

Planning Board minutes 3/21/23 7:30pm to 9pm

In attendance: Richard Nathhorst, Van Stoddard, Ken Kahn, Tim Shores, Tom Ewing, Steve Freedman

Absent: Swan Keyes

1. Minutes from the March 8 meeting: approved unanimously
2. New business: Ken Kahn shared an email sent to him by Better Together Dog Rescue, which has proposed to purchase (see email printed below). The Board decided that no action is needed from the Planning Board on this issue.
3. The Board discussed a piece of communication content designed to aid the Steering Group, and possibly to communicate the planning process to the general public.
 1. Earlier today, Tim circulated a PowerPoint file with the Planning Board by email, along with this explanation:
 1. "At the end of last year's existing conditions Working Group, after Tom explained the dilemmas of budget, tax rate, property assessment, and tax burden, Kim Van Wagner asked that we consider a document or communication device that explained those dilemmas in a more accessible way."
 2. "Kim's request has been on my mind, ever since. I recently created the attached powerpoint or storybook. I'd like to provide this to the Steering Group -- along with our many other volumes of information more densely presented -- so that they have a more accessible introduction to the factors of Leverett's need for a Comprehensive Plan, and a more accessible introduction to the role of the Steering Group in the creation of that plan."
 3. "I know it's long, but it's basically a comic book version of our previous reports and other write-ups. Hopefully that makes it a quick and entertaining (and therefore memorable) read. It could be a presentation, although I think it would serve better as a reference document printed for each Steering Group member."
 4. "It may also need factual correction or stylistic improvement -- I am open to that feedback."
 2. Planning Board members provided this feedback.
 1. Ken would like to see mention of Regionalization - Fire, EMT, Police, Municipal services.
 2. Steve thought it was terrific, the beginning is a little labored and juvenile, and he recommends shortening the beginning and curbing the juvenalia.
 3. Tom and Van observed that it's important to illustrate how increasing development to broaden the tax base doesn't just increase revenue, it also increases expenses, and finding the balance between these two increases is a key outcome that we need from the consultants in the Comprehensive Plan.

4. The Board discussed how additional households may impact education expenses: if more families with school children move to Leverett, Tom suggested that the costs of education may outweigh the benefits of additional tax revenue; Steve suggested that it's not that simple, since school costs don't increase substantially with each student -- rather, they increase substantially with each classroom full of students, and with Leverett's relatively low classroom size, we can add more students before needing to hire more teachers and paraprofessionals. There are also complications with planning for regional education costs.
 5. Ken pointed out that we've built a lot of new town facilities and services in the last 20 years that we paid with bonds that we're now paying off at a relatively rapid rate. We also refinanced 6 years ago to take advantage of low interest rates. This management of debt is worth highlighting, and it is also worth explaining that it's a method of financing that the Town won't be able to repeat.
 6. There are also elements of financial management, maintenance, projections, capital planning - these will be addressed primarily by RKG.
 7. Tim confessed that there are some topics that he doesn't understand well enough to do justice as a writer and communicator (namely, the Town's debt, capital planning, and regionalization of specific services) -- hopefully he will understand them better as we make progress through the Comprehensive Plan.
4. Discussion of Steering Group members.
 1. The Board agrees to invite all residents who have confirmed their interest and availability to the first Steering Group meeting (scheduling discussed below).
 1. The list of interested and available residents:
 1. Matt Boucher
 2. Jenny Daniell
 3. Arlyn Diamond
 4. Gary Gruber
 5. Peter Henion
 6. Isaiah Robison
 7. Kim Van Wagner
 8. Steve Weiss
 9. Sam Black OR Cyndie Baldwin (see next item in minutes)
 10. Maureen Ippolitto OR Silas Ball (see next item in minutes)
 2. On the matter of interested and available residents who live in the same household (Sam Black and Cyndie Baldwin; Maureen Ippolitto and Silas Ball), Tom led discussion and then moved to permit only one person from each household on the Steering Group, Ken seconded the motion.

