

ESSEX STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

MARCH 31, 2021, 7:00PM

Minutes

Attendees: Annie Cameron; Brendhan Zubricki; Matt Coogan; Wes Burnham; Scott Sheppard; Diane Corrao; Mark Renzi; Dick Denton; Mike Burke; Julie Scofield; Ruth Pereen; David Frithsen; John Bediz (joined a few minutes late)

Introduction of New Members.

- Committee members introduced themselves and their respective affiliations.

Election of Officers.

- **Brendhan Zubricki suggested that the Committee consider nominations for Chair.** Annie Cameron nominated Mike Burke. Mike accepted the nomination. Vote called. Unanimous.
- **Brendhan suggested that someone to act as Secretary.** Silence ensued. Annie volunteered to take notes for this meeting and suggested that this could be a rotating responsibility and was open to both men and women.

Discussion of approach to updating the Town of Essex Strategic Plan for the next five years.

Matt Coogan discussed the charge for this year, to develop a new Strategic, 5 year plan, presenting an overview of the process for the existing plan ([2015-2020](#)) where the Town of Essex engaged the MAPC. For this round of strategic planning, Matt suggested the following process in three phases:

Phase 1:

- Review previous plan
- Develop objectives
- Data gathering

Phase 2:

- Survey

Phase 3:

- Present draft plan to public

- Make revisions accordingly
- Submit Plan to BOS and begin execution

Various members shared their thoughts on the work ahead:

Dick Denton noted that he didn't want the concerns of Essex Seniors to be siloed and characterized as only issues for Seniors, as their concerns are shared by many in the community—specifically the lack of access for residents to everyday needs, such as grocery, pharmacy, physicians. He also noted that many had environmental concerns as well.

Matt noted that these same concerns were noted in the last process and confirmed that they are still relevant and shared across other demographics.

Mark Renzi asked that we consider what worked the last time; asked about how the plan was executed; noted environmental concerns; asked what we can learn from other towns and their efforts.

Brendhan and Matt noted that the November 2020 update memorializes what was accomplished from the previous plan.

Ruth Pereen noted a concern about the Chapter 40B initiatives happening in surrounding communities and asked how Essex can develop a more strategic approach to **Affordable** and **affordable** housing.

Wes Burnham noted that the Mixed Use bylaw ([Article 13](#)) would help in Essex making progress towards its housing goals and was posed as a first step. He noted that the bylaw:

- Had the full support of the SPC.
- There is a public hearing scheduled for April 14TH
- Noted that a [summary of the bylaw](#) would be available on the town website, [including map of zone](#).
- That the Planning Board welcomes questions about the proposed bylaw prior to Town Meeting at planningboard@essexma.org

Brendhan and Mike talked about what to address first in terms of housing:

- The Essex Housing Coalition had indicated a good first step toward more affordable housing in Essex would be to support and pass the Planning Board's proposal for a downtown mixed-use zoning district. This action would not solve the problem but would probably at least increase apartment housing stock, which does have an affect on rental rates. The Selectmen, the Economic Development Committee, and the Strategic Planning Committee all support the Planning Board's proposal.

- At one point in the past, the Essex Housing Coalition had a presentation from Harborlight Community Partners that covered a variety of ways that deed-restricted affordable housing can be put in place. In Essex, this may involve partnering with a non-profit to perhaps help purchase property. It is also possible to develop new units on Town-owned property and partnering would be necessary under that scenario as well.
- It is the hope of the Strategic Planning Committee that more can be accomplished with respect to affordable housing after the possible passage of the mixed used zoning district bylaw in May.

John Bediz suggested that the SPC workshop the remaining items on the existing plan to see what should remain/be updated and what should be discarded.

Various members weighed in on ways to begin the first phase—whiteboards, prioritization, etc.

Homework for all: please email your list of items that should be included in the next Strategic Plan – this may be rough—it’s a draft—to Mark Renzi at aquila28@gmail.com.

Date for next meeting: April 28, 2021 at 7 pm.