



TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

ELIHU THOMSON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
22 MONUMENT AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT, MA 01907

APRIL 27, 2015 MEETING MINUTES

Time: 7:05– 8:45 pm

Location: Swampscott Senior Center, 200 Essex St. (rear)

Members Present: Toni Bandrowicz, Sylvia Belkin, Chris Bibby, Gail Brock, Gino Cresta, Erin DeRoche, Neal Duffy, Angela Ippolito, Trish Malphrus, Amy O'Connor, Jim Olivetti, Robert Powell, Jackson Schultz, Ralph Souppa, Andrew Steingiser, Mary Webster

Members Absent: Sarah Walker, Brett Laker

Others Present: Pete Kane (Town Planner), Matthew Smith (MAPC), Christine Madore (MAPC), Bill Quinn (resident), Rupinder Sembhi (resident)

Second meeting of the Master Plan Committee opened at 7:05 pm.

1--WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

A-APPROVAL OF MARCH 31 MEETING MINUTES

Angela called the meeting to order at approximately 7:05 and called for a motion to approve the 2015-03-31 meeting minutes. The motion was approved unanimously with one additional item to be included in the official minutes; that Sarah Walker had volunteered to help write minutes, too.

B-MEETING OBJECTIVES

Matthew Smith of MAPC outlined the agenda for April 27 meeting.

2-PROJECT UPDATE

Matt noted that MAPC staff is now working on the initial “existing conditions” for the different elements of the Swampscott 2025 Master Plan project. Christine Madore of MAPC is also conducting “land use” research that will be included in a second stage document which will be presented at a later date.

A-WEBSITE

Matt presented the official website for Swampscott 2025 Master Plan project (<http://swampscott2025.mapc.org/>). He noted that the website is the central portal for the project; it provides information about the plan, how to get involved in the process, and a calendar of events, which has a Google-embedded calendar and automatic map links. It also contains a documents library, which houses previous plans, including [Open Space & Recreation Plan \(2013\)](#); [Harbor and Waterfront Plan \(2013\)](#); [Downtown Vision and Action Plan \(2012\)](#); [Community Survey: Results and Analysis \(2012\)](#); [Community Development Plan \(2004\)](#); [Open Space & Recreation Master Plan \(1983\)](#); and the [1971 Master Plan](#), as well as the Master Plan Committee’s meeting minutes ([March 31, 2015 Meeting Minutes](#)). On the website, people can also join a mailing list to receive plan updates, RSVP to the [Visioning Forum](#), participate in quick surveys, and contact Peter Kane (Swampscott Town Planner) and Matt.

Matt said the Swampscott 2025 communication plan also includes the use of social media websites: Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Swampscott-2025-The-Master-Plan/742489015870799?ref=hl>); Twitter (<https://twitter.com/swampscott2025>), and Instagram (<https://instagram.com/swampscott2025/>) and/or #Swampscott2025.

In addition, Matt said people who are unable to attend the Visioning Forum will be able to share their views anonymously in a virtual forum.

B-PUBLIC MEETING DATES

The next public meeting will be the Public Forum 1: Visioning Forum, which will take place on May 21, 2015 at the Swampscott High School from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm. It will be the first of four such public meetings. The Visioning Forum will provide the public with the opportunity to learn about the master plan process, share their thoughts about Swampscott’s future, and shape a vision for the community.

Matt also presented a list of future meeting dates and the topics for those meetings, as well as dates for the public forum meetings. For consistency, Matt said meetings will be held on Mondays from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm and Public Forum meetings will be held on Thursdays from 6:30 pm to 9:00 pm. The dates, as of today, are as follows:

Master Plan Committee Meeting Dates	
Date	Topic
June 1	Housing, Historic/Cultural, and Economic Development
June 29	Transportation and Public Services
July 27	Open Space, Sustainability (Energy & Hazard Migration)
August - no meeting	n/a
September 14	Draft Plan/Implementation (Plan Release)
October 12	Draft Plan Comments (Initial mtg. Another may be needed)
TBD	Final Plan

Public Forum Meeting Dates	
Date	Topic
May 21	Visioning
June 18	Housing and Economic Development
July 23	Transportation and Public Facilities and Services
September 24	Draft Plan Release

The dates for meetings and public forum meetings can also be found at <http://swampscott2025.mapc.org/calendar/>.

