

**TOWN OF HARVARD
PLANNING BOARD
STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION
JULY 18, 2020
APPROVED: NOVEMBER 2, 2020**

Chair Justin Brown opened the meeting at 9:09am on the porch of the Hildreth House under MGL Chapter 40A, the Zoning Act and the Code of the Town of Harvard, Chapter 125 the Protective Bylaw

Members Present: Justin Brown (Chair), Stacia Donahue (Vice Chair), Fran Nickerson, Gwen Leonard, Jane Biering and Rebecca Kelley (via ZOOM)

Others Present: Liz Allard (Land Use Administrator), Chris Ryan (Director of Community & Economic Development) and Matthew Flokos (Harvard Press)

Review Policy & Procedure

- Planning Board Handbook
Brown reviewed the tabs of the handbook
- Attending CPTC Training Sessions
Allard stated she has created a Gold Star Program for the Planning Board members that will provide incentives for attending training from Citizen Planner Training Collaborative and others alike. Allard has not determined the actual incentives as of yet. Allard presented Brown, Leonard and Biering with their first Gold Stars for attending the webinar on Introduction to Subdivision Control and Approval not Required this past week.
- 1-on-1 Training with new members plus continuation of Board Training
Ryan is working on creating videos to cover the aspects of Planning for the members to be able to review on their own

Master Plan

Ryan detailed the reasoning for Master Plans, which provides a guideline as to where the Town is going and wants to go over the next ten years. The Master Plan also assist Towns in achieving grant funding. Ryan recommends the Board consider a more dynamic Master Plan that is constantly updated with new information, concepts, action items and take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

- Set Priorities for FY2021 – Note the order of the table below was finalized at the July 20, 2020 meeting of the Planning Board, below reflects the discussion at that and this meeting. *Italics* indicates revised or additional information.

Action Item	Timeframe	Constraints or Issues
1. Open Space Residential Design – Addresses several 2016 MP action items and is generally supported in community.	Target Spring 2021 (ATM) and begin internal review July 2020 and outreach beginning September 2020	Very complex and technical legislation that cannot be much simplifies if we want to meet our goals. Needs hands-on and constant outreach plus member education in order to discuss and advocate for, Estimate 240 staff hours and 15 Board hours.
2. Ayer Road Plan Adoption and Implementation – Also	<i>Phase 1 Market Analysis &</i>	Running out of potential sources of funds, will require some creativity to

Action Item	Timeframe	Constraints or Issues
touches on several 2016 action items.	<i>Feasibility Study – find funding by end of 2020. Phase 2 Corridor Plan - discuss future funding during fall. Phase 3 Implement into Zoning</i>	achieve. Phase 1 will require 60 staff hours and 3 Board hours.
3. Senior Residential Development Bylaw – addresses the housing alternatives for seniors' action item.	<i>Considering this bylaw for Fall Town Meeting</i>	None identified. Estimate 90 staff hours and 8-10 Board hours.
4. Town Center Action Plan	Unknown	TCAC and update probably require revisiting and familiarization before determining what is needed.
5. Town Center Zoning – Specific action item.	Could commence discussion any time but length of project depends on model of bylaw to use.	May be best to consider a Form-Based Code process for the center and this would require consultant funding. Will be very sensitive and require an epic amount of public process.
6. Address Scenic Road Bylaw Issues – Connects to action items related to administration and enforcement.	<i>Leonard volunteered to take on this task. Considered for Spring Town Meeting 2021.</i>	Involves Planning Board, DPW, and Tree warden as well as potentially the HHC. Perhaps a working group could be created to discuss.
7. Ayer Road Infrastructure – Many initiatives will require public utilities along Ayer Road. The Board should begin to brainstorm these options.	Dedicate a meeting agenda item in September to discuss.	No constraint to discuss as long as preparatory work has been accomplished. No estimate of hours.
8. Economic Development Plan – Specific action item.	Could be initiated in winter 2020-21 if done internally.	Will require an intensive public process and some data collection and research. Ideally undertaken by a consultant but could be done in-house if time could be committed.
9. Multifamily District – The MP calls for mapping the district as regulations are already in place. Recommend some modifications to meet HC Program requirements.	Target Spring 2021 (ATM) and begin internal review in the fall and begin outreach by the end of the year.	Mapping will require a property identification evaluation criteria process and select 1 or more sites for mapping. Changing development to as-of-right will be difficult unless additional standards can be developed.
10. Master Plan Implementation Committee – Another specific MP action item.	<i>Liaisons will reach out to the boards and committees for updates on progress.</i>	No perceptible barriers other than the Select Board not wanting to form any new standing committees. <i>Planning Board accomplishing Action Plan goals, however other Boards and Committees are lacking.</i>
11. Protective Bylaw	Dependent on	The scale of the project could range

Action Item	Timeframe	Constraints or Issues
Recodification/Rewrite – Specific action item in MP.	funding and preparation of preliminary diagnostic. Could move up in priority if acute problems emerge.	from a simple recodification where no basic changes to bylaw are included, to a complete rewrite and addressing all of the problems and issues plus adding new provisions. For the latter, it would be a very complex and sensitive project and cost nearly \$100,000.
12. Department of Community and Economic Development	<i>Part of a 5-year Plan to be completed by end of FY21</i>	Suggest a brainstorm conversation with staff to consider options and possibilities.
13. Pedestrian and Bike Projects	<i>With the potential to create a Transportation Advisory Committee the Planning Board anticipates this item will be a top priority for the Transportation Committee</i>	So many moving parts and players require a coordinated effort.
14. Rural Life – Directly addresses two action items related to agriculture-related businesses and tourist-oriented businesses.	<i>Waiting for proponent to provide additional information</i>	Very controversial and resisted by agricultural community for several reasons. Needs to balance offerings with strong protections for neighbors. Estimate 240 staff hours and 20 Board hours.

