



TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

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

AUGUST 24, 2015 MEETING MINUTES

Time: 7:00– 9:00 pm

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

Members Present: Chris Bibby, Ralph Souppa, Gino Cresta, Robert Powell, Toni Bandrowicz, Angela Ippolito, Mary Webster, Jackson Schultz, Jim Olivetti

Members Absent: Amy O'Connor, Sarah Walker, Erin DeRoche, Trish Malphrus, Brett Laker, Neal Duffy, Gail Brock, Sylvia Belkin, Andrew Steingiser

Others: Pete Kane (Town Planner), Anthony Paprocki (ZBA), Peter Spellios (Board of Selectmen), Christine Madore (MAPC)

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

APPROVAL OF JUNE 29 MEETING MINUTES

Members of the Swampscott 2025 Master Plan (S25) committee were unable to approve the June 29 meeting minutes; the Committee did not have a quorum.

PUBLIC INPUT AND FEEDBACK

Summary: Forum 3

Christine Madore of MAPC provided a summary of public forum #3. With regard to transportation, MAPC heard the following from those who attended public forum #3:

- Pedestrian safety identified as greatest transportation issue in town.
- High vehicle speeds a concern, particularly on Humphrey St.
- People want roadways that are safe for pedestrians with raised crosswalks and other pedestrian safety measures built into design
- Improved train access desired, parking, bike facilities, pedestrian access
- Improved bus service – a shuttle and/or connection to train station and better service to Salem.
- Strong desire for bike lanes in town.
- Significant support for rail trail – paved with benches and other amenities

With regard to facilities/services, residents want:

- Town-owned property (e.g. old schools) back on the tax rolls
- Funding renovations should be a priority
- Preserving town history is critical to Swampscott's future
- To be better informed about, and have a greater voice, in decision making around facilities and services.

With regard to open space:

- Residents said improving existing facilities and amenities is a priority
- Residents have a strong desire for green corridor network; i.e. a rail trail
- Creating more open space/recreation important to many.

Public Participation Discussion

Direct outreach: Pete asked committee members to call 10 people each and personally invite them to meetings. MAPC will provide talking points.

MAPC wants to make events more social: Work with Whole Foods, Sea Glass Wine, and others to provide food and refreshments at social events prior to meeting.

The Committee discussed hosting a table at one or two of the Farmers Markets at the high school in October.

MAPC recommends that the S25 committee work with schools, holding “civics assembly” focusing on the master plan and provide questionnaire homework that parents fill out.

MAPC also recommends that S25 set up stations at Whole Foods and Panera Bread to solicit additional feedback in October.

Additional meetings

- HPP (Oct. 8 or 15)
- Forum 4: Goals and Strategies (November)
- MAPC and town will continue to perform key outreach tasks:
 - o Press releases
 - o Fliers
 - o Facebook

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Group Discussion

Christine outlined the following preliminary recommendations. She asked the S25 committee to read through the DRAFT goals and strategies and whether these goals and strategies align with what committee members have seen (the findings) and heard during the forums. She also asked the committee how the goals should be prioritized. And she asked the committee for other suggestions: what’s missing and what else would improve economic development. Christine noted that “organizational capacity” will determine how the goals are prioritized. The below list is not in order of priority. A committee member asked that some of the language in the recommendations be simplified into plain English and/or defined. Spellios asked whether MAPC will make specific recommendations and tools with regard to land use, public investment policies and the like. Kane said there will be actions recommended under the strategies. Christine noted that the most important goal is to improve property values. She noted that some cities and towns earmark funds that small business owners can use to improve signage and the like that would improve the streetscapes, or use re-location tax credits for retailers to move to Swampscott. She suggested the point of this exercise was to identify whether the below are the right goals. A committee member noted that it will be important to simplify the process that businesses go through to operate a business in Swampscott and offer tax incentives to do so. A committee member also asked with regard to organizational capacity, it will be important to identify who will perform the actions required. Christine noted that MAPC would recommend specifics, that, for instance, an “implementation committee” or boards be formed to execute strategies and tactics and monitor progress. But she also noted that the S25 committee has to provide feedback if MAPC’s specific recommendations are right for the town.

Goal 1: Maximize benefits of Swampscott's geographic location as a coastal community and public transportation access to Boston to attract new economic investment. Committee members said this is a goal. Christine noted that one strategy would be that noted in A below.

Strategies

- A. Establish land use and public investment policies that promote the attraction and growth of target industries. Christine said an example of this would be tax abatements and tax credits to companies that might want to relocate/build in Swampscott. Christine said these strategies could be measured against goals such as increasing revenue from taxes, including commercial taxes, and its ability to diversify tax revenue.
- B. Focus on redevelopment opportunities – multifamily residential, mixed use – in existing commercial areas where market opportunities are strongest. Both Kane and Christine explained that commercial areas could include commercially-zoned and residential-zoned areas, such as that near the RR station or on Humphrey St. Christine suggested that one of the actions under this strategy could be to identify opportunities to streamline zoning, make it more predictable, and more appealing to investors. A committee member suggested that we identify the specific commercial areas where opportunities are strongest, such as the RR station area, Humphrey St. and Vinnin Sq. Spellios suggested that the S25 committee and MAPC also look at non-commercial areas for redevelopment opportunities. A committee member suggested that we add to this strategy “focus on residentially-zoned areas where appropriate.” Kane suggested land now zoned for industrial/mining could be re-zoned for commercial. A member suggested that Marion Court be re-zoned to become a boutique hotel with a restaurant. Christine suggested that the S25 committee examine all the opportunities.
- C. Attract and retain businesses in key existing and emerging economic base industries such as retail and tourism.
- D. Improve multi-modal connectivity between the commuter rail station, commercial areas, and open space. A committee member agreed with this strategy, but suggested that we also need to maximize the fact that we have a RR station in town and that there are housing opportunities near the station.