There was a discussion initiated by Erin about how the master plan committee would make sure that “everybody” who is working on committees for the Town knows what the master plan committee is doing. Matt noted that the website would be useful to achieve that objective. He said the public, including people involved in various committees, will be able to read meeting minutes and other documents. Also, Matt noted that many informal and formal town committees (though not Zoning, Finance, Veterans Affairs, Health, and the All Blue Foundation) have representatives on the Swampscott 2025 Master Plan Committee. Matt said those members are charged with reporting back to their respective committees about the Swampscott 2025 Master Plan Committee’s efforts and

activities. Matt also said getting the feedback from and the support of all the Town's committees is vital to the success of the Master Plan 2025 project (S25). Peter also mentioned he will email the chairs of committees not represented about S25 and the Visioning Forum. In response to a question, Peter suggested that there would be no need to hold a meeting specifically for other Town committee members given that representatives from many Town committees are already members of the S25.

Angela said each member of the committee should invite people to attend the various meetings to learn what's going with the master plan process. Angela also she would provide an update about S25 at Town Meeting, and Matt noted that MAPC would meet with the town's selectmen to provide an update.

Matt asked committee members to distribute flyers about the Visioning Forum at town meeting, and other places such as local businesses.

Ralph initiated a discussion to make sure efforts by other committees would be included in the Master Plan. Matt said the master plan will build on and include all the work being done by other committees. MAPC's job is to synthesize all of that data and determine whether the priorities are correct and consistent, and that there is consensus. Matt said the point of the master plan is that it to synthesize information to create an action plan for moving forward. Matt acknowledged that it's not easy to establish priorities and build a master plan. But he said one positive is that Swampscott is building a full master plan rather than just elements of it. He did note, however, that elements of previously created plans, such as the Open Space Plan, will be incorporated and referenced in the new master plan.

In response to question, Peter noted that the Visioning Forum can be publicized on the Town of Swampscott's Government Access Channel, which is broadcast on Comcast Channel 16 and Verizon Channel 41. Also, Peter will work with Mr. Tom Reid to determine whether the Visioning Forum can be televised live or recorded in full or in part for future viewing. Matt said a recorded version of the Visioning Forum presentation will be available for the public to view from the website.

Peter noted that the Town of Swampscott will also use the Connect-CTY service, its town-to-resident notification system, to inform the public about the Visioning Forum. Amy offered to distribute flyers about the Visioning Forum at the public schools and to PTOs, etc.

In addition, committee members expressed a desire to invite people of all ages to the Visioning Forum. There was a discussion about whether to offer baby sitting and senior transportation.

There was a discussion about positing and/or distributing the Visioning Forum flyer at the voting locations on election day. A few committee members said they would help distribute at the polling spots.

(In a subsequent email dated May 8, Peter reminded Swampscott 2025 members - as ambassadors of the master plan process - of ways to promote the forum and to get the best turn out possible: Those included: posting the flyer @ local businesses and institutions; email invites to board/committee; and posting the flyer on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts.

C-MASTER PLAN SURVEY

Matt discussed that having a master plan community survey is useful, and typically the first step in creating a master plan. He noted that Swampscott published the Swampscott Community Survey in 2012 and that there won't

be a need to conduct a full survey for the new master plan. It would, however, be useful to conduct “lightning polls” once per week to “take the temperature of the community.”

Matt noted that the 2012 survey gives a sense of what the Town’s priorities already are and the “lighting polls” could help identify whether the priorities are same or not.

3-VISION MEETING

Matt said the point of the Visioning Forum is “to take the temperature of the community.” Matt said it is designed to get feedback from people that will inform the next public forum meetings. Matt also said the vision statement is something that everyone can get around so that you can answer this question: Does what’s being recommended fit the vision for what community said it wants?

Matt also asked S25 committee members to volunteer to help at the Visioning Forum.

A-MEETING FORMAT

Matt noted that there would be a sign-in table, an open house from 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm, a welcome and presentation from 7:00 pm to 7:30 pm, a group discussion from 7:30 pm to 8 to 8:30 pm, report backs from 8:30 pm to 8:45 pm, and an open house and personal vision statements from 8:45 pm to 9:00 pm. The meeting format, Matt said, is designed so to accommodate different types of participants.