Transportation

With the completion of the first Complete Streets project in Town Center the Board discuss the Priority Plan and evaluating Complete Streets implementation for effectiveness related to the Plan to present the results to the Select Board. This evaluation shall include performance measures such as linear feet of new or improved sidewalks, miles of bicycle accommodations, new or improved crosswalks, curb ramp improvements, and review of new traffic counts and vehicle crash data to help set priorities for local action. Ryan recommended the Board consider making the first of such evaluations in concert with Department of Public Works for the end of the summer 2020.

In regards to Safe Routes to School, Harvard has been denied previous funding, but continues to be interested and will continue to apply for funding.

Finding a location for a Park and Ride Lot in Harvard for commuters who use the Ayer and/or the Littleton commuter rail has proved difficult. The Town does not own any land within the ideal location for such a lot; Town Center or along Ayer Road. Ryan suggested a facility that could be large enough to serve not only shuttle passengers but others who wanted to park for commuting such as ride sharing and other transportation options. The facility would be paved and striped and better still, include several EV charging stations. This multi-modal facility could be eligible for Federal funding which would be the most likely funding scenario and make the Ayer Road corridor in Harvard a destination for commuters. With a shuttle in Devens currently this item was not a top priority for the Board at this time, but is another item that could be taken up by the Transportation Advisory

Committee.

Housing

Brown reviewed the Housing Production Plan, accepted by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in 2017. This Plan has not yet been certified. Certification would provide the Town “safe harbor” from M.G.L. Chapter 40B projects over the certification period. Certification requires that at least 0.5% production of eligible affordable housing units be developed in a calendar year and these units must be permitted and evidenced to DHCD for certification.

Housing Choice Initiative Program encourages municipalities to adopt best practices and zoning that supports sustainable housing production that also reinforces Massachusetts environmental agenda. Essentially, Housing Choice is a multi-pronged effort to align resources and data to create a single point of entry for communities seeking assistance in increasing their supply housing. An important part of the Housing Choice Initiative is the Housing Choice designation and grant program. The program includes simple, flexible standards that are achievable to all municipalities. Housing Choice Designation rewards communities that are producing new housing and have adopted best practices to promote sustainable housing development.

Based on a specific housing production quota, communities must identify and or demonstrate which 2020 Housing Choice Best Practices are met. Harvard is a 3% Production & Planning community and must demonstrate that 7 of 14 best practices are met. Currently, Harvard has met only three. Achieving additional practices would require amending existing bylaws from Special Permit to By-Right; which may not be an easy task in Harvard. Ryan will share the document he has sent to the Town Administrator detailing how Harvard can achieve the necessary practices.

Inclusionary zoning is a mandatory approach that requires developers to make a portion of the housing units in their project affordable to low- and moderate-income households. This can be done through either designation of a certain portion of the units in a development as affordable or allowing for a payment in lieu in some cases where building the units is infeasible or there are not enough units in the development to justify a unit. Such a bylaw allows a town to meet its local housing goals and also meet or maintain the Subsidized Housing Inventory minimum 10%.

Possible Protective Bylaw Amendments

- Town Center Overlay or Base District – See detail in Master Plan section.
- Finalize the Open Space Design Bylaw – See detail in the Master Plan section.
- Bungalow Bylaw – The Board agreed to hold off on further discussing this bylaw as other bylaw amendments before them may provide diverse housing such as this.
- Rural Life – See detail in Master Plan section.
- Building Height – Ryan to work with Building Commissioner to draft option needs to be illustrated for better assessment. Potential to present at 2021 Spring Town Meeting.
- Re-codify Zoning Bylaw – See detail in Master Plan section.
- Multifamily District Mapping – See detail in Master Plan section.
- Transfer of Development Rights and Devens – Transfer of Development Rights or TDR is a regulatory strategy that harnesses private market forces to accomplish two smart growth objectives.

1. Open space is permanently protected for open space, water supply, agricultural, habitat, recreational, or other purposes via the transfer of some or all of the rights of development that would otherwise have occurred in these sensitive places to more suitable locations.
2. Other locations, such as town centers or vacant and underutilized commercial or development targeted properties, become more vibrant and successful as the development potential from the protected resource areas is transferred to them.

In essence, development rights are "transferred" from one district or parcel (the "sending zone") to another (the "receiving zone"). Communities using TDR are generally shifting development densities within the community to achieve both open space and economic goals without changing their overall development potential. While less common, TDR can also be used for preservation of historic resources.

For example, if an 85-acre farm could be developed by-right into a 57-lot subdivision, the added value between the farm and the subdivision could be bundles as a set of development rights to build 57 housing units. Another piece of land halfway across town could be designated as a receiving parcel and add those 57 units to its existing set of development rights. The farm is thereby protected in perpetuity, the farmer gets paid as if the subdivision were built on the farm, and the receiving parcel landowner gets greater density from their existing parcel.

Indications are that Devens may also be interested in TDR and would serve as a logical receiving zone for Harvard bundled development rights. TDR would allow Harvard to protect farms, scenic vistas, rural historical properties, and other valued land assets.

Appoint Liaisons & Representatives

- Land Lines – Kelley
- Harvard/Devens Jurisdiction Committee – Biering
- Design Review Board – Kelley
- Community Resilience Working Group – Donahue

At 12:30pm Donahue made a motion to continue the Strategic Planning Session to July 20, 2020 at 7:00pm virtually. Nickerson seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor of the motion.

Signed: _____ Liz Allard, Clerk