1. The motion passed with Tom, Ken, and Van voting yes; Tim and Steve voting no; and Richard abstaining.
3. Discussion of next steps: Tom spoke with Emily Innes today.
 1. Emily is available April 17 or April 20. The Board voted to schedule the first Steering Group meeting on Monday, April 17 at 7pm. That meeting will be virtual, and Emily will manage the Zoom invites and meeting.
 2. Meetings will be primarily by Zoom, and Emily recommends not considering hybrid meetings. The Planning Board agreed to leave this decision up to the Steering Group.
 3. Although multiple Planning Board members are invited to the first meeting to help initiate the process, Emily recommended that Planning Board members not attend the Steering meetings, with the possible exception of one or two Planning members attending as liaisons. This will help the Steering Group operate with the autonomy they need to collaborate effectively.
 4. Tom asked Emily about Open Meeting Law, and she suggested that we prepare Steering Group members to follow OML procedures for minutes, timely posting of meeting time and place (Zoom link). Steering can handle their own process for timely posting with the Town Clerk. Tim will write to Margie to find out if Steering Group appointees need to be sworn in by Town Clerk.
 5. Planning Board agreed to leave the decision about Steering chairperson up to the Steering Group. If Steering Group members hesitate on this matter, Planning may gently recommend Gary Gruber as chair, given his experience on Planning, as Town Moderator, and Select Board.
 6. Ken discussed whether the Planning Board must post a meeting notice if more than 3 Planning Board members attend a Steering Group meeting. By analogy, Tim suggested that if 4 Planning Board members attend a Select Board meeting, they would not be violating OML if they are not deliberating over Planning Board matters. However, it could be that the Steering Group is deliberating over matters that are inherently within the scope of Planning Board's purview. Tim will ask Margie.
5. Steering Group Action Items
 1. Steve will reach out to Jim Field, Aaron Buford, and Tony Dinsmore or Jen Chylack (who belong to one household) about their availability and interest in joining Steering.
 2. Tim will follow up with Dave Rice about his availability and interest in joining Steering.
 3. Tim will write to everyone on the list of Steering Group appointees to let them know of the April 17 7pm schedule, and that they can expect to hear more information in the coming weeks.

4. Tim will write to Sam, Cyndie, Maureen, and Silas to let them know the vote outcome and let them choose which one will join the Steering Group, if they are still interested and available.
 5. Tim will print copies of the Phase 1 report for Steering Group members (he has already coordinated this with Lisa and Margie: Tim will print them at Staples and submit a receipt for reimbursement.)
 6. Tim will write to Margie to ask:
 1. If Steering Group members must be sworn in for OML compliance.
 2. If we may post Steering Group meetings to the Comprehensive Plan page on the Town website.
 3. Whether the Planning Board must post a meeting notice if more than 3 Planning Board members attend a Steering Group meeting.
 7. Tim will use the Board's feedback to improve the 'Why does Leverett need a Comprehensive Plan?' storybook. He will then circulate the storybook again among Planning Board members; then share it with Emily Innes for consideration as content to include in Steering Group meetings.
6. Tom asked Ken if he has reconsidered his decision to not run for reelection. Ken remains steadfast in his resolve to not tempt fate.
 7. Next Planning Board meeting is Wednesday, April 12 at 7:30 pm by Zoom.

From: **Jenny Franz** <jennyfranz@bettertogetherdogrescue.org>

Date: Fri, Mar 10, 2023 at 11:49 AM

Subject: Animal Shelter

To: <kpkahn@gmail.com>

Hello Mr. Kahn,

My name is Jenny Franz and I am the founder of Better Together Dog Rescue in Belchertown, MA. I wanted to introduce myself because my organization has put in an offer to purchase the previous Dakin Humane Society building in Leverett!

I hope that the idea of having the building occupied and open to the public again will be welcomed by the community.

If you have any questions for me, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone at 413-813-1505. I look forward to working with you.

Best,

Jenny Franz
Founder

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Founder & President
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<https://www.bettertogetherdogrescue.org/>