



Mayor
Charles C. Kokoros

Department of Planning and Community Development

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MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE

Jennifer Wadland, Chair
Kay Young, Vice-Chair
Erin V. Joyce, Member
Julia Flaherty, Member
Peter C. Herbst, Member
Shelley North, Member
David Cunningham, Member
Shaynah Barnes Munro, Member
Liz Page, Member
Joseph Reynolds, Member
Rayna Rubin, Member

APPROVED

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

Thursday – February 24, 2022 – 7PM

REMOTE, via Zoom

Meeting came to order at 6:10 PM

Members Present:

Jennifer Wadland, Chair
Kay Young, Vice-Chair, Business Owner
David Cunningham, Resident
Julia Flaherty, Town Councilor, District 1
Peter Herbst, Business Owner
Erin Joyce, Planning Board Representative
Liz Page, Resident
Joe Reynolds, Town Councilor, District 2
Rayna Rubin, Resident

Staff Present:

Melissa M. SantucciRozzi, Director – PCD
Connor Murphy, Zoning Planner – PCD

Consulting Firm (JM Goldson)

Jenn Goldson
Delaney Almond

Members Absent:

Shelley North, Business Owner
Shaynah Barnes Munro, Resident

Meeting Materials:

The Director had prepared and emailed informational packets for the Committee which included:

- Meeting Agenda – February 24, 2022
- Draft Meeting Minutes – December 8, 2021

Introduction of the New Council Appointee:

Chair Wadland begins the meeting by thanking Steve Sciascia (former Town Councilor, District 2) for his service, expertise and vision. Chair Wadland welcomes the new Town Councilor for District 2, Joe Reynolds, who has been appointed to the Master Plan Steering Committee. Chair Wadland advises that Councilor Reynolds comes with a wealth of experience in his roles as former Chief of Staff, former Chairman on Comprehensive Zoning Plan and as a former Member and Vice Chair of the Planning Board.

Kick-Off to the Master Plan – Jennifer Goldson and Delaney Almond, JM GOLDSON:

Chair Wadland explains that Jennifer Goldson, JM GOLDSON, will be covering the next portion of the meeting related to Kick-off of the Master Plan. Chair Wadland explains the process for asking questions, which will be addressed at the conclusion of the presentation.

Jennifer Goldson explains that they have a presentation, and they can take questions throughout, especially for clarification purposes. Then she will take questions at the end. (**Note: The slide presentation can be found on the Master Plan Steering Committee Page of the Town Website.**) Ms. Goldson provides an introduction of her firm as well as the Project Team and their roles. Ms. Goldson's background is in historic preservation. She specializes in working with communities that have a lot of characteristics that they want to preserve, while at the same time moving forward thus having a balance between preservation and progress.

Delaney Almond, Community Planning Analyst at JM GOLDSON, has her Master's Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Florida. She has worked on international planning and geospatial analytics. Her specialty is GIS, mapping and data visualization. Delaney will be the Lead Assistant on this project and will be here throughout the process.

Ms. Goldson explains that they have another member of the JM GOLDSON team, Andrew Oliver, who will be supporting the team, and they have two other consultant firms who are part of this team. RKG Associates will focus on economic development as well as public facilities and services. Kittelson & Associates will focus on Transportation.

Ms. Goldson explains the first phase is getting an understanding of the community. She summarizes that Braintree is a small, historic town with excellent access and proximity and also substantial commercial assets and opportunities. Ms. Goldson then begins the "launch clarifier" with the Committee Members. She would like to start by asking how long members have lived in Braintree and what is one thing they love about Braintree that they hope will never change. She challenges the committee to not repeat someone else's answer.

Erin Joyce explains that her husband, Michael Joyce, grew up in Braintree. She has been living in Braintree for almost 15 years. One thing that she loves about Braintree that she hopes will never change is the neighborhood elementary schools and the small communities fostered around those elementary schools. She feels like it is a wonderful community that starts in those areas and expands out as kids grow.

David Cunningham has lived in Braintree for about 36 years. He moved to Braintree 36 years ago with the school system in mind, as it enjoyed a pretty good reputation and still does. Mr. Cunningham "likes" certain aspects of the Town, but he will save his love for people as opposed to places. He likes the convenience of being close to the city, highways and other areas that he would frequent on a regular basis. He also likes that it is a mix between urban and suburban. He feels that it is no longer a little country town, and it hasn't been for 75 years, but that is part of what he likes about the Town. There is a difference between living in the city and in the outer suburbs, and he likes the idea of being able to walk to a train or other places near his house, and he finds it convenient to be able to do so. At the same time, he recognizes that most of the rest of the Town is a situation where you need to get in a vehicle to get anywhere, and it is a very unsafe place for pedestrians because of all the vehicular traffic.

