



TOWN OF ADAMS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, April 27, 2016 – 6:00 PM
ADAMS TOWN HALL, 1st FLOOR, ADAMS, MA 01220

On the above date the **Board of Selectmen** and held a workshop at the **Adams Town Hall** at 6:00 p.m.

Chairman Richard Blanchard presided the meeting. Present were **Vice Chairman Jeffrey Snoonian**, **Members Joseph Nowak, John Duval and Arthur Harrington**. Also in attendance were **Town Administrator, Tony Mazzucco and Community Development Director, Donna Cesan**.

The Select Board Workshop was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS DISCUSSION

Strategic Plan Work

Community Development Director Cesan reviewed draft documents on the Strategic Plan topics for the evening. It was noted that this is not a 20-Year plan, but instead it is a 5-Year Strategic Plan not to do too much but instead to be strategic and think about what can be achieved. If the Greylock Glen can be achieved the downtown is no longer a problem. There are limited resources and the strategic plan decides what projects are prioritized. Employment and marketing the community may be given to a group to accomplish. Sub-Goal Strategies were discussed, including hospitality and tourism, as well as maximizing natural resources. It was noted that there was not a strong reflection of work that had already had begun and had strong progress on it.

Economic Development

The goal is to have a robust economy. A review of the previously approved 2013 *Economic Development Strategy* took place.

Implement the Greylock Glen

The Town is aggressively pursuing state funding for components of the *Greylock Glen* as a top priority. It is important that subsequent Boards of Selectmen and Town Administrators are on the same page because as members change new members must be educated and brought up to speed.

Coordinate Town Marketing

Adams being the home of the Greylock Ramble and Thunderbolt was discussed. Dialogue took place about the Town marketing itself as the hub of outdoor recreation and how the *Greylock Glen* facilitates that with the *Visitors Bureau* and *ProAdams*. If marketing is pushed too soon tourists may come and not find what there is to do. Parallel marketing in conjunction to the developments that are being made to the *Greylock Glen* would be coordinated with a companion piece to go with the Ashuwillticook Trail. Creating an implementation plan with short and long term actions was suggested. The Town website will be updated over the next year with a web host to support multiple pages for the Greylock Glen and Rail Trail to search for places to go and parking. Mt. Greylock is not being talked about enough as the tallest peak in the state and being in Adams so the Town should be open to opportunities to utilize this information. Having the Town tagged as "The Home of Mt. Greylock" was also recommended.



TOWN OF ADAMS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

Continue the Extension of the Branch Line

The State is having meetings to discuss the Transformation Investment Plan where priority funding project decisions are made. To make sure they understand this is a priority, a request was made to submit a letter with formal comments, and having a strong Adams showing was urged. This would be a Capital Investment Plan (CIP), not a Transportation Investment Plan (TIP). North Adams Mayor Alcombright met with Lt. Governor Polito today regarding this and the Town of Adams is aggressively pursuing state and federal funding and also working with Jay Ash to strategize on what can be done. Director Cesan is continuously applying for grants. There are also several meetings for the Adams Branch Line, and hopefully this will make a difference.

Create New Lodging Options for Visitors

The Town of Adams is not likely to be involved in creating lodging other than the Greylock Glen because the Town doesn't want to be a landlord for anything other than that project as Adams is the developer.

Expand Marketing and Promotion of Events in the Community

There will be a Warrant Article for funds for this.

Visitor Population

The next strategy is maintaining existing facilities and expanding the visitor population in Adams. The Town will continue to operate and maintain the Visitors Center, there will be an increasing opportunity as the train comes through to sell tickets through the Visitors Center and use it to cut down the need for parking at the Greylock Glen. An upgrade to the Visitors Center parking lot is being worked on now. The Town will develop new parking centers on Hoosac and Winter Streets because 15,000 new visitors in the downtown will need to be accommodated. Discussion on where parking can be provided, including the option of angled parking with meters was proposed.

Signage

Improved signage and tourism information at the Visitors Center along the Adams Station and Ashuwillticook Trail was outlined, and having a kiosk at the Visitors Center. In preparation for the trains coming, the Town can direct people to restaurants and local businesses, and is at the critical junction now. Discussion on appropriate signage took place. Grant funding sources were exhausted, and some existing signs may have a retrofit option for better visibility.

