



Town of Uxbridge  
**Planning Board**  
21 So. Main St.  
Uxbridge, MA 01569  
(508) 278.8603

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Minutes of the Uxbridge Planning Board special meeting held on Wednesday, **August 16, 2006**, at 7:00 P.M. in the **Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room**, 21 So. Main St., Uxbridge, MA 01569.

**Planning Board Members Present:** Chairman John Morawski, Clerk Debbie Bernier, Peter Petrillo and Stanley Stefanick

**Planning Board Member(s) Absent:** Vice-Chairman Susan Bloomberg

**Others Present:** Floyd Forman, Director of Planning and Economic Development and Cheryl Brodeur, Administrative Assistant, Planning and Zoning Boards

The meeting being duly called, properly posted, and a quorum being present, Acting Chairman Debbie Bernier called the meeting to order at **7:02 P.M.** Chairman Morawski arrived a couple of minutes later and took over chairmanship from Ms. Bernier.

**Old / New Business:**

**Discussion with Professor John Mullin on Comprehensive Planning Issues:** Floyd Forman explained to the Board members that the special meeting being held tonight was scheduled at the request of the Board to bring in parties well versed in the Comprehensive Planning (Master Plan) process. Mr. Forman introduced Professor John Mullin, Dean of the University of Massachusetts Amherst Graduate School and Professor of Land Use Planning at UMass, and his business partner, Zenia Kotval, Professor of Urban Planning at Michigan State who works with Professor Mullin's team at the Center for Economic Development. Mr. Forman told the Board members that Professor Mullin has extensive knowledge of the Blackstone Valley, particularly of Uxbridge, and that he and his business partner had been invited to discuss the process to craft a Master Plan for the Town.

Professor Mullin began by telling the Board members that he was a longtime fan of the Town of Uxbridge and that he had been involved with projects here since 1988. He spoke to the centrality of the Town as it relates to both Providence and Worcester, approximately nineteen miles from either city. He indicated that he and his partner are currently working with the Town of Smithfield, Rhode Island. He spoke to a stunning increase in property values and what he termed the extraordinary location of Uxbridge. He talked about the tremendous growth / development anticipated with the emergence of the third ring (Rt. 146 / Rt. 290 / Rt. 12, et al).

Professor Mullin explained that there are many ways to do a Master Plan:

1. The Planning Board does it --- not the likely way to do it
2. The citizenry does it --- a difficult way to do it
3. The Planning Board oversees a group of committees and subcommittees, acting as the font of knowledge and keeping the committees and subcommittees focused on the task at hand, and ultimately delivering the Master Plan to Town Meeting for its approval (a very cost effective way to do a Master Plan)

Professor Mullin went on to remind Board members that when the Master Plan is done (crafted, delivered, approved), it is only the beginning. He further stated that reporting on the Master Plan at Town Meeting provides accountability and is very effective.

Professor Mullin told the Board members that no matter which method you choose to craft the Master Plan, some professional help will be needed. He mentioned that CMRPC would provide some assistance and

that with Larry Adams heading up CMRPC he felt that agency would be regenerated. He recommended that the Board members invite him to speak to them.

Professor Mullin next shared the steps required to craft a Master Plan:

1. Collect data, i.e., identify regional trends. The town's school system sets the tone.
2. Look at your infrastructure: It is the skeleton of your town. Ask yourselves what you want to do with it.
3. Look at the big "enchiladas": The old mills in Uxbridge lend themselves to over 55 developments / small condominiums. Think about bringing a good 3-star motel to Town.
4. The Visioning Process: Conduct a series of charettes. Crash all your resources together to craft your vision.
5. Set goals and objectives.
6. Propose zoning reform.
7. Establish a Capital Improvements Program. A Capital Improvement Program helps the Master Plan.