Kay Young has lived in Braintree for about 8 years, and she owns a business in Braintree, a beer store. She is a member of the 4th of July committee, and she runs the Braintree Beer Garden, and she thinks one of the things she loves about Braintree is the community involvement and the support and passion that people have. She is very happy to live here. Although 8 years doesn't seem like a long time in comparison to others, in that time she has been welcomed with open arms and has learned a whole lot. She appreciates the passion and support that she has received both as a resident and as a business owner.

Peter Herbst has lived in Braintree for 14 years; his wife grew up in Braintree. Peter would echo what David Cunningham previously mentions, which is the access to the “T”. He likes that you could get into Boston so easily for work and entertainment. The other thing that he really enjoys about Braintree is that there is a good balance of people that both live and work here rather than live here and commute to work elsewhere.

Liz Page has lived in Braintree all her life (over 50 years). She can honestly say that she loves the town; she feels that there is a generational aspect to many people that live in Braintree – they grew up in the town, and they raised their family in the town. That is something that seems to foster life-long friendships and relationships. The next thing that she loves about the town is the true sense of community; it is a very welcoming town at the same time. She thinks it is a great place to live and to raise a family.

Joe Reynolds has lived in Braintree for about 50 years. He absolutely agrees with some of the things that previous speakers have touched upon such as closeness and knowing your neighbors. Joe really enjoys the diversity of neighborhoods with open space. Joe is a history student, and he really like the historical aspect of the town. It is fascinating to him how this town has evolved. It is very significant in our country, and he likes the fact that we recognize this to this day. Joe loves the New England feel in the community; however, he also enjoys the fact that we understand that the world changes constantly. He thinks there is spirit in this community and in the panel to try to find what is the most important things that we can all agree upon to continue the success of our community in the way that it has through the centuries.

Jennifer Wadland has been in Braintree for 15 years; she moved up from Norwell, which is a different type of community. She absolutely loves the sense of community in this town. People band together, and it is like life-long friends. She loves the location close to the city, with a small-town feel. She loves the school system, but maybe we need a little more work on them going forward.

Julia Flaherty will add that Braintree has a nice set of natural features developed for pedestrian or passive recreational use - things like Pond Meadow Park, Sunset Lake, Cranberry Pond, the town forest. She loves that Braintree offers those, and they are like little Braintree secrets, as people from other towns may not know about them as well. So, when you use them, they are not over-run with people. It is a nice feature that not every town offers, and Julia would like to see Braintree continue to offer that to folks.

Rayna Rubin has lived in Braintree for about 8 years. What drew her to Braintree was the nice mix of things such as the location, the city, the nice parks and amenities. Where Rayna lives, you can walk to the library and the farmer’s market. She is on the Historical Commission – so the history is important. For Rayna, it is a mix of all these things that are accessible. It is not too big – it’s not too small. It is just right. With reference to community and volunteerism, Rayna feels we “punch above our weight” in all of those areas.

Steering Committee members length of residence in Braintree varies; however, there was agreement over the aspects of Braintree that they admired such as: neighborhood elementary school community, sense of community, open-space and natural features, historic aspects, community involvement, welcoming town/lifelong friendships and MBTA access/convenience of location.

Delaney Almond, JM GOLDSON, summarizes what members have said in their Project Launch Clarifiers. Ms. Almond acknowledges that they were super-detailed and will be useful throughout the process. Ms. Almond explains that there were three key themes. The first theme was wanting the process to be inclusive – capturing a number of different audiences. The second theme was that the committee wants to come away with a clear direction for the future. The third theme was that the committee wants to achieve balance. Ms. Almond describes these themes in more detail (this is clearly set forth in the slide set on the Master Plan page of the Website).

Ms. Goldson explains that the consulting team will be asking the Steering Committee to do homework, which she thinks is a really important piece of the Committee's involvement. Ms. Goldson continues the presentation by explaining some fundamental about a Master Plan. She explains that it is a way for a community to figure out how it is going to respond to change over time. First, the project will start by understanding where you are today, and then it will progress into the visionary phase. In conclusion, the Master Plan becomes a policy document that needs to be both financially and politically feasible. There are also social and community building ideas built in. Ms. Goldson reviews core questions at the heart of master planning. She then reviews what has changed in 2+ decades since the prior Master Plan was complete. She explains that the Master Plan process is a way to bring people together to reflect rather than to react and to create a policy roadmap to guide local decision making, comply with state requirements and allocate municipal resources.

