



Town of Wenham  
Master Plan Advisory Committee & Planning Board  
Meeting Minutes of July 19, 2023  
Town Hall, 138 Main Street

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Pursuant to the Open Meeting Law, MGL Chapter 30 A, §§18-25, written notice posted by the Town Clerk delivered to all members, a meeting of the Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) & Planning Board was held Wednesday July 19, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Town Hall. This meeting was live and recorded by HWCAM for replay.

On the recommendation of the Planning Board, the Select Board created the Master Plan Advisory Committee & appointed the following residents for a 2 year term starting July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2024 to work with the outside consultant and provide advice to the Planning Board throughout the Master Planning process: Ernest Ashley, Water Commission; Erica Ciampa, Affordable Housing Trust; Phil Colarusso, Conservation Commission; David Frenkel, School Committee; Mardi Lowery, Council on Aging; Deirdre Pierotti, Select Board; Finance Committee (open seat); At-Large members: Kirsten Alexander; Dana Begin; Deb Evans; Joanne Frascella, Sue Patrolia. Planning Board members (2) rotating.

**Call to order** - With a quorum present, the Chair called the MPAC meeting to order at 6:30pm and identified the meeting was being recorded and those present: J. Frascella, Chair; D. Pierotti, Vice Chair; E. Ashley; P. Colarusso; K. Alexander; D. Frenkel; S. Petrolia and via Zoom: D. Evans, M. Lowery. Not present: E. Ciampa; D. Begin  
Also present: Margaret Hoffman, Planning Coordinator; Catherine Tinsley, Recording Secretary  
Planning Board members Rick Woodland; David Anderson  
Consultant JM Goldson - Jenn Goldson, AICP Manager; Cambridge Econometrics - Dan Hodge (L – 8:25pm)  
Via Zoom: Steve Poulos, Town Administrator; Dano Jukanovich, Finance Committee; Leo Maestranzi, Conservation Commission

*The agenda was taken out of order with permission\**- Review of Fiscal Analysis by Cambridge Econometrics

**Review Schedule** – J. Goldson

Ms. Goldson led the discussion on the schedule for Phase III: Strategies (July – November)

- Deliverable: JM will create a packet to include the five core themes, strategies, ideas, and links to specific information on line; this will be available for the public. JM Goldson will also provide the MPAC with a PowerPoint presentation of the strategies to present to boards/committees for input and feedback. This is slated to be done mid August through October; all meetings will be open to the public and comments will be accepted. Ms. Goldson noted these meetings could be held on zoom as focus groups and offered to assist with these presentations as needed. She spoke about the use of exit polls to create a summary. The committee supported other ideas be considered such as a presentation for those residents who participated in the *Meeting in a Box* groups or have technical working sessions based on the themes. A list of those to be invited who are not a part of a board/ committee will be created. The presentation will align a specific strategy for that board/committee/group.  
The next meeting with JMG is October 26.

- Debrief on Public Comments Received re Vision & Goals Statement – J. Goldson

The committee reviewed comments on the Vision & Goals Statement and offered edits.

In summary, the following were mentioned: The Wenham Museum is wanting to collaborate, increase tourism, include large land owners in the master planning, and consider cluster development.

- \*Review of Fiscal Analysis by Cambridge Econometrics – D. Hodge
    - Power Point Presentation- Wenham Development Scenarios and Fiscal Analysis
- Ann Furbush was recognized for her contribution to the fiscal analysis.

Background/ Context – To better understand the implications and opportunities to add more businesses and commercial development, as related to the high residential taxes.

Additional areas for commercial and business development, and net impacts Wenham can expect as a result of different scales and types of development to reduce tax rate/ increase revenue, were shown.

Overview

- Assessing Fiscal Goals and Fiscal Impact of Development:

Increasing Tax Revenues - based on the current residential tax rate of \$17.35 per \$1,000 assessed value.

To increase tax revenue by:

- 1% - the town would need to add \$11 million in assessed value which is equivalent to 125,00 sf
- 3 % - the town would need to add \$34 million which is equivalent to 374,000 sf or e.g. 33 CVS stores, 3 (Ipswich) New England Bio Labs or 2 Walmart stores
- 5% - the town would need to add \$57 million which is equivalent to 624,000 sf

Decreasing Tax Rate - based on the current residential tax rate of \$17.35 per \$1,000 assessed value.

- To decrease the tax rate to \$17 - Wenham would have to add new assed value of \$23 million equivalent to 257,000 sq ft.
- To decrease the tax rate to \$16.50 - Wenham would have to add new assed value of \$58 million equivalent to 643,000 sq ft.
- To decrease the tax rate to \$16 - Wenham would have to add new assed value of \$96 million equivalent to 1.1 million sq ft.

For comparison in size, 643,000 sf is an estimated 16 acres and it was questioned if there was enough land in town for this use; Wenham has minimal “market ready” inventory to attract commercial business. Market ready inventory is considered property that has been fully vetted for building including access, utilities, permitting, updated zoning, etc. The Iron Rail property was mentioned and it was noted the town has engaged with a company to do a feasibility study on this property.

Mr. Hodge fielded questions from the committee regarding various scenarios e.g. Bed & Breakfasts, Inns to increase revenue and tourism, commercial vs residential tax rates, and the required relationship of land acreage, parking, & green scape to a building. Comparison towns used to estimate finance impact included: Boxford, Essex Hamilton, Topsfield, and West Newbury.

- Assessing Development Scenarios:
  - Mixed Use - retail/restaurant and residential
  - Research Lab & Office
  - Industrial /Warehouse
  - Residential – 30 single family homes (72,000 sf)

In closing, Mr. Hodge provided a final summary. An estimated \$58 million/ 643,000 sf of new commercial property was needed in Wenham to reduce tax rate \$.85 from \$17.35 to \$16.50.

Lab/office, warehouse/industrial and mixed use are the most promising in terms of making a fiscal impact.

Ms. Frascella questioned the five-year growth assumption spreadsheet of expenses being extended another 5 years (total of 10 years). Mr. Poulos commented that although it is possible to add years to the spreadsheet the longer out these figures are calculated. the less effective it becomes. It was agreed this would be helpful and to include shared service with the Town of Hamilton, e.g. new school.

- Preliminary Strategy Questions & Answers - The committee members will individually complete this document and submit to the consultant.

**Meeting Minutes** - *The MPAC voted unanimously to approve the meeting minutes of **March 29, 2023** & **May 2, 2023** with Marty Lowery abstaining, not a member on those dates, and Kirsten Alexander abstaining on the March 29, 2023 minutes, not present.*

#### **Determine next meeting dates**

- Technical working session group – July 24.
- October 26- Impact meeting with Consultant.

**Adjourn** – The Committee voted unanimously by roll call to adjourn at 8:37pm.

*Respectfully Submitted By*  
*Catherine Tinsley*  
7.25.23