Rail Trail Extension to Downtown

Extending the Rail Trail to the Downtown area has had pretty good success and was the reason the Visitors Center was put in. As the trail goes further north in this next segment and into North Adams it will increase the number of people visiting.

Positive Business Environment

A positive business environment will provide business growth and the Town is working with businesses to establish a business-friendly approach. A designated committee of the Board of Selectmen could meet with businesses to identify impediments to starting and maintaining business. The Town can help create a positive environment but not teach people how to grow their business. The *Economic Development Commission* may be able to help, and to support *ProAdams* in their work.



TOWN OF ADAMS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

The first step is to inventory existing Downtown retail space and to create a business recruitment program. A summer intern could do parts of it. Once identified, the Town can look at what spaces are not code compliant and what the impediments are to having them host businesses. A task force can be created with Board Members and Community Development staff. Work can continue to move forward with property owners on improving and maintaining downtown building stock with code enforcement and façade programs on the *Polish Mile* and the gateways to the Downtown. The Town can host a meeting with town businesses to discuss strengths and weaknesses. A Task Force can be established to work with the Fire District to expand the district. An active train rail line will expand and support businesses as well. The Town's pavement management program is being updated and using Chapter 90 funds to address priorities. Continued active participation with MPO will help make sure projects are on the TIP. A suggestion was made for the Board to greet new businesses moving into town. There can be facilitation of the creation of small and home-based businesses with amendments to the Zoning bylaws. Work can be done with Berkshire Enterprises to help those hoping to open businesses. A past series of workshops were held with positive results, and the Town can offer a catalog of small business resources to encourage success. A brochure that is underway will be completed and coordinated with local booster programs for a "shop local" campaign. Employment opportunities can be identified for this area and special attention can be given to green businesses, wind energy, and other options. The Economic Development Commission has a subcommittee for this but this project is on hold due to the solar cap. The Town could also market Adams to businesses that use high quality water in their business.

High Speed Internet

The infrastructure of Adams is inadequate for internet speed, and the final mile of broadband will require considerable funds to accomplish. There is high speed internet access through the Downtown corridor, but it is spotty in other areas. The Town can get higher speed internet in the Downtown and Business Park. The last mile focuses on high speed in residences all over town. Fiber optic comes through the state but does not come to local people. There are communities that still have dial-up.

Develop Downtown

The goal is to strengthen the Downtown to be vibrant from day into evening. An increase in housing units in the downtown area to include residential and mixed use buildings would be desired and would address a lot of issues. Current Zoning classifications in the Downtown don't work, and a Zoning bylaw amendment would re-designate the Zoning classification, which could then do an overlay. The Town would work on a bylaw and go to Town Meeting after approval from the Attorney General's Office to be sure it meets all requirements. A 40R designation and its process were reviewed. Façade and signage improvements can be made to other areas than Downtown, and a suggestion was made for the Town to create a fund from Economic Development to offer this. Adams has the same needs as Pittsfield but funding availability is different because of the size of the community. Continued work can be done by putting in signage like "Share the Road" and installing bike racks to make Downtown Adams bike friendly. There are currently bike lanes on Park Street which can continue down Hoosac Street to the Rail Trail. Signage can be installed at the Visitors Center, Adams Station, and Armory Court for food establishments and other amenities available.

Town Maintenance

A goal is to provide a high level of maintenance to assure Town attractiveness. This is a concern with DPW budget cuts.



TOWN OF ADAMS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

Improved Property Conditions

The Town can work with property owners to improve property conditions. Well maintained housing restores character, is available across income levels and will make Adams a more balanced community. One Member suggested adopting a bylaw for the Town to make repairs when property owners fail to comply. The Board of Health has some ability to do this in very egregious situations. The Board of Health and Board of Selectmen could work together to look at the Town's housing stock and inspection services from a broader scope. There are a significant number of multi-family housing units. The Town could actively enforce registration with vacant properties but is currently not enforcing it. The Board was urged to consider establishing a special revolving Slum and Blight Remediation Fund which could be funded by fees from a Board of Health requirement to file for a \$100 fee to provide for additional cleanup and to manage lead and asbestos costs. The Town could actively pursue a housing rehabilitation program and add selective demolition. Support could be given for the work the Treasurer has done with tax title properties. Building fees could be raised to add the cost for town building maintenance, small unexpected issues like the boiler repair at the Registry of Deeds, or doing studies to tear buildings down or get bid documents. The Slum and Blight Remediation Fund could be used for environmental studies and to do work on properties to clean, board them up, and cut utilities.