Ms. Goldson explains the Statutory Elements of a Master Plan vs. the Elements of a Master Plan for Braintree. The Statutory Elements are: (1) Land Use; (2) Circulation; (3) Economic Development; (4) Housing; (5) Natural, Historic and Cultural Resources; (6) Open Space and Recreation; and (7) Public Facilities and Services. The Elements for Braintree (based on RFP) are: (1) Land Use; (2) Transportation, Circulation and Transit; (3) Economic Development; (4) Housing; (5) Historic and Cultural Resources; (6) Open Space, Natural Resources and Recreation; (7) Public Facilities and Services and (8) Sustainability and Resilience. As the plan unfolds these elements are interconnected. Ms. Goldson reviews the idea of "Vision Pillars" used by other towns such as Mansfield, which show how the elements have overlap.

Ms. Goldson highlights her "Tree of the Plan's Components", which shows the vision, goals, strategies that are supported by information and understanding of trends and issues and rooted in community values. She describes each of the components where the vision is hopeful, the goals are the conditions aimed for and the strategies are the ways to achieve the goals.

Ms. Goldson explains that they will be doing a series of focus groups within the community because they really want to understand the issues from the interested citizen's point of view. It is not just about collecting census data; it is also about talking to people and understanding the issues. Ms. Goldson provides examples of: (1) what "a vision" looks like. The vision for each town is very customized; (2) goals under a core theme, which don't tell you how you're going to do it but instead what you are aiming for; and (3) strategies, which are the nuts and bolts of how you are going to do things. Another element that will be included is a "Future Land Use Map", which is a picture of anything that is spatially relevant as part of the vision and the goals. The project will include a very robust community engagement process in a number of ways.

Ms. Goldson pauses to see if there are any questions. Dan Clifford, former Councilor and current resident, states so far what Ms. Goldson has presented is very good, but he would like to ask if there are going to be specific benchmarks whereby the public will have an opportunity to come in as the process goes along. Ms. Goldson responds by stating absolutely; you will see more detail of that as the Overall Project Schedule is presented by Delaney Almond. It will show the various ways members of the public can participate.

Delaney Almond provides an overview of the Overall Project Schedule. The Overall Project Schedule spans 18 months; we are currently in Phase I, Braintree Yesterday and Today; the main goal deliverable at the end of the Phase, which will be in June 2022, is going to be an Existing Conditions Report. That is where we get a baseline about what has been happening in Braintree. What are the existing conditions since the last Master Plan? The Existing Conditions Report is informed by focus groups, interviews and a community forum. These are opportunities for members of the community to participate. Phase II, Braintree Tomorrow, will produce a draft Vision and Goals Report. This phase will include an on-line survey and another community forum. Phase III, Achieving Braintree Tomorrow, is where we determine how we are going to achieve the goals. It is where we develop the strategies. There are more focus groups around the core themes. These will be very informative for developing the strategies and putting the draft Plan together. The last phase, Phase IV – Plan Finalization-

Adoption, is where the consulting team meets with everybody and goes back to every element to make sure it all makes sense and is reflective of what is seen in the community.

Rayna Rubin, committee member, would like to also add that, in addition to forums and face-to-face meetings, there will be website and other ways that the community can comment or provide observations and ideas. Ms. Goldson explains that, as part of the Phase II piece, there are a number of ways that the team will try to get out to where people already are rather than just asking people to come to public forums. Some of those ways are going out to various events that are happening in the community. The committee will be asked to help at these events, and this will start to happen over the summer and into the fall.

Ms. Goldson discusses the possibility of using a “Meeting in a Box”, which is basically a meeting kit where any member of the public or steering committee can host a small meeting to get more people involved. This meeting might last for about an hour and include a smaller group of under 10 attendees. When members of the community engage people, it can have an exponential affect. The “Meeting in a Box” kit has all the materials needed to have a meaningful discussion.

Ms. Goldson explains how they are “performance based”, and if something is not working, the consulting team wants to work with the steering committee to determine how to get more input. The consulting team wants the committee to be happy with the results. They want to figure out how to reach people they are not hearing from.

Ms. Goldson explains that the process is not necessarily “linear”, as they will continue to revisit the work of earlier phases. This can be a challenging and sometimes frustrating process; therefore, it is important to communicate all along the way. Ms. Goldson explains that the resulting plan may not be 100% everything each individual is looking for; however, they are after a plan that town officials and the community can say “They have really listened to us. I can see that there have been trade-offs and compromises, but they are balancing a lot of different things.” Ms. Goldson can tell, from the Launch Clarifier, that there is a lot of overlap in the things the committee members care about, but there are also differences. Hopefully, the steering committee can be a microcosm of the different perspectives in the community. Working through different perspectives is part of the process. Ms. Goldson asks that the committee keeps an open and curious mind and express your opinions.

