

TOWN OF WINCHENDON



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Master Plan Committee

109 Front Street
Winchendon, Massachusetts 01475-1758
Robinson Broadhurst Conference Room 4th Floor
Master Plan Minutes
September 15, 2014

Present: Penny Maliska, Chair
Corey Bohan, Vice-Chair
Lionel Cloutier
Jane LaPointe

Tracy Murphy
James Halloran
Doneen Durling

Absent: Greg Vine
Diane Sevigny

Brian Dickens
Myranda Bishop

List of Documents Presented at Meeting:

- Hard copy of the Power Point
- Monday August 4, 2014 Minutes
- Housing Inventory and Analysis Draft

Maliska called the meeting to order at 2:18 p.m.

Disclosure of Audio/Video Recording: No one announced they would be audio recording the meeting this evening.

GUEST SPEAKERS: Maliska introduced the guest speakers John Hume, Planning and Development Director, and Renee Marion, GIS Specialist from Montachusett Regional Planning. Hume mentioned that they have two handouts that they are going to go through for the presentation. The first handout is a hardcopy of the PowerPoint and the second handout is a Housing Inventory and Analysis. He went through the slides and on the first slide it showed how MRPC is able to do the work for this project and how it is funded. The Town applied for MRPCs District Local Technical Assistance which is Technical Assistance from MRPCs staff to work on two elements of the Master Plan, The Economic Development Piece and the Housing Element. Hume wanted to mention that they are never sure if they will get the DLTA from year to year even though we did get that assistance from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts over the past eight years. He said the good news is they did receive another round of the District Local Technical Assistance grant funds from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts so their program is going to continue for another year. Hume mentioned the steps to take in preparing for the Master Plan. Then he goes on to reading over the Housing Data Collection Analysis slide. He mentioned how in the Population Growth in Neighboring Communities table showed how the City of Gardner actually decreased within the last ten years. In 2010, the census showed a population of 10300 residents in Winchendon which was an increase of 6.7% since 2000. The growth rate over that last decade has been higher than the Montachusett Regional Planning Commissions Average. Winchendon grew twice the rate as the Massachusetts rate which was about 3%. Maliska asked If Hume knew what was driving that percentage. He said he thinks that the housing prices in Winchendon and in the Montachsett Region in general, with a few exceptions, are more affordable. Also he feels it has to do a lot with the quality of life out in