Promote Live/Work Housing

There has been a belief that there are impediments to Live/Work Housing, but that has not been found to be the case and there are no proposals to date. Research can be done to see if any changes need to be made to building codes. There could be about forty viable locations for live/work space that can be assessed, and a special permit is needed to have a Live/Work space. The Zoning Board has not turned anyone down yet, and work can be done with local realtors to discuss how to market these spaces. The Adams Arts Advisory Board may be able to do regular workshops to promote this option. The Building Commissioner should be consulted with to see what needs to happen for Live/Work situation to go forward. Once certified to be a certain type of space, the only problem that exists is when it is changed. An example was given of a painting studio turning into a metalwork art studio which requires welding and has different fire hazards. Building Codes are based on a hazard index due to what happens in the building, and whether or not it is open to the public.

It was mentioned that if buildings are shut down a memo sent out to the Board of Selectmen to inform them would be helpful. The Town rarely revokes a permit or forces a "stop work" order.

Natural Environment

This topic needs more work, but the goal is to be a good steward of the town's natural resources for the next generations. Director Cesan will go through the highlights of recommendations on this. The suggestion of creating additional open space came from a Planning meeting. The Town could work with other communities to find the best maintenance of the bike trail. Flood control and mowing in the downtown is the Town's responsibility but the rest is the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Adams can increase its profile as a farming community by providing more visibility for products across the state, creating a farmers' market and reinvigorating the Agricultural Commission. The Agricultural Commission now has new members and needs someone to work with them.



TOWN OF ADAMS BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

Town Charter Changes

Changes to the Town Charter were discussed in regards to creating a better government without impacting services. It is a huge process so it is best to get all of it done at once.

Action Responsibilities

It is important to identify who is responsible for the action items, and historically Town staff ends up with these responsibilities. In the past the action items were implemented into department work programs, and these items would also get integrated into the Capital Plan. Once identified, the champions for each action item would give regular progress reports. A yearly analysis was also recommended to have every item looked at.

Block Grant

The Board needs another workshop meeting to discuss the block grant. There are multiple activities, but too many activities that don't have enough impact.

Evaluations

Town Administrator Mazzucco advised that Department Head evaluations will take place in July, and he hopes the Town Administrator evaluation done by the Board will take place as well. He noted it is prudent to identify where we are and what we have done.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Certificate of Announcement

Chairman Blanchard notified the public and the Board of a *Certificate of Announcement* that the *Department of Conservation and Recreation* needed regarding the acquirement of property. The announcement was read aloud.

Upcoming Election

Member Duval thanked Chairman Blanchard and Member Nowak for their service on the Board of Selectmen and wished them well in the election.

Town Meeting

Town Meeting date has been set for June 20th.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion made to adjourn by Member Duval

Second by Member Harrington

Unanimous Vote

Motion passed

The Board of Selectmen Meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.



TOWN OF ADAMS BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary

Joseph Nowak, Member

Arthur Harrington, Member

John Duval, Member


Jeffrey Snoonian, Vice Chairman

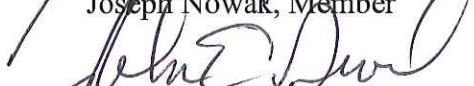
Richard Blanchard, Chairman




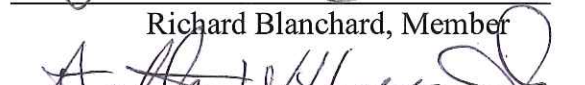
TOWN OF ADAMS BOARD OF SELECTMEN WORKSHOP MINUTES

Respectfully Submitted by Deborah J. Dunlap,
Recording Secretary


Joseph Nowak, Member


John Duval, Member


Richard Blanchard, Member


Arthur Harrington, Vice Chairman


Jeffrey Snoonian, Chairman