Peter Petrillo asked Professor Mullin if, during the process, you did an overview of the best locations for re-zoning. Professor Mullin indicated that you do and that the recommendation would then be referred to other subcommittees for coordination. Chairman Morawski inquired as to how many subcommittees would be needed. Professor Mullin indicated that 7-8 would be the right number and would map to each chapter of MGL C. 41 of Section 81D. Further, he said, that the subcommittees all reported back to the Planning Board. Stanley Stefanick inquired as to the length of the process. Professor Mullin indicated the two years was generally required. Professor Mullin went on to say that no one should attempt to bring the Master Plan to Town Meeting until at least nine months have been expended working on it or it does not have much success with Town Meeting. Chairman Morawski inquired as to the cost involved in crafting a Master Plan. Professor Mullin replied that in Massachusetts, it was generally between fifty to one hundred thousand dollars (\$50,000 - \$100,000). Professor Kotval indicated that some towns elect to do this process in two stages. Professor Mullin chimed in that an active citizen component is key to keeping costs down. He recommended using CMRPC and for instance getting the mapping done with "free" days available to Towns by way of the dues they pay. Stanley Stefanick inquired as to how many years the Plan spanned. Professor Mullin indicated that it is designed for twenty years and should be reviewed and updated every five years. Peter Petrillo asked if he understood correctly that the Planning Board oversees the subcommittees that report back to the Planning Board and the Department Heads who are involved with the Master Plan process. Professor Kotval answered in the affirmative and went on to say that this included floating the information by the public. She went on to say that this would be lots of work without enough citizenry and that it then becomes a Planner problem. Professor Mullin added that for this process to work, it must be citizen intensive. He went on to say that surveys will be part of this process and that one can get surveys from Utah State's website and tailor them to the Town's needs. Debbie Bernier asked if you could tailor them to what you want the Town to become. Professor Mullin said they would all involve "quality of life" issues. Town Manager Jill Myers asked Professor Mullin what role the Board of Selectmen would play in crafting the Master Plan. Professor Mullin responded that they usually got involved after the first plan that came from the Town Manager to the Department Heads. He went on to say that the Board of Selectmen brings agents into the process through Town Meeting. Further, he said that the Finance Committee, the Planning Board, and the Board of Selectmen would ultimately present the Master Plan to Town Meeting.

Stanley Stefanick, referring to an earlier comment from Professor Mullin about how he and Professor Kotval had worked with the Town of Billerica on its Master Plan, queried about the total population of that town and the total number of volunteers involved with the project. Professor Mullin indicated that the total population was approximately twenty thousand people and that some one hundred volunteers served on the subcommittees. Professor Kotval indicated that the subcommittees prioritize their goals on their own schedule and went on to say that the schedule should be designed in such a way that the busy person can commit. Debbie Bernier, directing her question to the Town Manager, asked if the Town had a pool of people. Town Manager Myers answered that the pool did not exist yet but that a few parties have expressed interest. Debbie Bernier then asked Professor Mullin how it is that you put together the

subcommittees. Professor Mullin responded that you have a "Visioning Session" to start. He went on to say that you hold this session and let the populace express their interests and as a result, they help tailor who serves, primarily those with needs and interests. Peter Petrillo expressed his opinion that the "Vision" is really important. Professor Mullin indicated that the most difficult part is defining the problem. Debbie Bernier then asked Professor Mullin what the Planning Board / Town do in the interim to move forward. Professor Mullin explained that this was a difficult question to answer. He went on to say that defining the Planning Board's special permit granting authority would be a good start, for instance, maintaining community character could be a criterion. He suggested that the Planning Board urge banks to come in with investment trends and that it looks at parks and recreation and chamber trends. Professor Mullin reiterated that the Town of Uxbridge is at the center of the third ring he discussed earlier.

Professor Mullin told the Board members that the average current commute to work in Massachusetts is thirty-two minutes. He then asked the Board members where you could get from Uxbridge in thirty-two minutes. Answers included Providence, Worcester, Rt. 395 and Rt. 495.

Floyd Forman reminded Board members that there are areas in town that the Town does not want to run public sewer and water, for instance in the agricultural zone where we want to encourage conservation design development. Debbie Bernier queried as to whether this Master Plan was to cover the whole town. Professor Mullin answered in the affirmative and reiterated that MGL C. 41 Section 81D has nine chapters that map to the Master Plan. Debbie Bernier then asked if the Town would modify its by-laws and Professor Mullin indicated that at the end of the Master Plan process, the Planning Board would have suggestions on by-law reform.