At the sign-in table, those attending the Visioning Forum will receive, among other things, numbered dots for an exercise, a Swampscott Today document, and a personal vision statement form, in which each participant will be asked to write a short one- to two-sentence personal vision statement at the end of the meeting.

During the open house, those attending will be asked where they live, and work, and how they get to work. Participants will also be asked to write one word on a form that describes what Swampscott represents to them. Participants will be asked to review data about Swampscott and describe what surprised them the most and describe what else MAPC should know about Swampscott that wasn’t presented in the data. Those attending will also learn how to participate in the master plan process.

As part of the welcome, Matt will deliver a presentation about what a master plan is and how it’s done. He will also describe Swampscott’s current conditions and trends.

During the group discussion, participants (roughly 10-15 people per group) will discuss with fellow community members thoughts and ideas about Swampscott. Discussion points will include Swampscott’s greatest assets, greatest challenges, and greatest opportunities. As a group, participants will identify priorities: the top three assets, challenges and opportunities. MAPC staff will facilitate these discussions and Matt asked committee members to volunteer to sit in on these discussions.

Those participating in the group discussion will also be asked to describe in a “map exercise” areas they want to keep the same and preserve and those they would like to see change i.e. developed or redeveloped.

Volunteers from each group will report back to the larger group after the group discussion.

The meeting will conclude with everyone writing their own personal vision statement for Swampscott.

Matt said MAPC will synthesize the information from the Visioning Forum and create a vision statement for Swampscott. Matt said he prefers a paragraph-length vision statement rather than a one- or two-sentence

statement. This vision statement will become a “poster” that guides the whole plan. There will be a goal statement and principles that follow. Matt said the Master Plan Committee will review the vision statement and “hopefully” agree on it.

Peter reminded committee members that we want all people of all ages to attend the Visioning Forum. A request was made that S25 Committee members have names tags that identifies them as such. Matt said such identification would be in place.

A discussion was held about whether 15 minutes was too short for the report backs. Matt agreed that more time is needed for report backs. A brief discussion was held about whether the “numbered dots” exercise could be done electronically.

In response to a question, Peter noted that he and Matt would discuss the impetus and purpose for the Master Plan as part of their opening remarks at the Visioning Forum. In response to a comment, Angela offered to give examples of what has been going on in Swampscott as the reason for the master plan, and how various groups and committees will be involved in the process.

Matt said it will be important to think “holistically” about the process. Matt also said, as part of this discussion, that there should be an annual check in as part of every master plan, to make sure that actions are aligned with the priorities established. Matt said the master plan needs to be a “working document.” Matt said a committee could stay in place to review whether the master plan was being implemented.

In response to question, Matt said there will be recommendations for zoning changes in the master plan.

Pete noted, as part of this discussion, that the master plan will not solve the issues that the town has had, but it will provide us with a framework to address issues in the future. Matt said MAPC would provide the town with general timelines to implement the master plan as well.

In response to a question, Pete said the Planning Board will be charged with approving the Swampscott 2025 Master Plan.

4-GROUP DISCUSSION

Matt played a four-minute video that highlights the problems of an aging society.

A-SWAMPSCOTT: OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

i-HOUSING

Committee members discussed personal examples of aging in Swampscott and the need for a different “retirement” model. Matt noted that there’s a difference between “aging in place” and “aging in a community” and asked what they may mean for a community such as Swampscott.

A discussion followed about the two very different types of housing in Swampscott, single-family houses and condo/apartment complexes. One member suggested that the town is divided into two parts, and that many older residents may have moved from their single-family houses to apartments/condos.

Another member suggested that older residents might not want to move from their houses to apartments/condos, but it may be the only option available. Members expressed a desire to create other options into a Master Plan.

Matt said planning to have elderly live in a community is a plan for people of all ages to live in a community, and that should be the goal.

Matt noted that some communities have developed high density housing to accommodate senior living that is also near transportation, such as train stations and bus stops. One example is Salem, Mass. Matt asked: How can you prioritize the type of development that would be suitable to people who are aging who might have some accessibility issues. Matt said it's also important to think about how to attract younger people to Swampscott. Matt said you have to make your community attractive to different demographics.

A member mentioned that there could be a huge influx of younger professionals, who can't yet afford to buy a house, into the 184-unit apartment complex on Paradise Rd.

