



**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
David Cunningham, Member
Julia Flaherty, Member
Peter C. Herbst, Member
Justine Huang, Member
Erin V. Joyce, Member
Shelley North, Member
Elizabeth Page, Member
Joseph Reynolds, Member
Rayna Rubin, Member

Approved – October 3, 2022

**MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE – MEETING MINUTES
Thursday – July 27, 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
Peter Herbst, Business Owner
Justine Huang, Resident
Erin Joyce, Planning Board Representative
Shelley North, Business Owner
Elizabeth Page, Resident
Rayna Rubin, Resident-arrived after attendance was taken

Staff Present:

Connor Murphy, Assistant Director – PCD

Consulting Firm (JM Goldson)

Delaney Almond

Members Absent:

Julia Flaherty, Town Councilor, District 1
Joe Reynolds, Town Councilor, District 2

Member and Staff Announcements:

Chairperson Wadland opens the meeting up for Member and Staff Announcements.

Member Joyce wanted to note that she has to leave at 7:45 this evening.

Assistant Director Connor Murphy mentions that Director SantucciRozzi and Members Joyce and Huang attended Braintree Day and yielded a very good turnout for the surveys. Staff is working on having attendance at the Farmer’s Market. There are members of the Zoning Board that participate in the Farmer’s Market every week. Staff will be working with them on setting up a booth. Staff has a banner and copies of the survey, and they are hoping to engage in some good public participation. We will also be working on a Beer Garden table with Member Kay Young to promote the survey.

Member Elizabeth Pages asks Mr. Murphy if the Braintree Day surveys were done online. Mr. Murphy believes it was a mix of both, and it will be the same process at the Farmer's Market. Mr. Murphy advises that the QR Code is used to access the website and survey. Member Joyce advises that a lot of people stopped by the booth at Braintree Day and take the survey. Member Joyce advises that the survey is very long to take at a setting like Braintree Day or a Farmer's Market. She wonders if it is possible to have an abbreviated one for those types of events. They did use maps, and she thinks it was well received by the people that stopped at the booth. Member Huang agrees with member Joyce and suggests that for the Farmer's Market we have the map and have them take-away the survey. She also suggests using technology in the form of a laptop in case attendees want to take the survey there. Assistant Director Murphy advises that is something he can work with town officials on doing.

Video Message from Jennifer Goldson

Delaney Almond, JM Goldson, advises that Jenn Goldson is not in attendance; however, she will play a video message that is part of the presentation, and then she will go directly into the other agenda items.

Ms. Goldson wanted to provide some extra support in the form of opening thoughts. She advises that we are in a very important phase in the Master Plan process. It can even be a tender phase. We have concluded the initial due diligence to understand the community, and we are about to launch Phase II where we ask community members what they want for the future of Braintree. Members may have felt some tension at last month's meeting. We heard community members express frustrations with the draft Existing Conditions Report that we reviewed last month. Ms. Goldson wants to say two things on the subject. Ms. Goldson wants the members to know that exposing community tension is not just typical or to be expected in a Master Planning process; she would argue that it is essential in order to create a truly meaningful plan at the end of the project. Part of the job as planners is to shine a light on those tensions in the community that are very natural – tensions between development/growth and preservation. That is the only way to find a common ground, which she believes we will do. This is normal and good. We need to talk these issues through. The consultants provide a structure and framework to be able to do this in a safe and constructive way. Ms. Goldson advises that the Existing Conditions Report had some mixed reactions, where to some it seemed they crossed the line from analysis into recommendations. While to some it seemed they offered an appropriate and helpful synthesis of the issues, Ms. Goldson wants the members to know that they didn't intend to make recommendations in this document. The consulting team is in the process of removing any language that could be interpreted as a recommendation. The next version of the Existing Conditions Report will contain those changes. In closing, Ms. Goldson offers that the Steering Committee is doing a terrific job as a committee in leading this process, and she hopes that the committee feels good about that. Ms. Goldson advises that her team will do their best to continue to be as inclusive and responsive as possible throughout the whole process. Ms. Goldson advises that tonight Delaney Almond will provide an update on the status of the Phase II Project Schedule, and she will walk the committee through some ideas to help target some groups that are under-represented. Ms. Goldson thanks the committee for listening, and she looks forward to seeing them very soon.