Megan Diprete, who was sitting in the audience, introduced herself and explained that she was present as a representative of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce / Economic Development Commission. She told the Board members that the Chamber and the towns it serves used to have a good mutual exchange of information and that the Chamber is making an effort to re-acquaint itself with all the communities. She went on to say that Uxbridge is the epicenter of the Blackstone Valley. She then told the Board members that the Chamber is moving back to Northbridge from its current site. Ms. Diprete went on to say that the Chamber was part of an active partnership, a group of individual communities with a common vision. Professor Mullin interjected that the Chamber could provide regional focus and data. Debbie Bernier asked if any other local communities are currently working on Master Plans and received no answer to her question. Ms. Diprete suggested that key agencies to get assistance on the Master Plan were the Chamber, the Chafee Corridor Commission, and CMRPC. She went on to say that Kip Bergstrom, Rhode Island member of the Blackstone Valley Chamber, was a good resource. Mr. Forman mentioned that the Four-Town group was another resource available to the community.

Professor Mullin urged the Board members to hold other meetings before making a decision to move forward with crafting a Plan. Floyd Forman said that having worked on a Master Plan for the Town of Ithaca (NY), he urged the Board members to really think about what they wanted and how they would go about getting what they wanted because crafting a Master Plan is lots of work. He went on to say that it is a long, involved process and that many people are needed to bring it to fruition. He further indicated that key questions the Board should be asking itself are: Does the Board really want to undertake this and does the Board have the resources to get this work done. Chairman Morawski said that it sounds daunting but that that is no reason not to do it. Professor Mullin indicated that the first question that the Board should be asking is: It's 2020, Uxbridge is what (fill in the blank)? He went on to say that the Town needs to tell him and Ms. Kotval what they don't want that answer to be and further, that the real test is how to meld old Uxbridge with new Uxbridge.

Floyd Forman expressed his hope that as Planning Director is that the Town would elect to keep the rural character where it is rural now and place infrastructure where the Town would like to see development occur. Professor Mullin told Mr. Forman to go to his Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors and take people on a bus tour through the town. The Board members thank Professor Mullin for sharing his

thoughts with them and he expressed his thanks to the Board members for inviting him and Professor Kotval to speak to them.

Megan Diprete of the Blackstone Chamber of Commerce indicated that the Chamber had limited financial resources but that it does interact with the legislature. She went on to say that the Blackstone Valley Corridor Commission coupled with the Chamber could play a facilitator role supporting the Planning Director at Town Meeting. Ms. Diprete said further that you need the “buzz”, the participation. She said the Planning Board would be the hub for coordination of activities and that it should let the consultants do the work. Ms. Diprete went on to say that the Chamber could create the dialogue, connect the dots and bridge the gaps. Chairman Morawski expressed his feeling that the more people involved in the process and project, the better off the Plan will be. Town Manager, Jill Myers, expressed her feeling that time is of the essence, that FY08 would be more difficult to secure the financial resources necessary to move forward with the Master Plan. She further explained that she was not sure that Fall Town Meeting is the time to bring this forward (and seek funding) but that something should be done sooner rather than later. Ms. Diprete interjected that the Board should coordinate its processes: the 4-Town group, the Romney administration, housing and transportation. She went on to say that the Board should get a commitment from staff to line up the resources.

Peter Petrillo asked Floyd Forman to bring in Larry Adams, Executive Director of CMRPC and mentioned the Town Manager appointing a Capital Improvement Committee. He further asked that Mr. Forman provide the Chafee Commission and 4-Town study information to the Board.

Chairman Morawski mentioned that this was at least a start. Floyd Forman went on to say that it is a broad process that helps the entire community but that it needs the assistance of Town Staff, committees, subcommittees, etc. The Board members indicated that they would like to get more input at another off-week meeting and asked Mr. Forman to arrange same.

**Adjournment:** Peter Petrillo made a motion, seconded by Stanley Stefanick, to adjourn. The vote was 4-0-0 in favor of the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:20 P.M.

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John Morawski, Chairman

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Date

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Susan Bloomberg, Vice Chairman

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ABSENT

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Debbie Bernier, Clerk

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Date

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Peter Petrillo

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Stanley Stefanick

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date