

## PLANNING BOARD/SELECTBOARD JOINT MEETING

DATE: August 29, 2019

TIME: 7:00 P.M.

FOR: Joint Meeting Planning Board/Selectboard

PLACE: Large Meeting Room

PRESENT: Planning Board: Brandee Nelson, Chair; Malcolm Fick; Jonathan Hankin;

Jeremy Higa; Pedro Pachano

Selectboard: Stephen Bannon, Chair; Ed Abrahams; Bill Cooke; Kate Burke;

Leigh Davis

Mark Pruhenski, Town Manager

Chris Rembold, Town Planner

Mr. Bannon called the meeting called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. He read the statement regarding recording of the meeting. Three people announced they would be recording the meeting.

### **MASTER PLAN:**

Mr. Rembold said the goal of the Master Plan is for there to be a yearly review. It has been at least two years since the last review. Mr. Rembold provided the board members a handout updating what items need to be reviewed and the order they should be reviewed. The document titled *Document 2013 Great Barrington Master Plan Progress Update 08/20/2019*.

Mr. Rembold said he didn't think it was necessary to go over all 12 pages of the handout. He said the redevelopment section has been worked on with forward movement. He said key sites that are privately owned have set the stage for redevelopment through zoning and financial backing. Ultimately it is up to the owners to redevelop their properties. At this point there is good progress with the Fairgrounds, the New England Log Homes site and the Housatonic mill buildings. He said the Planning Board has been very proactive and successful in addressing zoning updates.

Mr. Rembold said Affordable Housing and Economic Development will always need attention. The new Economic Development Committee should help with the Town's economic development.

Ms. Nelson thanked Mr. Rembold for the comprehensive review. She asked what the schedule will be to update the Master Plan.

Mr. Rembold said work needs to begin soon. There is a lot happening in the Town right now and all of the boards are busy. He said there will be a census next year with results to be released

in 2021 or 2022. He said some of the estimates might be useful when. He said it might be helpful to have 12 months to ramp up the process.

Mr. Bannon said the Selectboard is working on outreach with neighborhoods to discuss the Open Space and Recreation Plan, climate change impacts and a vulnerability plan.

Ms. Davis said she would like to get information about the Business Improvement District to find out why it wasn't successful.

Mr. Rembold said he could provide information. He said the meetings were usually fruitful but financially not all businesses were on board.

Other topics addressed were working on the infrastructure in both Great Barrington and Housatonic including fiber optics, passenger rail service and natural gas service in Housatonic.

There was discussion of housing and some of the barriers for affordable housing development including an increase in the sewer hookup charges. There are other issues that make it difficult to develop affordable housing. The boards discussed and felt that having local realtors Eric Sternagle and Tom Doyle at an upcoming meeting could provide some useful information. Additionally, the boards created a Housing Sub-Committee with Kate Burke, Bill Cooke, Jonathan Hankin and Pedro Pachano as members. The sub-committee will work on providing information about affordable housing opportunities.

A discussion about how to better information out to the public about opportunities in Great Barrington led to a request to look into creating an APP for the Town to make people aware of all that Great Barrington has to offer.

### **SHORT TERM RENTALS:**

The boards discussed short term rentals. There was discussion of how best to collect data for how many properties in Great Barrington are participating in short term rentals. The board members agreed that people would be reluctant voluntarily provide information for fear of punitive action from the Town.

Mr. Pruhenski asked for clarification on what information the boards would like to obtain. Mr. Pruhenski was asked to contact the State to find out what data they can provide for short term rentals, how many rentals are owner occupied, find out what the ownership structure is from the Assessor's office and find out how many days per year the short term rentals are rented. This item will be included on the next joint meeting agenda.

**HOUSING NEEDS STUDY:**

Mr. Rembold said one way to dig into the housing data would be to get some funds for a housing study.

The boards agreed to support an application to the Community Preservation Committee for funds for a housing study.

Mr. Abrahams made a motion to create an application to be submitted to the CPC for funds for a housing study, Mr. Cooke seconded all in favor.

Mr. Fick made a motion to create an application to be submitted to the CPC for funds for a housing study, Mr. Higa seconded all in favor.

**CONTINUED-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

Ms. Nelson said this item was on the first joint meeting agenda.

Ms. Davis updated the board members on the progress of the Economic Development Committee. She said the Committee is working on a Mission Statement and a Vision Statement. The Committee has gone through the Master Plan to pick tasks and items to concentrate on. She said the Committee is focusing on making a recommendation on the Housatonic school.

Ms. Nelson encouraged focusing on broadband as it could open up a lot of opportunities.

Ms. Davis said there are many obstacles broadband including child care and public transportation.

Ms. Nelson said she has heard people comment that there is not enough support for economic development in Housatonic. Additionally there might be some focus on recreation. There needs to be more to bring attention to the natural resources and activities in our community.

Ms. Davis said the Committee will work on the suggestions. She said the EDC is focusing on creating energy in the downtown.

**MARIJUANA LICENSE LIMITS:**

Mr. Bannon asked if the Planning Board wanted to work with the Selectboard to set limits on the number of marijuana facilities.

Mr. Pachano said the Selectboard is the rightful place for setting the limits.

Ms. Nelson said the Planning Board is reluctant to limit businesses generally. It is not consistent with our past practices.

Mr. Bannon said the Selectboard will move forward with it.

Mr. Fick said we don't know the impact until there are one or two more open. He said he doesn't think it is quite time.

Mr. Abrahams said it would be good to figure out what was meant at Town Meeting for setting limits. He said if the Selectboard gets to the point of setting limits we will seek assistance from the Planning Board.

Ms. Nelson said we will certainly work with you we are just not going to take it on.

The boards set October 10 at 6:00 P.M. for the next joint meeting. The meeting will take place prior to a regular Planning Board meeting. Agenda items for the next meeting will include:

- Having Tom Doyle and Eric Steuernagle speak about housing
- Discuss the question about having two nights for the ATM. Moderator Michael Wise will be invited to attend the meeting
- Short term rentals
- Housing sub-committee report
- ECD report
- Master Plan-pushing out to other committees to possibly get reports

**CITIZEN'S SPEAK TIME:**

A citizen from Mahaiwe Street suggested citizen outreach when discussing housing.

Ms. Nelson thanked Mr. Rembold for his hard work and congratulated him on his promotion to Assistant Town Manager.

Having concluded the business, the meeting was adjourned without objection at 8:11 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Kim Shaw / C.R.", written in dark ink.

Kimberly L. Shaw  
Planning Board Secretary