Review Phase II Project Schedule:

Delaney Almond, JM Goldson, quickly reviews the Phase II Project Schedule. She advises that we are doing our summer engagement currently. In October we will have our second Community Forum. We will wrap up this phase by presenting the draft Vision and Goals Report. Then, we will move onto Phase III in the new year and Phase IV next summer. Looking at the detailed schedule for Phase II, we have one more meeting this summer (on August 18) where we will check-in on the engagement process. We will close the engagement in early September (September 6), and we will meet to discuss the first draft of Vision and Goals as a result of summer engagement (on September 22). We will have Community Forum 2 in October where we will get some public feedback on the draft Vision and Goals. Then, in November and December we will be finalizing that report and presenting that to the committee. Ms. Almond pauses to see if there are any questions.

Member Rubin would like to propose to the group that we have a couple of extra weeks after Labor Day as it is difficult to get people to attend Meeting in a Box over the summer. She wonders what other people think about this.

Member Young agrees that it is a good idea, as long as it doesn't crunch what the consultants are doing. She feels that in summer people are away and more distracted. Once people get back to routines in the fall, more participation would probably happen.

Member Joyce clarifies with Ms. Almond that this is engagement is for Phase II, as it is looking forward and asking people questions about the vision for the future. Member Joyce concludes that if this is the public participation portion for Phase II, she would agree to extending it into the fall to capture people coming back from summer break.

Member Page understands members concerns about the summer; however, her concern is if something were to happen in the form of a potential shutdown, we may have another delay at some point. She is concerned about how many times we can delay the process.

Ms. Almond states, as it stands currently, if we extend the process even a few weeks, we will have to do a contract and budget amendment to push everything else back. The turnaround time between when we close the summer engagement and prepare the Vision and Goals is a tight turnaround time. The consultants want to make sure they have ample time to put that together thoughtfully. However, she recognizes that it is totally up to the committee, but they would need to do a budget and contract amendment to account for any additional meetings. She advises that we would have to reschedule the second Community Forum. Chairperson Wadland states that might not be up to the committee. Member Joyce had one comment, which might not affect the contract and time allotted. She did have a request from a Councilor to allow the Meeting in a Box to extend into September. Maybe that would be a way to extend community participation. Ms. Almond would have to confirm this with Ms. Goldson for an official word. Ms. Almond states the survey would be harder to extend. Member Rubin suggests we make a recommendation to extend Meeting in a Box by two weeks, and Ms. Almond will check to see if that will trigger a change to the scope. Member North notes that the survey is lengthy, and participants have advised her that it is taking too long to complete. She recommends an abbreviated survey with multiple choice and the option for written comments. Ms. Almond will check to see if that is something the consultants can do. Chairperson Wadland confirms there are two recommendations: (1) an abbreviated survey; (2) extend Meeting in a Box by two weeks.

Member Huang wonders if we have the survey results, and maybe that can help them determine some of the extensions. Ms. Almond advises that is coming up in the slide presentation.

Update on Summer Tools (Survey and Meeting in a Box)

Ms. Almond advises that the Meeting in a Box packet is live on the website. She asks that members send completed pages back to her or to the Planning and Community Development Department. She advises that they are waiting for a translation into Simplified Chinese. That will be live soon, as well. Member Huang advises that the Meeting in a Box, like the survey, takes a while, and she wonders if there could be something in a Power Point presentation to share while doing Meeting in a Box to explain the objective. Ms. Almond advises that the Existing Conditions Report is on the website and could be pulled up during Meeting in a Box.

Ms. Almond advises that we have a Crowd Map on the website, next to Meeting in a Box. This is basically a tool where you can drop a point, share your idea, like other people's ideas. People are interacting with this and putting some ideas out there. Member Huang asks if it is possible to do a quick demonstration, as she went there and wasn't sure what to do. Ms. Almond advises that you click on "Submit a Report" on the bottom of the page. It comes up with a bunch of fields to fill out. It allows you to pick a spot on the map to drop the pin. It asks you questions related to the pin. You can click on the other ideas to see what other people are suggesting.