Delaney Almond reviews the detailed schedule for Phase I, which is also posted on the Town website. She highlights what is expected to be included for each of the five meetings from February through June, as well as what other events will occur during this period.

Rayna Rubin asks if the committee members will be able to get copies of the schedule and presentation. Director SantucciRozzi explains that the schedule was circulated, and she will get a copy of the slides from Jenn Goldson. All of this will be uploaded to the Master Plan Steering Committee page on the Mayor’s page on the website.

Jen Wadland asks, for planning purposes, are these dates firm? Director SantucciRozzi clarifies that the dates are firm, and they will all be in person meetings. Cahill Auditorium has already been reserved, and we will have cable coverage.

Dan Clifford arrived at tonight’s meeting a little late, but wants to make sure that the consulting team was aware that about 2.5 years ago approximately 800 residents came to Town Hall and effectively demanded that a Master Plan be crafted and created for the Town. A lot of the discussion, at that time, was that the community wanted to keep their “suburban feel” and reject the urbanization of Braintree. With regard to the question of having civic participation, Mr. Clifford would like to relay that the Town will be very active and very interested to participate.

Ms. Goldson discusses the possibility of “Naming the Plan”. This is not something that the committee needs to spend a lot of time on; however, having a survey that goes out asking people for name ideas is a positive way to gain community input right away, and it puts the project in the eye of the public. Rayna Rubin likes the idea, and there is discussion around how to distribute this survey. Ms. Goldson thinks it should be on the town website, on the Mayor’s page for the Master Plan, on the project page created by the consulting team, posted on social media and through distribution of a flyer.

Jen Wadland discusses what the former speaker, Mr. Clifford, alluded to related to a large outpouring of lack of support from the community for the Comprehensive Zoning Amendment, and she suggests saying “Help Name Our Town’s Master Plan”, as there was such a push for a Master Plan. It is important to say “Master Plan”.

Kay Young thinks it is a good idea, as it is important to let people feel involved from the beginning.

Liz Page comments that the presentation was wonderful. She thinks it is going to be a great process, and she is looking forward to it. With regard to the name, she thinks we should keep it simple such as – “Braintree – Our Town”. Dan Clifford states the town is looking for a Master Plan; let’s keep it simple and call it a Master Plan.

Recording Secretary:

Director SantucciRozzi explains that the Committee will be getting a Recording Secretary for the Committee. She was hoping there would be interest from a Planning student that recently graduated, which would be a nice opportunity for them to participate in something like this. The Director will be reaching out to some companies that do minutes for Boards.

In-Person Meetings

Director SantucciRozzi advises that the legislature did make some changes to the in-person meetings; zoom and remote meetings have been extended until July 15, 2022. Mayor Kokoros and the Director have spoken at length about this issue, and they really want to get back into the swing of meeting in person. The Director advises that Jenn Goldson has quite a bit of interactive things planned. All of the meetings detailed on the Phase 1 Schedule are in-person meetings and the date in May is a Saturday. It hasn’t yet been determined if the meeting will occur in the morning or afternoon. The Director discusses the possibility of setting up a table at upcoming community events to reach residents.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – December 8, 2021

MOTION made by Member Young to approve the Meeting Minutes of December 8, 2021 as written; **SECONDED** by Councilor Flaherty; voted 8:0:0. Roll-Call Vote: Kay Young – Yes; David Cunningham – Yes; Julia Flaherty – Yes; Peter Herbst – Yes; Erin Joyce – Yes; Elizabeth Page – Yes; Rayna Rubin – Yes; Chair Wadland – Yes. (As Member Reynolds was not present for the December 8, 2021 meeting, he is abstaining from this vote.)

Adjournment

MOTION made by Member Young to adjourn the Meeting; **SECONDED** by Member Page; voted 9:0:0. Roll-Call Vote: Kay Young – Yes; David Cunningham – Yes; Julia Flaherty – Yes; Peter Herbst – Yes; Erin Joyce – Yes; Elizabeth Page – Yes; Joe Reynolds – Aye; Rayna Rubin – Yes; Chair Wadland – Yes. The meeting adjourned at 7:35 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Louise F. Quinlan,
Office Manager, Planning and Community Development

APPROVED