power and green energy may help with business development and converting land to green energy use. Creating environmental sustainability will attract the cutting edge of clean energy. Having a good aquifer is important for future generations. The town's best asset is the Rail Trail right now, and its carbon footprint is pretty low.

Zoning and Bylaws

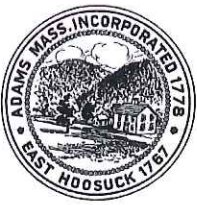
The Zoning and bylaws in Adams were written in early 1980's and need to be reviewed and updated. It was recommended to the Board to eliminate the parking meter requirement in the historic downtown. A study of the purchasing patterns in the area would determine sales and demographic data and see whether purchasing goes out of the community. A "Leakage Analysis" would be helpful to determine whether or not to change what is offered. Having a variety of stores in the downtown would draw foot traffic, but the Downtown has to change from the way it is. There are no places to go on the main street on a Friday or Saturday night, and the street is completely quiet. The Downtown area is not strong enough to be busy either daytime or night and opening one bar would be a start. The Town needs to do a full Charter review to support the Arts and Culture, Clean Energy, and the Downtown Revitalization.

Nature

The Bike Trail is growing, and the *Greylock Glen* and *Mount Greylock* are future opportunities for people who enjoy the outdoors. Once the *Greylock Glen* is developed it will be a great starting point for anything to do on the mountain like snowmobiling or four-wheeling. People from this area go to Canada to go snowmobiling because there isn't an option locally.

Mount Greylock

The Town is working hard on the *Greylock Glen*, which is the highest peak in the state. It is visited by a significant amount of people but though the mountain is in Adams, the roads leading up to it are in North Adams and Lanesborough. People who have access to the mountain will have access to the downtown. The intent is to build a campground with cabins and have the snowmaking capacity for cross-country skiing.



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Top Goals

The Top Goals identified from the community list included *Revitalizing the Downtown and the Economy; Supporting Arts, Culture and the Local History; Sustainability; Community that supports Families and Youth; Outdoor Recreation; Developing the Greylock Glen; and Housing and Property Maintenance.*

There are too many multi-family and older housing that cannot be brought back into circulation so the Town must take some of this stock off the inventory market. There is not much buildable land, and tearing down older buildings would create an opportunity to replace old housing with newer stock. Additionally, there needs to be a "Community Shrinking Study" done, because communities are taught how to grow but there is no plan on how to shrink.

Food and Agriculture

The agricultural base is not strong enough in Adams and there is no *Farm-to-Table* process. A suggestion was made to work with the restaurants in town to build this. The Agricultural Commission did not show much interest, and would need a group of 5 or 6 people. The Town could begin to foster a great partnership between restaurants and local farms by using locally produced foods and offering cooking classes. Adams has the third largest dairy farm in Berkshire County, but a couple others are on the edge of going out of business. There is one local orchard that provides produce to local markets. The Adams Agricultural Fair is only fair left in Berkshire County, and more can be done with it.

William Kolis, a local business owner, mentioned there had been several bus tours organized to bring people into town in the recent past, and the Ale House and Haflinger Haus are bringing outside people into town. He said there is little economy found on Park Street as the Firehouse Café is currently not operating and the Red Carpet has been for sale for two years with no bids. He pointed out that currently, there are ten projects on Park Street that are running into problems due to compliance issues, and currently nineteen vacant storefronts on Park Street. He said he felt there need to be attractions to bring people into the area and that the local government can create these opportunities, but he felt the Greylock Glen is not the answer. He said the local government needs to show people how to operate and needs to work with the people on Park Street regarding the code compliance problems to find ways around them, or to give them a reduction on rent or taxes. He also suggested doing requests for proposals and vetting those interested in the buildings to create more of a selection for the growth. He noted the level of traffic that goes through and suggested having something publicly showing success.

Going Forward

At the next Strategic Planning Session this work would be outlined in a coherent document. There will be three more tabletop exercises topics for the next sessions.

The Collins Center Staff was thanked for their time and work.



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ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Member Duval to adjourn

Second by Member Nowak

Unanimous vote

Motion passed

Meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary.

Joseph Nowak
Joseph Nowak, Member

Arthur Harrington, Member

John Duval
John Duval, Member

Jeffrey Snoonian, Vice Chairman

Richard Blanchard
Richard Blanchard, Chairman