Member Huang asks what the objective is of this tool. Ms. Almond advises that this is another tool to get suggestions from people, and Crowd Map takes less time than the survey or Meeting in a Box. The Crowd Map can be used to share a suggestion for a specific location.

Member North mentions that there was discussion on getting Patch or Patriot Ledger involved. Mr. Murphy doesn't believe those efforts have been made, but it is something he can investigate. Member North thinks it would be another way to get "real time" feedback.

Ms. Almond provides a survey update. As of today, there have been 331 responses. Of the respondents, there have been 260 from the project website, 69 from the event flyer at Braintree Day and 2 from the Meeting in a Box packet. Ms. Almond advises that the responses are rolling in, and the more events we do, we will get even more. Ms. Almond advises that this is a great response so far. The survey has been translated into Simplified Chinese. Ms. Almond highlights the age comparisons between survey participants and Braintree population. There are more people in the 35-44 age range. There are fewer younger and older people taking the survey. At the end of the presentation, she will provide ideas on how to reach the under-represented populations. In the gender comparison, there are more female participants. Looking at education comparison, there are a lot of people with a bachelor's degree or graduate degree taking the survey, but fewer people with high school diploma or less. In looking at income, we have more higher income earners taking the survey. Looking at race, there is an under-representation in Asian and Black/African American.

Public Engagement Methods and Targets

Ms. Almond has a long list of suggestions for reaching more residents. To reach the youth population, there are ideas to partner with Braintree Recreation Department. To reach older residents, partnering with the Council on Aging or other Elder Affairs organizations is suggested. There is the possibility of connecting youth with seniors. In looking at the gender breakdown, there is an opportunity to increase the male representation as well as the gender nonconforming representation. There is an opportunity to increase youth participation by partnering with Braintree Public Schools. For income, the lower income representation can be increased by partnering with Braintree Housing Authority or Braintree Food Pantry.

Member North asks if the Braintree Alert system (voicemail, text and email system used by the Mayor's office) has been used. Mr. Murphy advises that it was used back in June, but he is not sure it was used for the survey. Member North suggests that we do a Braintree Alert message. Also, the library sends out links. The other suggestions are other community organizations like the North Braintree Civic Association, the Rotary Club, etc. Chairperson Wadland did speak to the Senior Center, and the challenge is that the survey is quite long and some individuals do not have access to a computer. Chairperson Wadland will be doing a Meeting in a Box at the Senior Center to gather feedback. Chairperson Wadland mentions that Member Huang has agreed to do a Meeting in a Box with the Asian community through the outreach program of the Senior Center. Chairperson Wadland also reached out to the Marge Crispin Center, who has the Food Pantry, to put up a poster at the center.

Member Young asks if she could just take notes when they meet at the Senior Center and turn that in or is it necessary that responses be done in the form of a survey from individual people. Ms. Almond said that notes would be useful. Chairperson Wadland states that the Meeting in a Box is much more user-friendly for that demographic.

Member Rubin asks if there could be paper surveys to fill out. She also suggests that the survey be added to web pages at various locations like the library and the Recreation Department. Chairperson Wadland feels that the survey is a little long for filling out while at the library or Recreation Department. The consensus is that an abbreviated survey would be useful.

Member Page suggests putting a flyer in the BELD bill that goes out to every resident. Mr. Murphy confirms that is something that has been discussed; he is uncertain of the feasibility of this. However, this is being investigated.

Member Joyce advises that the Newsletter is a couple of months out; however, we could possibly insert slips into the mailing.

Member Huang suggests that flyers come home from the schools. Member Huang also wanted to pass out flyers in her neighborhood or at summer camps, but she wasn't sure if that was possible. Mr. Murphy mentions that Member Huang can come by the office to pick up flyers.

