

# Planning Board Work Session Minutes

**Location:** Strafford Town Hall Conference Room

**Date & Time:** January 12, 2023 6:30PM

**Voting Members Present:**

Charlie Moreno – Chairman  
Phil Auger – Vice Chairman  
Terry Hyland  
Tim Reed

**Non-Voting Members Present:**

Donald Coker – Alternate

**Others Present:**

Jen Czysz, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Executive Director  
Autumn Scott, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, Regional Planner  
Robert Fletcher, Minutes Recorder

The Chairman, Charlie Moreno, called the Work Session to order at 6:45PM and recognized Board members Phil Auger, Terry Hyland, and Tim Reed as present. He also recognized as present Jen Czysz, Autumn Scott, and Robert Fletcher.

The Chairman indicated that the purpose of the Work Session was to review the results of the November 2022 Community Forum and discuss the next steps for Master Plan development. He asked Autumn Scott to provide an update.

## **Community Forum Results**

Autumn Scott summarized the overall commonalities of the Community Forum as follows:

- Balancing change with maintaining rural character and small-town feel.
- Change is needed to attract younger people to the Town (housing, broadband, etc.).
- Maintaining/reducing tax burdens.
- Maintaining rural viewsheds & preserving natural resources.
- Enhancing the town's central locations with additional attractions.
- Avoiding "chain" or "big-box" developments.
- Appreciation for the Town's conservation land and recreation opportunities.
- Desire for programming—across generations and abilities.
- Improving walkways and bikeways in certain areas.
- Balancing development with environmental protection.
- Increasing community building/gathering opportunities.
- Improving communication capabilities.

## **Community Forum individual session highlights:**

### **Housing Session**

- People want flexible and affordable single houses but are okay with smaller, more affordable houses for first-time homeowners.
- In general, residents are open to a variety of housing types and locations but are worried about too much change.
- Participants would like to see more housing within walking distance of stores, restaurants and community centers and keeping the rural feel while affording opportunities for diversity.
- When it comes to building types, town houses were not rural enough for most people.
- People agreed that small cluster development is necessary and felt it was okay to do this type of development throughout the community in an effort to preserve the land.

#### Natural Resource Session

- Participants were vocal in that while Bow Lake is an important resource in town, there are many more natural resources to focus on outside of the Lake and throughout the rest of town.
- Residents appreciate the amount of land conservation and the idea that not every open space needs to be built out.
- Many are concerned with the water quality of the Lake and other water bodies and waterways, which can be affected by boat activity and tree clearing, faulty septic systems, fertilizer, invasive species and runoff.
- In terms of farms, participants saw opportunities for the town to make it easier to farm and for there to be more resources for sustainable agriculture.
- For other open spaces, such as those for recreation, many saw opportunities to map existing trails and educate people about these resources.

#### Community Services and Infrastructure Session

- Participants stated they liked the rural character of their community, and they all shared this vision.
- People felt that the fire and police departments, town hall staff and planning board, library, and recycling center were all providing good service.
- Participants enjoyed the recreation options available to them in their community but were also looking for more programs and options for things to do such as community building activities and youth programs.
- Participants wanted improvement in cell phone coverage and internet service along with more reliable electric power services.
- Participants would like to see more recreational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, including elderly people and those with disabilities.
- People also felt that the community would benefit from having more sidewalks (for example to/from school and library), better street lighting and school zone signage.
- Participants perceived a lack of communication when it comes to community events and would like to see more posted agendas and meetings added to the newsletter and possibly video-record/livestream some of the meetings so people can stay up-to-date and know what is happening.

### Community Character and Land Use

- Participants noted a desire for year-round community gathering spaces in a centralized location.
- Many participants liked the idea of adding more eateries and restaurants that have a traditional atmosphere to the Town's central locations, such as an ice cream shop by Bow Lake.
- Participants enjoy Strafford's outdoor recreation opportunities and beautiful mountain and shoreline views but would like increased access to the lake—both walking and expanded parking, and potentially a new beach location.
- There was an overlap in participant desires for new land uses such as community center, recreation center, walking trails, eateries, and a place for public arts/vendors/local produce and goods, noting that having these in one central area would be ideal.

### **Master Plan Format and Content**

The Master Plan will begin with an introduction and may include several sections to address community profile, vision, land use, community character, natural resources, economic development, housing, community services, infrastructure, age friendliness, and an implementation guide.

The Board agreed that each section of the Master Plan should contain specific goals and the actions necessary to achieve the goals and should be formatted similarly to the Goffstown Master Plan. Action items need to be individually prioritized as high, medium, or low, long term or short term, and the Board should consider the use of various committees to assist the Board in addressing actions to meet stated goals.

Data comparison with other similar towns, such as Deerfield and Barnstead, would include population density, median housing price, household income and household size. Other data will be limited only to the Town of Strafford.

The Board suggested a Master Plan overview, community forum results, and timeline for completing the Master Plan be presented at the annual Town meeting in March. The Board also suggested having an individual monitor and respond to social media comments regarding the Master Plan.

The Board agreed to Master Plan development continuation at a Work Session on February 23, 2023, at 6:30PM, which will address initial drafts of Age Friendliness, Community Character, and Community Service sections. Additional Work Sessions will be conducted in March for initial drafts of Community Profile, and Housing and Economic Development sections, and in April for Infrastructure, Natural Resources, Land Use, and Vision sections.

There being no further business before the Board, Phil Auger made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Terry Hyland. The Board voted unanimously in favor, and the meeting adjourned at 7:48PM.