this region and it can be a nice place to raise a family. Hume said he noticed that trend in communities heading west out toward Winchendon. He then went on to explain the Housing growth in the community. Durling asked if the building permits describe were permits given out for even subdivisions that haven't been built. Hume mentioned it is Building Permits that were issued whether it was developed or not. Then Hume explained the Housing Unit Inventory and Occupancy/Vacancy Rates. Bohan questioned how many of the homes were seasonal for Winchendon up on the lake. Hume said he could check into that and see because the numbers are out there. Bohan mentioned that the 9.3% vacancy rate was distressing and Maliska mentioned that Phillipston held steady at 21% and we proportionately increased by 50%. Mr. White spoke from the audience saying he believes that it's also because we had one of the higher, between 1-3 of the top three, foreclosure rates for a year in a half. LaPointe said she had a curiosity about the slide before explaining owner and rental units, and if they had readily available information about how that distributed across the town. Hume asked Marion if she thought they'd be able to find that and Marion said a lot of the census data in 2010 released are broken down very differently, so a lot of the information they are trying to get at a detailed level ends up going through what they call the American Community Survey and sometimes that data doesn't look right. Halloran talks about the street he lives on and the vacant houses, affordability and population density. Then Hume turns to the Types of Household slide and explains how almost 70% of the households in Winchendon are family oriented households. He mentioned that the representative decrease in the family household is a national trend. Maliska talked about how the numbers for five years of age and younger dropped by 18%-19% will just move through the body of the snake as that cord of kids grows older. LaPointe asked Hume to explain what a family oriented household was. He said it is blood relatives and a non-family household could be a bunch of friends or roommates living in a house. Hume talked about the median age and income. He mentioned that the median annual household income was \$61,937.00. The committee seemed shocked at how high it was. Bohan asked if they had the last census to compare it too, Hume said he did not but that would be interesting to compare that data. He went on to Affordable Housing, 80% of the median household income for the region in which the community is located. Hume mentioned that Housing Production Plans are eligible under our District Local Technical Assistance Program, maybe that's something the Committee might want to consider having done. Bohan asked Hume if they've done any comparison with Winchendon, Athol, and Orange. Lionel asked why you would want to build more new houses when you have a bunch of empty houses. Mr. White mentioned that that plan doesn't necessarily mean you are going to be building new. Doneen asked if there was a definition of what is numerically affordable and is it different for each town. Maliska answered saying a house that can be supported at an income of more than 80% of the local medium. Hume said he could include Athol's numbers in the packets fairly easy. Hume concluding with Home Value and the figures are provided from the Warren Group. Maliska said those that were associated with licensed people looked like MLS. She said it's a trivia to two different things one being the foreclosure rate and the other is the big whale houses that couldn't afford to discount themselves by 25% and didn't enter the market at all. So we extracted the high end sales and concentrated low end sales and overall the median just fell right off a cliff. She said she would bring in some more informative data that show trends that can go from years back. LaPointe said part of the Master Plan is to find out what makes our town more viable, attractive, etc. and what influences that. Maliska pointed out that part of it could be distance from major routes. LaPointe says on the Economic Development side, if there is something we can do over the town that picks up on the trend of self-employment and other networks, than they don't need the connectivity of big highways. Bohan said within the next decade or two you are going to see the technological level advance greatly. Halloran mentioned that it can't just be any one component. Lapointe was saying it would be nice to receive the input from the younger residents who are interested in the town. Maliska talked about how Winchendon isn't off by very much compared to national averages but we are very low for the region and the state. She told Hume she heard several different things for recommendation request and one is more information regarding the seasonal component of vacancy rights and another one is to add Athol to the spread of towns that we look at, and also considering the possibility of getting a Housing Production Plan from somewhere in the DLTA money. Marion presents 3D map, along with contour and elevation maps.

OPEN DISCUSSION: Maliska starts with the Public Forum and coordination with UMASS on September 29th. Murphy came forward and told the Committee that her and Mr. White met this morning with a UMASS group and did a presentation on the history of Winchendon because the Professor asked Murphy what isn't obvious about Winchendon. She said their enthusiasm was absolutely contagious. They broke down into three communities one being Athol the other Chicopee and then Winchendon. The 29th of September they are

coming back out to hold a workshop. Their main focus for the workshop is to listen. They are going to set up different various stations pretty close to what we have as chapters in our Master Plan. That's why it is so important that as the Committee the Master Plan Committee is their because they are going to get a good idea of what to do in the future but on a larger town wide scale, where as their focus is just on Central Street. Murphy said she met with Halloran briefly about the implementation strategies and Halloran graciously agreed to do work on transportation. She doesn't want those who haven't been able to meet up with her to be discouraged because they will be gathering information throughout this whole process.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Monday August 4, 2014 – Bohan moved to approve; Doneen seconded. By a vote of all aye, the motion carried unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS: Maliska ran into Judy Mizhir and she has a panel of LPN students who are going to be in the community doing a broad based health status assessment. Murphy said she also stopped and asked if some of the students could come to public forums to try to get some information.

SET NEXT MEETING DATE AND TIME: The Open forum is September 29th at 5:30 p.m. and the next meeting is set for October 6, 2014 at 2:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT: Doneen moves to adjourn; Cloutier seconded. By a vote of all aye, the meeting adjourned at 3:31 p.m.



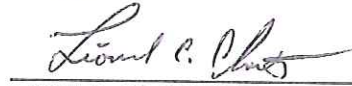
CHAIR: PENNY MALISKA



VICE CHAIR: COREY BOHAN



JAMES HALLORAN



LIONEL CLOUTIER

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JANÉ LAPOINTE



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