

## **Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Sept. 11, 2021**

**9:00AM**

Don Gagnon, Planning Board

Allison, town clerk

Don Campbell

Linda Levernoch

Peter and Susan Mattson

Carol Lew

Business aspect, all zoned residential, helpful to have business here for the finances of the town. Proactive work to make something happen.

Dick Spencer, finance committee

Kent Lew

Technical assistance through Berkshire Regional Planning Council, to help us with the projects we identify, clarify and identify deliverables for. We have a need to report back to BRPC. Do you have a project, how is it structured, what is the progress?

Steering committee here to help smaller committees

Senior housing, opportunities with state funding.

Town sees that the lease is signed, but someone else completing it.

Berkshire Regional Housing Authority, Community Housing Committee

Affordable housing an actionable idea Why do we want it, for whom? seniors, poor people, young families.

Affordable Housing Trust has people to help.

Change zoning to allow senior housing to conform to New England spirit.

Sharing Housing Inc.

A community of individual dwellings with central services, Zoning laws don't accommodate that now.

You need to work the bylaws as you work the projects.

Time, patience and perseverance, and building consensus.

What we need is a place to get milk. A sustainable general store, always was a gathering place for communities.

It would be hard for a business to exist on its own structure, but an outdoor outfitter outpost, an extension of another shop. Maybe that works with a store thing, tied back to a development. Something to pose to a developer, Housing, gathering, and store.

Stonehouse, owned by Housing & Urban Development.

A program through Attorneys General, to work with communities when you have abandoned, neglected properties, will get involved to navigate the process of getting them into receivership, selling off the property in order to put those properties back into production as affordable housing.

Church enlisted Arlo to help with repairs. Can we approach him?

One stop center of growth, all state grants, a laundry list of available programs.

Community Development block grant would be Federal money coming through the state.

Every property that abuts Route 8 or Washington Mountain Road, each is available for a marijuana retailer. Zone west side of Route 8 across from Town Hall, commercial, housing, office space. Gives the town an idea for how they could reach out and grab that property

Laura Brennan, Economic Development, Regional Planning Commission

If the property across the street were commercial, it would attract developers.

When our tax rate is set, there is a process that determines how much we have to raise. Two broad categories of assessments: Commercial/Industrial, Residential/Open Space. The select board sets the two rates, We can set the commercial rate higher than the residential rate. The rates have always been the same, and are in small towns.

Taxes on fixed assets that a business has, room tax on AirBnB, Could pass a meals tax, a few local excise taxes. Sales tax is a state thing.

Website

Civic Plus, Kent poised to lock that in, provides service of municipal websites, do design, hosting, etc. Becket, Peru, Lenox, W Stockbridge, Lanesboro, Adams.

Community Best Practice Grant to fund the upfront costs.

Has to be a priority for this town. Need to put a lot of resources in one spot for people to access.

Wireframe at [KentLew.com/Washington-MA](http://KentLew.com/Washington-MA)

Individual user access at different rights levels

Each department would be able to post their agendas and minutes, the platform enables that.

Employee access with standard forms

Public facing permitting

Online tax payment, property map

Emergency banner

Can create an historical section or a promotional section

Kent exploring how much constraint this puts on us.

Open burning permits.

Allison, the website needs to be the go to site

Kent spearheading, leveraged Laura Brennan, operating under a grant, available to help with grunt work. Once I get from the design team what we need to provide, Kent will work with his team to provide that. Allison, Jodi, Anne Marie Desitelle, Kent. Happy to add more people.

Kent to share websites the team looked at. Anyone who has input, here are the things I like about this site or that site, or here is a well implemented feature. Feedback through Kent who will feed it to the team.

Two calendars on the site, for meetings and for events.

Will have a road map of what Civic Plus needs.

Allison to ask all the departments what they need, liaison to town departments for input.

Next meeting, ask Laura if willing to come in person on a Saturday morning, 9/25, 10/2, 10/9\*\*.