



Mayor
Charles C. Kokoros

APPROVED

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: June 23, 2022

MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES

Thursday – April 28, 2022 – 7PM

Location: Cahill Auditorium, Braintree Town Hall, 1 JFK Memorial Drive

Meeting came to order at 7:00 PM

Members Present:

Jennifer Wadland, Chair
Kay Young, Vice-Chair, Business Owner
David Cunningham, Resident
Julia Flaherty, Town Councilor, District 1
Liz Page, Resident
Joe Reynolds, Town Councilor, District 2
Rayna Rubin, Resident

Staff Present:

Melissa M. SantucciRozzi, Director – PCD

Consulting Firm (JM Goldson)

Jenn Goldson
Delaney Almond

Members Absent:

Peter Herbst, Business Owner
Erin Joyce, Planning Board Representative
Shaynah Barnes Munro, Resident
Shelley North, Business Owner

Member and Staff Announcements:

Director SantucciRozzi wants to make a housekeeping announcement and states that we are very fortunate to have Braintree Cable Access here this evening. The Director states that we need to have a process in recognizing speakers. If you would like to speak, the Director asks that you raise your hand if you are a member of the body and Chair Wadland will recognize you. Those from the audience can raise their hand and come up to the podium. BCAM turns the camera to the person that is speaking, so they just want to be able to follow the speakers. Staff has one other announcement. On Wednesday, Eric Halverson of RKG, who is part of the consulting team, spent the entire day in Braintree interviewing several of the department heads. There was one that was a conflict and was done today. We should be getting some of that information at one of our upcoming meetings.

Overview:

Jennifer Goldson begins by explaining that there is an activity built into the Agenda, and we will be taking about 90 minutes. She will also provide an update on the project schedule. Delaney Almond will go through the Activity Summary that we did at our last meeting in March. Then, the team will provide a summary of the six Focus Group Meetings done over the past few weeks; this was also provided as part of the members' packet for this meeting. Ms. Goldson explains that the Department Head interviews are not incorporated as part of the summary provided, but she will add in those findings at a later date. Ms. Goldson explains that we will be doing a group activity, and she also wants to provide an update of the Naming Contest. There were a lot of good ideas. Lastly, the team wants to go through details and outreach for the Forum, which is being held on May 21, 2022.

Ms. Goldson provides an “on-screen” reminder of where we are in the project schedule. We are in Phase I, and we will be moving into Phase II, which is the Visioning Phase, starting over the summer and into the fall. Phase III will be Achieving (i.e. strategies), which will occur during the winter and into the spring. Phase IV, which will wrap up the project, will occur next summer. Currently, in Phase I, we are trying to understand the community. The team will be submitting a comprehensive Existing Conditions Analysis in the middle of June for the committee to review, and this will be discussed at our June meeting. At the end of each phase, the team will be providing a deliverable that summarizes everything learned in that phase.

March 24, 2022 Group Activity Summary:

Delaney Almond, Community Planner at JM Goldson, is providing a summary of the group activity done at our last meeting. We took maps of Braintree and identified places that were Special Places and places that were Opportunity Areas. The Group Activity showed that participants wanted to preserve open and natural space, particularly cemeteries. Participants also wanted to prioritize neighborhood integrity. Some of the major areas of opportunity are the Ivory Street Corridor and the South Shore Plaza. Both of the town squares have been mentioned as both Special Places and Opportunity Areas by multiple groups.

Master Plan Focus Groups Summaries:

Delaney Almond explains that there were six Focus Groups held, with a total of 37 people participating. Participants were sent a blank worksheet, as shown in the slide presentation. It has Opportunities/Strengths on one side and Issues/Challenges on the other side. Each of the Focus Groups were centered around one of the Master Plan topics. There was a brief explanation at the beginning of each Focus Group, and then the participants had a conversation. Team members were there to take notes, facilitate discussion and get an understanding of what is going on according to these key stakeholders in each area. Committee Members have been provided a summary of key themes for each of the topic areas. There were some “Key Themes” that came up across multiple Focus Groups. One theme was “Protect and Enhance Neighborhoods”, where participants want to maintain the character of neighborhoods. Multiple groups had conversations about the uniqueness of each neighborhood, with the hope of making them more attractive and preventing vehicle “cut-through” occurring.

