



**Town of Amherst
Special Town Council Meeting
Master Plan Overview
Wednesday, May 8, 2019
Town Room, Town Hall
4 Boltwood Avenue**

Minutes

Complete video is available online: <https://amherstmedia.org/content/amherst-town-council-special-meeting-5819>

1. Call to order and declaration of a quorum

President Griesemer declared the presence of a quorum and called the Special Town Council meeting to order at 2:37 p.m.

Councilor Schreiber called the Community Resources Committee to order at 2:37 p.m. with 3 of 5 members present.

Councilors present: Councilors De Angelis, DuMont, Griesemer, Hanneke, Pam, Ross, Ryan, Schreiber, and Steinberg.

Councilors participating remotely: None

Others present: Town Manager Paul Bockelman, Clerk of the Council Margaret Z. Nartowicz, Assistant Town Manager M. David Ziomek, Planning Director Christine Brestrup, and Senior Planner Nate Malloy.

President Griesemer announced that Councilor Schreiber, Chair of the Community Resources Committee would preside at the meeting.

Introductions: Planning Director Christine Brestrup, and Senior Planner Nate Malloy

2. Presentations and Discussion

Master Plan Overview

Ms. Brestrup presented an overview of the Master Plan's purpose, chapters and objectives.

Councilor Griesemer asked about the municipal parking district and the responsibility of commercial developers to address parking issues. Ms. Brestrup and Mr. Malloy explained that the municipal parking district was established in the late 60s, at that time businesses, restaurants, and retail did not need to provide onsite parking. The district was later expanded to include B-G,

B-L areas and residential uses, as an effort to promote residential development in the downtown. President Griesemer asked about owners' responsibility for providing parking. Mr. Malloy responded that there was no requirement but there is a responsibility.

Councilor Steinberg asked about conflicting values in the master plan. Ms. Brestrup responded that there are inherent conflicts within the master plan and plans for different areas that have been identified as potential for both conservation and development.

Mr. Malloy presented an overview of the Master Plan's Affordable Housing chapter.

Councilor Ross asked about the federal Springfield Metropolitan Statistical Area in which Amherst is included, and the area median income (AMI) calculation. Mr. Malloy explained that what is considered affordable in Springfield may not be affordable for most people in Amherst. It can be difficult for voucher holders to find housing due to those calculations.

Ms. Brestrup presented an overview of the Master Plan's Transportation and Open Space and Recreation chapters, and explained the process for Master Plan updates.

Councilor Schreiber asked about the Town Council's role in Master Plan updates. Councilors Griesemer and Hanneke provided an overview of the Planning Board's and the Council's respective responsibilities under MGL c.14, §81D and Charter Section 9.8.

Councilor Ryan asked how the development of or updates to the Master Plan translate the community's broad vision to a planning tool for specific general areas to address issues affecting certain neighborhoods. Councilor Schreiber spoke about the master plan for different parts of Amherst and how they correspond to each other. Ms. Brestrup spoke about the challenges in planning around what the state proposes for Route 9. The Valley CDC proposal would use a comprehensive planning process, which would overlay the zoning process. We need to think about village centers, hold public forums, and distribute information before moving forward.

Councilor Pam expressed an interest in learning more about the comprehensive permitting process. Ms. Brestrup explained that a comprehensive permit application to waive zoning requirements, including those under MGL chapter 40B, would be sought in instances where someone wants to build something not permitted by the Town's zoning. Mr. Malloy added that the Town needs to balance the waivers with the Town's need for affordable housing.

Councilor Hanneke remarked on some of the competing characteristics of Open Space and Housing objectives and asked if there is a plan for Open Space and Housing thresholds. Ms. Brestrup explained that the Town established a plan several years ago to focus development in the downtown and village centers, and noted some of the plan's features to mitigate development sprawl. Councilor Hanneke asked how we keep the Town feeling like a small town; when there is a need for housing units to make living in Town affordable, the only direction is up. Ms. Brestrup responded that developers have been clever about finding spaces to develop that are

close to services. Mr. Malloy added that we look for ways to be creative in meeting the differing desires for preserving open space and providing affordable housing.

Community Resources Committee - Public Comment

Stephen George, 23 Dana Street, Kate Troast, 99 Dana Street, Ann Yee, 29 Dana Place, and Tim Atteridge, 143 Northampton Road individually expressed concerns with the proposed Valley CDC low-income housing project on Northampton Road.

John Hornik, Chair of the Amherst Affordable Housing Trust explained that many issues raised are under the purview of the Zoning Board of Appeals and expressed support for the project.

Councilors discussed the proposed bond issuance for the project in the CPAC proposals. Councilor Schreiber noted that the Council needs to determine the best way to hear from both sides. Councilor Steinberg explained the challenges associated with the full Council's referral of matters to different committees with different charges, and that he expects the Finance Committee to discuss the financial aspects of the CPAC proposals.

Councilors continued to discuss the appropriate level for discussion on this matter. Councilor Schreiber suggested that it should be at the full Council. Councilor Griesemer noted that the Committee could decide to reconsider its prior vote if it so chose, and provided dates of upcoming meetings at which the CPAC proposal would be discussed. Councilor Steinberg explained that statute and the Charter provide a specific date by which budget determinations are made, and that CPAC is a separate process that isn't bound by the same deadlines. He noted that the Council should determine the appropriate time to take this up. Councilor Griesemer noted the Council could choose to delay action, and further explained that should the Committee not reconsider its original vote, the Council is not bound to accept the Community Resources Committee's recommendation. Councilor Ryan noted his desire for the CRC to reconsider its recommendation on the bond authorization.

Councilors discussed the nature and short tenure of the Council and its committees, and stressed that it is learning as it goes. Discussion continued regarding the path this Council matter should take, and reasons for the CRC's initial vote to recommend.

Kate Troast, 99 Dana Street emphasized that the proposed Northampton Road development is significant and it shouldn't be rushed.

Other items: Speed Limits-to be referred; Airbnb – next Council meeting; May 29 CRC meeting may be canceled.

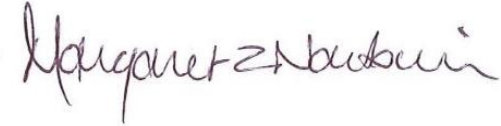
3. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated by the President 48 Hours in Advance

4. Adjourn

MOVED: Councilor De_Angelis moved, second by Councilor Schreiber to adjourn the Special Meeting of the Town Council.

VOTED 9-0 to adjourn at 4:33 p.m. on May 8, 2019.

Respectfully submitted,



Margaret Z. Nartowicz

Clerk of the Council

Record of Agenda Packet Materials and Documents Presented

Agenda Town Council Special Meeting 05-08-2019

AMHERST'S MASTER PLAN Presentation