

## Master Plan Implementation Committee

February 15, 2023

Members present: Cheryl Tougias, Chair; Roxanne Musto; Taber Keally; Dick Burke; Warren Lizio; Regina Campbell-Malone; Elaine Benson; Josh Eckart-Lee, Staff

Meeting called to order at 7:03. Motion to approve the minutes from January 23 made by Warren Lizio, seconded by Roxanne Musto. Taber Keally abstained, all others in favor.

### Staff Update

Josh Eckart-Lee provided a staff update on sustainability projects, including a microgrid feasibility study and greenhouse gas inventory, as well as the upcoming MBTA Communities information session that the Department will be hosting on February 16<sup>th</sup>. Next meeting dates are March 20<sup>th</sup> and April 17<sup>th</sup>.

### Discussion of Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan

Discussion was held regarding the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan and MPIC's letter of support. Chair Tougias provided background on the historic efforts to develop a plan of this type, which bicycle advocates had been pushing for since 2016. In 2018, the Committee put in a budget request for \$10,000 for the purpose of a bike/ped plan. The Planning Department & MAPC coordinated a survey that received over 500 responses, then hosted a public meeting in Spring 2022, and then the final plan was submitted in June 2022.

Planning Director Tim Czerwienski provided additional history on the project and the reasoning for requesting a recommendation from MPIC to the Select Board to adopt this as the Town's plan. Director Czerwienski noted the importance of having a plan that is adopted by the Select Board as a guide for departmental action, for grant applications, and for incorporation of plan priorities into town-wide repaving and Public Works efforts. Director Czerwienski noted how the plan builds off the existing Complete Streets Plan. One Complete Streets program of note is the Brook Rd. road diet. The bike/ped plan is meant to be a town-wide and overarching plan document, where the Complete Streets plan goes into more granular detail.

The primary goal of the bike/ped plan is to ensure a connected network of safe routes for bicycles and pedestrians moving through town. The plan is designed to try and accommodate existing transportation and traffic considerations, and is developed with the aim of developing the network with minimal traffic and fiscal impact. Director Czerwienski emphasized the importance of creating a completely connected network and avoiding punching holes in a connected system. Director Czerwienski noted the importance of continuing to advocate for Complete Streets efforts on state-managed routes. Member Burke asked for clarification on the definition of a network, the connection between this and the traffic mitigation plan, as well as safety concerns. Director Czerwienski confirmed that the traffic mitigation plan was among the materials provided to MAPC in the development of bike plan, and their recommendations are in line with the goals of promoting safety through traffic slowing. Director Czerwienski clarified that a network of bike lanes is meant to mirror the existing roadway network and to have bike lanes which connect to one another, and which also connect to locations where one would want to bike, such as the Neponset Greenway, commercial areas of town, and other amenities, in a safe and topographically-aware system.

Lee Toma of the Bicycle Committee spoke briefly on his past advocacy and insight from the Bicycle Committee, reaffirming the importance of a connected network. He noted that their committee has been pushing for a plan since at least the year 2000 and that Complete Streets projects have been very successful in advancing ridership, especially at schools.

Member Musto noted the importance of neighborhood buy-in and safety in the plan and the potential for removing recommendations from the plan that are more impactful to current residents. Director Czerwienski restated that the plan was developed to use the best practices that achieve the goals that residents previously identified, and based off the transportation planning expertise of the consultants. He noted that adding street parking, reducing lane width, additions of curbs, bollards protecting bicycle lanes, and centerline removal are all proven methods of traffic calming.

Member Keally noted that the comments that have been received are not from engineers or transportation professionals, but that there might have been better buy-in from more explicit outreach to neighborhood associations. Director Czerwienski noted that staff capacity, consultant scope, and funding all play a role in how much engagement is possible and specific outreach to each neighborhood association at the scale of this project was not feasible within the constraints of this process. Chair Tougias echoed the sentiments from Director Czerwienski and indicated her intention to continue to support recommending this plan with the Committee's notes.

Member Musto indicated that this plan is both too specific in some areas and too broad in others, and expressed concerns that a town-wide approach does not provide neighborhood-level specificity. Member Campbell-Malone asked whether a commitment to a public process would be enough to assuage the concerns of Member Musto, especially in this planning process. Chair Tougias noted that past planning processes that MPIC has been involved in have followed this same process of providing support in the planning process, and then sending recommendations to Select Board with the Committee's notes and analysis.

Member Lizio requested additional context for the recommendation process. Chair Tougias clarified the purpose of ensuring that the deliberations of the committee for the content of the recommendation process should be done in a public forum for Open Meeting Law considerations. Chair Tougias also recommended that the recommendation letter include a suggestion that larger projects utilize the Town's Traffic Model. Member Lizio noted that the Complete Streets Plan includes provisions where proposals are cost-prohibitive or have negative impacts that outweigh the benefits can be excluded.

Director Czerwienski discussed that decisions regarding costs and tradeoffs regarding safety or traffic are political decisions that have multiple inputs and stakeholders, whereas the plan recommendations are technical best practices. Member Musto stated her concerns that creating plan implies a universal approval or vetting that may not be representative of its support. Member Campbell-Malone discussed the importance of ensuring that this plan is not ignored for a long period of time and that implementation is not done without consultation of the residents. Member Keally reaffirmed that this plan is a series of recommendations from the experts, but does not include mandates, and noted that the Committee would be doing the Town a disservice should they fail to recommend this.

Member Lizio requested that the recommendation letter explicitly note that implementation be a multi-departmental process. Member Burke reminded the Committee that this plan is an overview and that the letter of recommendation should also be a broad overview. Maggie Oldfield spoke on behalf of the

Hillside Neighborhood Association and reiterated the points in the Association's previously submitted letter and expressed fear at the title of the plan.

Member Benson noted that procedurally, if this Committee is to include citizen's speak, we should include it on the agenda. Member Campbell-Malone acknowledged that she had heard a clear hesitancy based on fear and worry from residents and concerned members and thanked them for sharing their perspectives. Chair Tougias recommended that a simpler letter be drafted for the benefit of the Select Board, which was supported by the board. The letter is to be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting.

Members discussed the draft report of the Committee to Town Meeting, and all members were supportive of the draft as written. Motion made to submit the report to the Select Board made by Taber Keally, seconded by Elaine Benson. Regina Campbell-Malone abstained, all others in favor.

Agenda items 6 & 7 were deferred to the following meeting.

Motion to adjourn made by Roxanne Musto, seconded by Dick Burke. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53.

Respectively submitted,

Josh Eckart-Lee

Assistant Town Planner