There was also a Key Theme of “Town Priorities”. We know that people care about open space, natural resources, history, culture, sustainability and sports. Yet, sports are viewed as the main town priority. This was heard from multiple Focus Groups. It is a perception.

Another Key Theme is that “Braintree is Changing”. This was mentioned in multiple Focus Groups. While there is a desire to embrace the change in Braintree, it is important to remember to preserve and teach about the history. Other Focus Groups noted the importance of bringing newer residents in as volunteers and participants in local government to get people to be more involved and bring people together.

There was also a Key Theme of “Priorities of New Development”. Participants noted that, with the change in development that is happening in Braintree, there should be an emphasis on sustainability and green building.

When discussing transportation, there was a discussion about transit-oriented development, Complete Streets, more amenities for pedestrians and bicycles and connectivity across town.

Participants in the Economic Development and Housing Focus Groups noted that we need to find a healthy balance between residential and commercial development across town.

Lastly, there is a Key Theme about “Information about Braintree”. Almost every Focus Group had a conversation about access to information about Braintree. Some participants stated it was difficult to find information about events or the availability of facilities, especially for people not deeply involved with the Town. There was a recommendation that centralized information in multiple languages would be helpful. Ms. Almond concludes that so far these were the Key Themes noted.

Member Cunningham asks for clarification on “Complete Streets”. Ms. Almond explains that Complete Streets are streets that are designed with transit in mind, and includes planning for pedestrians, bicyclists, green space. They think about the street as a complete space for all of its users, rather than just for vehicles.

Chairwoman Wadland wants to make sure that Ms. Almond received feedback from Mr. Steve Sciascia, who wrote a letter about the housing. Ms. Almond believes they received this information via email, and she explains that the team can make a revision to include this if necessary.

Group Activity Session (Existing Conditions Problems and Challenges):

Delaney Almond explains that we are now going to do an activity; she explains that the committee members have received some homework. Basically, the team wants committee members to reflect on the top problems and challenges in the community related to each of the Master Plan Elements. Ms. Almond provides a brief explanation on how this should be done. Ms. Goldson stresses the importance of putting each idea on a different sticky note because they need to be organized on the sheet. Ms. Goldson invites audience members to participate in the exercise. Ms. Goldson explains that at the conclusion they will do a quick review of each sheet. Ms. Goldson clarifies that each participant should provide a maximum of three concerns for each of the Master Plan Element sheets. This should be done individually.

Chairwoman Wadland clarifies that, if anyone has any comments, it should be done through the Chair.

Ms. Goldson suggests for clarification that the topics (Elements) be read: (1) Economic Development; (2) Historic and Cultural Resources; (3) Housing; (4) Open Space/Natural Resources/ Recreation; (5) Public Facilities and Services; (6) Sustainability and Resilience; (7) Transportation, Circulation and Transit. Ms. Goldson explains that she, Delaney Almond and Director SantucciRozzi are available for clarification during this Group Activity Session. The Committee breaks for the Group Activity Session.

The meeting reconvenes with Ms. Goldson explaining that they will be briefly provide a presentation of the results of the Group Activity Session. The team will be recording all of the comments and providing them to the Master Plan Steering Committee as a document for the next meeting. Ms. Goldson discusses the Economic Development section where participants discussed South Shore Plaza and crime and vacancy at South Shore Plaza, as well as impacts to neighborhoods.

Under Economic Development there were also comments related to impacts, such as traffic, of commercial development as well as industrial developments on neighborhoods. The flipside was wanting to see more biotech, as long as traffic was not an impact. There were also comments related to maintenance of, cleanliness and vacancies within business districts. There were comments related to public/ private partnerships. There were a few comments about tax revenue related to trying to diversify the tax base and increase tax revenue, but not as much as Ms. Goldson expected to see.

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Under Historic and Cultural Resources there were concerns that many Braintree residents don't know the history of the Town or recognize the wealth of historic resources that Braintree has. One person was disheartened and thought it was too late, but others had ideas around trying to protect, preserve and educate. There was discussion about resources being open to the public/publicly accessible. There was concern related to lack of money for preservation and wanting more funding sources for preservation. With regard to Cultural Resources, some people felt there was a lack of cultural opportunities, such as a live entertainment venue or other means for theatre, visual arts and music.

