

**Master Plan Committee Meeting Minutes  
February 23, 2005  
Town Building**

The meeting was convened at 7:30 p.m. In attendance were Donna Jacobs, Karen Kelleher, Ernie Dodd, John Harding, Greg Jones, and Roy Miller (not a quorum). Greg Jones volunteered to be scribe. Charles Kern and Janet Wheeler arrived at 7:40, making a quorum.

**Minutes**

There was no quorum on February 16<sup>th</sup>, so no official meeting was held. The minutes for January 31, 2005 were approved unanimously.

**Candidate Interview**

The Master Plan Committee currently has 8 members, and there are 2 applicants for the vacant position, Roy Miller and Ron Hamm. Various people have tried to get in touch with John Halpren to find out if he intends to participate. John attended one meeting, and has not been seen since. We will include an agenda item for next meeting to discuss recommending the Selectmen remove Mr. Halpren for non-attendance. Then we might have 2 openings. Mr. Hamm was not in attendance. Apparently he was not sent notice of the meeting. The agenda will be amended to always have a discussion of membership, so we can deal with such matters at any meeting.

Roy Miller introduced himself. He is a 30-year resident of Stow. He has lived in 4 different houses, in 4 different sections of Stow. He was a member of the Personnel Committee in the 80's. He filled out an unexpired term as an Assessor. He headed up the Community Chest back when Digital was providing lots of money. His job is to do planning in industry, so he knows the planning process. He does not know municipal planning. He brings objectivity and a fresh set of eyes to the committee. He travels on business about 40% of the time, so he may miss some meetings, but he will keep in touch via email or out-of-meeting activities.

The committee took no action on filling the vacancy, as the second candidate was not present. Roy was invited to participate fully in the meeting, except for votes.

**Housing Partnership**

Janet Wheeler distributed a statement the Selectmen have adopted that defines the initial role of the Housing Partnership. The Selectmen are actively recruiting for the HP. They want to avoid obvious conflicts of interest. The HP will be a 7-member committee with staggered 3-year terms. The HP will be the organization to spearhead the adoption of the Master Plan housing recommendations.

**Housing Trust Fund**

Donna had distributed the text of Bill 491 of 2004, amending Chapter 44 of Mass General Laws allowing towns to adopt a Housing Trust Fund by town meeting vote. Ernie Dodd commented that he is in favor of the HTF because he was never comfortable giving

Inclusionary Zoning monies to the Housing Authority. Charles Kern moved that the Master Plan Committee sponsor an article on the Town Meeting Warrant adopting Sections 53C-N of Chapter 44 of Mass General Laws. Karen Kelleher seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**YAC**

Janet Wheeler informed the committee that the Selectmen chose to create yet another committee (YAC) at the Joint Boards Meeting 2/16. The purpose of the committee is to communicate municipal needs between Town departments and boards. A description of the committee will be issued by the Selectmen’s office. The committee will consist of representatives of 8 different departments/boards. The committee is expected to meet quarterly.

**Vision**

We started a discussion of the Master Plan Vision in a diffuse way as Ernie fought the Planning Board’s copier. John Harding said we should boil the vision down into something that can be captured in a few images for selling purposes. What are we trying to avoid, and what are we trying to create or save? We went around the table saying what we were for and what we were against.

Who	For	Against
Greg for people of Stow	Preserve Rural Character	Development
John Harding	Golf Courses	Traffic in Lower Village
Charles Kern	Farms, Orchards	Lower Village sprawl
Greg for self	Compassionate Community	Mac Mansions
Janet Wheeler	Determine how to protect particular pieces of large real estate. Diversity of housing to include the very wealthy.	Poor planning that detracts from scenic vistas and contributes to traffic and other hazards.
Roy Miller	Diversity of housing that allows people with a variety of incomes to live in Stow	Homogeneity. One size fits all
Donna Jacobs	Water Quality	Lack of Services
Karen Kelleher	Historic character	Lack of Services
Ernie Dodd	Villages without traffic going through the middle	Traffic that splits a village
Various	Tying open space together	
	More recreational fields	
	The Rail trail	

The question was asked if people object to development because of visual clutter or resulting traffic increase. There was not a clear answer, but if it is just the visual impact then tucking new homes away from the road behind common drives (a la Bolton) might address the concern.

Villages

What do we mean by villages, and how will we get there? The villages are Lower Village, Center Village, and Gleasondale. West Stow may become a village, but let’s

concentrate on the first 3 to develop a pattern. Denser development can only come with tertiary septic treatment. In other words, sewers in the villages. Also possibly water. Presumably the density can be even higher if both water and sewer are available. The goal would be to have development in the villages “pull” development away from the open space areas in town. (TDR) Donna stated that TDR has not worked elsewhere and there are a number of alternate planning tools that Stow could use to accomplish its goals. The notion was advanced that leading institutions in each village could be induced to create a treatment plant to solve their own problems, and then the rest of the village could come along. Donna said no, a betterment district must come first and if the treatment plant is not communally owned, it cannot take anybody’s waste except its own. A major question is what entity in town should take the lead to create betterment districts and financial arrangements. We got bogged down in details here.

John brought us back to the big picture by asking if we envision septic treatment town-wide, or only in the villages. The clear answer was villages only, as individual septic in the rest of town is a reason to minimize development. Nobody really knows what a denser village would look like. What does “infill” development look like in Lower Village? How would Gleasondale work with a rejuvenated mill? Would the rest of Gleasondale embrace the concept of having help solving their septic problems and becoming conforming lots again?

The village discussion brought up the issue of professional help to get the Master Plan done. Donna does not think we need professional help unless we want to do a complete Master Plan rewrite. If we just want to do a Master Plan update, then we can slightly repackage the EO418 study and issue that as our update. Certainly the Housing portion can stand on its own, and she thinks the open space pieces are close. Donna feels there is a contingent on the committee that has been at this for a LONG time, so they would like to issue the report and let a future Master Plan Committee perform a full rewrite. This was discussed for a while, but it was after 10:15, so it was left for the committee to think over for the next meeting.

We did discuss the Master Plan process. The law requires that the Planning Board adopt the Master Plan. Anything else is voluntary. Last time the MP Objectives were adopted by Town Meeting, but the substantive proposals were defeated. Certainly Town Meeting is an opportunity to get buy-in from townspeople. Donna informed us that there is a major rewrite of Zoning-related laws at the state level that include a change in the Master Plan procedures.

The meeting adjourned at 10:40.

Respectfully submitted, Greg Jones