Ms. Almond hopes that the Asian participation will increase following the translation into Simplified Chinese. They are also hoping to partner with local Asian organizations (such as Chinese Church of Metro-South Boston, Thayer Public Library Chinese Language Storytime, South Shore Desi Market, etc.). We could also connect with local BIPOC-owned businesses to advertise. Ms. Almond highlights ways to reach renters through property management companies.

Member Page doesn't understand why we want non-resident participation in this. She really thinks this needs to be a reflection of what the residents want for the Town of Braintree rather than someone that is working a job in Braintree currently but may not be next year. The residents need to be the primary concern. Member Page thinks it is unfair to weight a non-resident's participation at the same level as a resident's comments. Ms. Almond advises that because the survey is done through Survey Monkey, they can filter the non-resident comments from the resident comments. Ms. Almond reviews several locations to post information.

Member North asks if information related to the Master Plan has been provided to the variety of committees in the Town, and she wonders if there is an easy way to send the survey link to each committee. Member Joyce advises that the Planning Board has had the Master Plan Update on their monthly agenda every month since this process has started, and there is active participation at Planning Board meetings in discussing this topic. Member Joyce suggests adding the QR code to agendas, and she suggests this be done town wide. Member Joyce also suggests that perhaps local restaurants have the QR code on menus or as an insert to menus. Member North emphasizes the importance of committee members taking the survey as well as then passing on the information to others. Mr. Murphy knows that the survey has gone out to the various boards that the Planning and Community Development Department services; he states staff can work with the town to ensure that other boards get this information. Member Page advises that there is a large email chain that goes out to all kinds of people including residents that go to meetings. Mr. Murphy confirms that is the Public Notice email blast.

Ms. Almond has been noting these ideas and suggests committee members volunteer for some of these outreach suggestions.

Open Questions and Answers:

Member Rubin notes the 331 respondents and asks what percent is considered a good response rate. Ms. Almond advises that 300+ is a good response. She has done some surveys that barely get over 100. Statistically, having several hundred is good. We will be able to get statistically significant results numerically. It is more important to make sure we have the representation in each population segment.

Member Joyce plans to engage the elementary school community that she is involved with. She is wondering what an appropriate tool would be to reach out to a younger population. Ms. Almond advises that the consultants provided the Town staff with materials for a younger population. Ms. Almond suggests asking kids to draw a picture or write a few words. Mr. Murphy states he can provide this to Member Joyce. Chairperson Wadland wonders whether seniors at the Senior Center will participate in the survey as it is long, and they may not have computer access.

Chairperson Wadland also mentions that the younger population may not have interest in all the areas covered by the survey.

Ms. Almond explains that the Meeting in a Box done at the Senior Center will be taken into consideration when looking at the demographics. She explains that is why we have many different tools available. They developed these tools to target different populations. Ms. Almond will look at making an abbreviated version of the survey.

Member North notes the next feasible step is to make sure members own the outreach they have committed to.

Member Young thinks what might be helpful is for the committee to come up with a list of ideas that came up tonight and that members “sign-up” for items on the list. Chairperson Wadland suggests that committee members email what action items they will take care of. Member Young suggests that a deadline is set for this. Mr. Murphy mentions at the beginning of this process there was an assignment for committee members to get flyers out in the community, and he asks if we should go back to that assignment list. Chairperson Wadland does not think that list was helpful. Therefore, it is the preference that committee members email what they are committing to do.

Member Joyce suggests this be done in a “Doodle Poll” for scheduling and volunteering, listing all the options with the ability for members to check off the area that they will commit to. Chairperson Wadland agrees to put this together but emphasizes that members can add to the list.

Member Page asks for the date for the next meeting. Chairperson Wadland confirms that the next meetings are August 18, 2022 and September 22, 2022.

Member Rubin thanks everyone for being so enthusiastic.

There was a question from the audience on whether you need a Drop Box account to access the Meeting in a Box. Ms. Almond confirms you do not need a Drop Box account. Ms. Almond confirms that there are hardcopies in the Planning Department. Ms. Almond provides her email address in case there are issues.

Adjournment

MOTION made by Member Young to adjourn the meeting; **SECONDED** by Member Rubin; voted 8:0:0. The meeting adjourned at 7:58 PM.

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