With regards to Housing, there were comments related to wanting more diversity in housing stock (single-family starter homes, smaller scale options). There was discussion related to multi-family development, where there were conflicting opinions where some said we have too much and it is too intense and others saying we shouldn't be afraid of mixed-use development in appropriate areas. There were comments related to affordable housing, housing for seniors and housing for veterans being priorities. There were notes about prioritizing transit-oriented development. Transit-oriented development is housing development that is denser and located closer to transit and allows people to access transit easier for commuting. There were a few comments about maintaining neighborhood character through residential zoning so that the neighborhoods can stay as intended.

With regards to Open Space/Natural Resources/ Recreation, we have comments about preserving more open space and protecting green spaces. There were comments about maintaining open space related to litter and about trees being cut down. There was concern about playgrounds and family spaces not being maintained or upgraded. An individual was concerned that the Town wants tax revenue more than it wants to protect the quality of life and protect existing waterfront. Comment included that there was limited or no walking or bike paths.

With regards to Public Facilities and Services, there were a lot of comments about the Fire Department headquarters needing major capital improvements. There were comments related to the Police Station. There were many comments related to the high school, which needs some work. The ADA Commission needs new leadership and more members. There were questions about how do we ensure upkeep of buildings and sidewalks. There were comments suggesting that public buildings should be more energy efficient and support renewable energy.

With regards to Sustainability and Resilience, there are areas that talks about concerns related to flooding and maintaining residential character. There were a lot of comments related to lack of leadership, knowledge, money and education. In addition, there were concerns about pollution, suggestions to create a sustainable lens and upgrade town vehicles to hybrid and battery. There was an emphasis on development and how that can be sustainable.

With regards to Transportation, Circulation and Transit, there are a lot of ideas about bicyclists, pedestrians, access and safety. There are comments related to the need for better public transit, residential zoning and development around T Stations. There were notes about too much traffic and how it is just not safe. There were comments about lack of connectivity, traffic calming measures, concerns about safety with reactivity/lack of planning.

Ms. Goldson concludes that this is a really useful exercise for the team. They are seeing things come out of the Focus Groups and learning a lot from their own research, but it is also good for them to hear the perspectives of meeting attendees and committee members. The team will be providing this information in typed form for the next meeting.

Braintree Master Plan Project Naming Contest update:

Delaney Almond discusses the naming contest where we have received 48 responses and 11 names are listed in the slide presentation. Committee members are asked to write down their top three choices and we can tally votes.

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Ms. Goldson also suggests we can do this via email, as well, if members want more time to think about this. Chairwoman Wadland likes the idea of everyone in the room voting, and committee members are ready to vote. Ms. Goldson mentions that members: don't have to like any of the suggestions, can come up with their own idea, can just have Braintree Master Plan as the name or can just vote for one name. Ms. Goldson reads the 11 name suggestions: 1.) Braintree 2033; 2.) Braintree 2033 and Beyond; 3.) Forward Braintree; 4.) Braintree's Blueprint; 5.) Inspired Braintree; 6.) Realize Braintree; 7.) Brainstorming Braintree; 8.) Braintree for the Ages; 9.) A Decade for the Foundation of Braintree's Future; 10.) A Better Braintree; 11.) Braintree Master Plan. Ms. Goldson points out that this document will still be called a Master Plan, but it may have a different interesting or branding name. However, "Braintree Master Plan" will still be put on everything.

Community Forum Details and Outreach Plan:

Delaney Almond highlights the upcoming Community Forum, which is being held on Saturday, May 21st at Town Hall from 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM. It will be an Open House style with a Kickoff Presentation. Then people will circulate to stations. Stations will be informative and interactive. There will be poster boards set up at each station. Some will have information that has been gathered so far from the Existing Conditions Report that the team is working on, from the Focus Groups and from these committee meetings. Then, there will be a board that is interactive, similar to the group activity from tonight. We will ask participants about their vision for the future of Braintree, the issues and opportunities in each Master Plan Element and the biggest issues in Braintree that participants hope the Plan will address. Ms. Almond explains that Director SantucciRozzi put together a great list related to outreach for the Forum. There are also flyers and materials that can be distributed throughout town.