Goal 2: A growing and thriving tourism industry with more amenities and programming year round. (This goal needs a verb, the committee suggested. “Build and improve” was suggested.)

Strategies

- A. Promote existing cultural, open space, and recreational amenities and explore opportunities to create additional amenities. A member suggested using the Community Preservation Act to accomplish this strategy.
- B. Encourage more programming and cultural activities throughout the year, especially along the waterfront and in the town's public open space. A committee member suggested that we add concerts such as those in Lynn and Beverly, and use, for instance, the high school auditorium. Concerts in those cities have greatly helped greatly local businesses. Christine noted that Swampscott already has many great activities, including movie nights, festivals, and the like. A committee member suggested the creation of a cultural arts center. Christine asked if there was a way to create activities that speak to Swampscott's heritage, the dories and lobster pots. She asked why there isn't a lobster festival or a dory race. Committee members and

Christine suggested the creation of walking and historical bike tours of the Olmsted district, and other landmarks in Swampscott. Kane noted that architectural tours of the sort done in Boston could be done in Swampscott. Christine noted that a pastor in Sharon worked with that town's historical commission to create historical bike tour of that town. She suggested that little organization is required, just someone to champion the cause.

- C. Explore opportunities for development of a new hotel with conference and function facilities.
- D. Invest in public infrastructure that makes the town more attractive, inviting, and more navigable. A committee member suggested that this strategy could benefit from some examples. Kane said this would come in the actions. Christine and others said this could be bike lanes, rail trails, sidewalks, the beaches and beach fronts, the bump-outs.

Goal 3: Improve marketing of Swampscott locally and regionally to attract more visitors and investment. Christine noted that Swampscott is a member of Lynn Area Chamber of Commerce and Essex National Heritage Area. A member suggested if it could be possible to organize and list all the events that occur in town and whether it would be possible to have other groups promote events in Swampscott. Kane noted that the town is creating a communications committee that would be charged with doing that, among other things. Christine noted that LACC stands ready to promote events in the town and the town, for the benefit of businesses here. She said Swampscott's community calendar could go on the LACC and the ENHA calendar of events. Christine noted that a subcommittee could be formed on the LACC to focus on Swampscott. A member asked if the marketing of a town of Swampscott's size fall to volunteers or paid professionals. Christine noted that it varies. Christine noted that some towns such as Scituate form a quasi-public entity, an economic development committee, to promote the town, and the like. Christine said a town can get a lot done by forming an EDC, which might have two public employees.

Strategies

- A. Leverage relationships with economic development and tourism entities to promote Swampscott as both a tourist destination and a business-friendly community.
- B. Develop a comprehensive marketing strategy for the Town of Swampscott to attract new visitors and businesses.
- C. Make business development regulatory processes more friendly and transparent to better attract desired investment.

Goal 4: Building organizational capacity to advocate for continued revitalization and stronger growth in Swampscott's commercial areas. Christine suggested that we send more ideas to Kane or her.

Strategies

- A. Consider establishing a Town Committee charged with creating a more favorable economic development climate in Swampscott. Focus attention on key industry sector opportunities: retail and restaurants, tourism and healthcare.
- B. Collaborate with adjacent communities to streamline land use policies and design standards, especially Vinnin Square and Humphrey Street.

- C. Develop stronger lines of communication between town hall and businesses to better identify and respond to business needs and interests.

The committee did not address below in the meeting per se but was part of the handout and Christine suggested that we could cover this in the next meeting.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS

Group Discussion

Christine outlined the following preliminary recommendations with regard to historical and cultural assets

Goal 1: Enhance efforts to protect and maintain Swampscott's historic and cultural resources.

Strategies

- Create list of preservation priorities following successful completion of 2015 inventory.
- Review demolition delay bylaw and make updates to reduce loopholes, increase enforceability.
- Increase communication and coordination with private groups such as the Historical Society and Andrews Chapel Restoration Committee.

Goal 2: Increase local capacity to support and fund historical preservation efforts.

Strategies

- Explore passage of the Community Preservation Act.
- Increase coordination among town boards and staff.
 - Hold regular meetings with HC, HDC, Town Planner, DPW, ZBA, and Planning Board to communicate currently preservation efforts. Create opportunities for communication between these meetings.
- Explore opportunities to bring on professional staff for Historical Commission:
 - Could be within Town
 - Could be Shared Services agreement with another Town
 - Possible "circuit rider" for preservation planning among several towns?

Goal 3: Promote Swampscott's historic resources to encourage greater preservation efforts and to attract visitors to town.

Strategies

- Explore public-private partnerships to boost Annual Preservation Awards program and local preservation education efforts
- Create heritage tourism program highlighting Swampscott's unique resources

- Update Historical Commission webpage
 - Tell the stories of Cap'n Jack's and Tupelo Road – failures of the demolition delay bylaw due to lack of documentation and resources to encourage preservation
 - Tell the stories of the closed schools, so that they may be captured regardless of future of these buildings
- Leverage current history – for example, the current governor lives in the Olmsted District!

NEXT STEPS

Christine asked that S25 members review and comment on the economic development draft document.

Next Meeting. The next S25 meeting is set for Sept. 28, 2015. The meeting will feature discussions about History and Culture Element, Public Facilities and Services, and Housing Production Plan, and public forum 4, possibly Nov. 12.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.

Robert Powell
Clerk, Swampscott 2025 Master Plan Committee