A member suggested that the master plan should address the vacant buildings in Swampscott and whether those buildings could be used to address housing needs for younger and older people. Matt said those buildings could be addressed part of the discussion about housing as well as other elements of the master plan, such as transportation and public facilities and services.

A member suggested that the master plan could be used to demonstrate why certain actions are being taken with respect to housing and zoning law changes. Matt said details about Swampscott's population and its housing needs will be discussed in great detail during the housing and economic development public forum meeting.

Matt noted that the master plan should address how to become a more fiscally responsible place by building on the town's assets and building on the opportunities. He said the plan won't change the vast majority of Swampscott's single-family neighborhoods. But there will be ways to create additional revenue.

Powell mentioned that AARP has on its website tools to help assess the livability of a community as well as tools to help communities create a livable community. He noted that there could be areas, for instance, near the train station that could be rezoned and changed to address housing needs. He also mentioned that a resource should be created to help seniors understand their housing options, such as downsizing, reverse mortgages, shared living, and the like.

ii-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A member asked what economic development means to a community such as Swampscott. Matt said because Swampscott relies so heavily on its residential tax base it means looking at other ways to create revenue. He said creating high-density residential near the train station, for instance, is one way to increase revenue, and could be part of an economic development strategy.

A member suggested creating incubator/co-worker office space buildings as one way to accommodate entrepreneurs and small business owners who work from home or who might want to work from home in Swampscott. Matt said there's a need for "second" offices in small communities such as Swampscott.

Matt noted that there's a split tax rate in Swampscott and the committee should explore how that it is affecting businesses decision to come to Swampscott or stay in Swampscott. Matt suggested that it expensive to do business in Swampscott and that it might be worth looking at the tax rate ratio, business to residential. He suggested too that it might be worth building a tourism industry – B&Bs and hotels – in Swampscott, and charge a rooms tax. He also said there's a chance for restaurants to charge a local meals tax. He also suggested making the waterfront a destination and doing so could increase traffic to local restaurants.

He said there are very practical ways to increase revenue as part of a well-thought out economic development plan.

There was a discussion about the difference between the business tax rate, \$30, and the residential tax rate, \$18, and how difficult it is for business to afford to be here given that tax rate.

Another member said it's hard to attract boat owners to travel to Swampscott for a visit, and that we should be more "boater-friendly."

Another member noted that we are losing our waterfront to people who can afford to live in very expensive condos. The member noted that the biggest issue Swampscott faces is to not lose its waterfront to expensive condos developments. Matt noted that some communities have in place zoning laws to create walkways to the water as part of waterfront developments. A committee member suggested that repair of the "walkway" along the ocean front near Anthony's be put in the master plan.

A member suggested that if we lose access to the beaches, the incentive to come and live in Swampscott declines, and the housing market becomes less attractive to people. Matt said the idea behind a master plan is to build upon what is attractive about a town such as Swampscott, and to enhance that. Matt noted, however, there is a trend among older Americans to downsize to apartments/condos in downtowns such as Salem and Lynn and not age in place in an expensive-to-maintain single family house. And he noted that houses and condos on the waterfront do generate a good deal of tax revenue. He said the master plan should strive to seek a balance and that it won't be a one-size-fits all strategy. He said it will be important to find the pieces that work in the right places.

Another member suggested thinking outside the box to generate revenue by creating licenses for in-law apartments/accessory units. The member suggested a \$5,000 license on 10% of the housing stock (500 units) in Swampscott would yield \$2.5 million in extra revenue. Pete said such units are allowed in town but there is no license fee associated with those units at the moment but it may not be allowed in Mass.

Matt said part of the master plan is to address how to make this region more competitive, to attract and retain employees.

iii-TRANSPORTATION

A committee member suggested that it might not be easy for older residents to get around town except for driving their personal automobiles. Matt noted that it's possible to create a community that is both automobile- and pedestrian-focused.

Matt noted that [diesel multiple units](#) (DMU) might be one mode of transportation that Swampscott could benefit from. He said the MassDOT's 2025 plan includes the possibility of DMUs running to Lynn.

A member said a bus stop is also needed at or near the train station.

5-NEXT STEPS

Next Meeting

The next meeting is set for Monday, June 1 @ 7p.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:45 pm.

Robert Powell

Clerk, Swampscott 2025 Master Plan Committee