Director SantucciRozzi explains that each committee member has a stack of flyers, and she has populated the outreach list with who is responsible for each item, and she highlights suggestions for where committee members can engage in outreach and post and distribute flyers. Committee Members are asked to complete these tasks by Tuesday, May 3, 2022. The Director and Assistant Director will post at all town buildings. The announcement and link for the Forum is going on all of the Agendas coming out of the Planning and Community Development Office this month. The Director discusses other places that posting will occur, and she stresses the importance of getting the word out and getting people to attend the Forum. Ms. Almond reminds people about the Braintree Master Plan website, where there is a link to register for the Forum.

Ms. Goldson explains that this is an open public meeting, and you don't have to register to come. The registration is optional and helps the event planners to get an estimate on attendance. However, anybody can come whether they have registered or not.

Braintree Master Plan Project Naming Contest (results):

Ms. Goldson announces that we have a winner and a runner up. The winner is: The Braintree Master Plan with ten votes. The runner up was: A Better Braintree with seven votes. Ms. Goldson explains that ultimately the name is up to the Steering Committee Members.

Open Questions and Answers:

Councilor Joe Reynolds asks Ms. Goldson when committee members will be seeing the "Meetings in a Box". Ms. Goldson explains that will be for Phase II when you do the visioning work.

Chairwoman Wadland asks Ms. Goldson how members can help on the day of the Forum Event. Ms. Goldson explains that the team would like members to each be at a station. The stations will be organized by the elements. The Director will assign members based upon their areas of expertise. Members can also notify the team if there is a topic they feel comfortable with. Committee Members will be asked to talk with people, and it is a great opportunity for the community to get to know members. Although the public may communicate their concerns verbally to a member, it is important that people write down their concerns so that it can be recorded.

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Director SantucciRozzi explains that she will send out an email with the list, and members can populate what they are interested in. We will need members at the sign-in table. The Director explains that Braintree Cable Access will be providing coverage. The Mayor will be providing some opening remarks along with the Director. Then, Jen Goldson and Delaney Almond will provide an introduction before people start making their way around the room. BCAM will video that. There will be a roving camera and microphone to interview willing participants. The Director explains that we are trying to make it as interactive as possible.

Member David Cunningham asks if this is going to be a scenario where only people from Braintree or businesses from Braintree are going to be part of the process. Ms. Goldson explains that it is an open public meeting. So, in theory, anybody no matter where they live or work could come. However, we have found that other people are not that interested in coming. It is mostly residents and business owners – anyone who cares about Braintree is invited to attend. Member Cunningham’s concern is that the problems that Braintree has Braintree cannot solve by itself. We have state and federal leaders who can address some of the problems. Member Cunningham expresses that if we don’t get help from higher sources, we will be putting a band-aid on the problems. Ms. Goldson comments that some towns provide invitations to their state representatives, and it is a good idea. Member Cunningham is talking about a higher level than that and states, as taxpayers in the United States, we are funding an infrastructure program that is responsible for infrastructure for the entire country. Braintree has infrastructure problems that need to be addressed, but it doesn’t have the money to pay for those things. Member Cunningham thinks we should invite the local Congressperson and the two Senators at least to make them aware of it. Member Cunningham discusses the Braintree Split traffic situation and the undersized parking garage at the Braintree T station. We don’t have the ability to solve those problems, yet we have to deal with them every day. We need to get people at higher levels to be aware of what we are trying to accomplish. The Director will send personal communication to invite the Senators and local Congressperson.

Recording Secretary:

Director SantucciRozzi advises that there is no update. The Director was hoping to get a recent graduate of a planning program, and she has been unable to connect with that person. Louise Quinlan, the Office Manager from the Planning Department is currently doing the minutes for now, so we are keeping up with them. The Director does want to get somebody as Recording Secretary.

Approval of Meeting Minutes – March 24, 2022:

MOTION made by Member Young to approve the Meeting Minutes of March 24, 2022; **SECONDED** by Member Reynolds; voted 7:0:0.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Member Young to adjourn the meeting; **SECONDED** by Member Reynolds; voted 7:0:0. The meeting adjourned at 7:36 PM.

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

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