

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

1. 6:00pm - Call to Order

Chair Brian Charville called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm and identified the Planning Board (PB) members in attendance, including himself, Amy MacNulty and Page Wilkins. Chair Charville noted that Vice Chair Flaws would not be in attendance due to illness, but that Clerk Edward Champy III was expected to arrive shortly. Chair Charville introduced staff members in attendance; Planning and Conservation Director Emilie Cademartori and Administrative Assistant Sondria Berman, and stated the meeting was being recorded by video and audio to assist with the preparation of minutes. Chair Charville introduced consultants from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Andrea Harris-Long and Sarah Scott, both of whom have assisted the Town with the vision plan.

2. 6:01pm- Community Forum

Andrea Harris-Long provided an overview of the vision plan and the people and groups who have undertaken the task of putting together a vision plan for the town – specifically the Lynnfield PB, town staff, and MAPC staff. Chair Charville discussed the PB’s main reason for embarking on a vision plan was to take a first step towards updating the town’s existing Master Plan from 2002. He noted that over time, values and priorities of residents can change and therefore it is important to revisit and reevaluate these planning documents to ensure they are relevant to the current population. He continued that a vision plan is an information-gathering exercise that may precede and inform a full Master Plan; it collects data that is then used to focus aspirational priorities for the Town which can either stand on their own or be incorporated into a more robust and detailed Master Plan. He explained that over the course of the past year, the PB has conducted a number of community-outreach efforts, from in-person tablings at Lynnfield community events to online and print media news announcements – the most recognizable likely being the community-wide visioning survey conducted in spring 2023. He noted that MAPC has attended half a dozen PB meetings over the past year, and the PB has taken input from community members about the visioning project.

Ms. MacNulty stated the vision plan provides the town with a strategic framework for the future. She noted that for many town-based projects such as the Rail Trail and other developments, the planning process is often years or decades in the making and having an up-to-date vision plan and master plan equips town staff and boards with the tools they need to support projects that the

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

community values most. She noted that she was pleased to see survey feedback from community members highlighting the importance of conservation areas and open spaces for recreation and how it ultimately contributed to a healthier, more connected community. Ms. MacNulty praised the staff at MAPC for their work and efforts on the visioning plan.

Chair Charville echoed the importance of the visioning plan as a tool for the Town to set priorities for the next 15-20 years.

Ms. Wilkins noted that she valued the vision plan as a means of hearing from residents directly about what is most important to them about the Town- and more specifically, how they picture the Town over the next two decades.

Ms. Harris-Long reviewed the progress made on the visioning project thus far, including various interviews and engagement initiatives in the community. She noted that the MAPC utilized multi-faceted data collection including interactive exhibits, surveys, and discussion forums. Ms. Harris-Long asked audience members to raise their hands as to who has already been engaged with the project already, and the number of years attendees have lived in Lynnfield.

She shared statistics from the latest census data from 2020, and comparing it to the 2002 Master Plan. The data showed an increase in population, housing units, and median housing price costs but a decrease in public school enrollment.

Ms. Scott discussed engagement endeavors within the Town; she highlighted tabling events, interviews with town officials, staff, committee and board chairs, the town-wide survey, and an interactive discussion with Lynnfield High School 10th grade social studies classes to gather feedback from youths in Lynnfield. She noted 855 individuals participated in the town-wide survey, and provided a high-level overview of common themes, interests and concerns from the survey results.

Ms. Harris-Long cited the three major themes as guiding principles for the vision plan: Sense of Belonging, Transparent, Well-Run Town Government, and Balanced Community Growth. Ms. Harris-Long noted that the next steps for the vision plan would include a draft plan, posted in an online forum in the next month to allow for public comment. She encouraged attendees to review the draft and provide feedback that can be included in the final draft that the PB will review.

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

Ms. Harris shared a worksheet activity with attendees that included a draft vision statement for Lynnfield, and an open-ended questionnaire for individuals to make edits, changes or suggestions to the vision statement. Ms. Harris-Long invited audience comments on what ideas or suggestions they had for the draft vision statement; Michele Cole of 6 Baldwin Lane asked if mailers were sent to residents regarding the survey, and questioned if many people in town were aware of the survey. Ms. Harris-Long stated that for visioning projects, the outreach and engagement plan is often determined by the partnering municipality; she continued that MAPC does not provide its own funds for direct engagement, but rather that engagement funds are drawn from a grant, which in this case, was a community compact grant from the state.

Ms. MacNulty stated that it is an ongoing challenge for Towns to get the attention of all individuals in Town to solicit participation; she cited the varied outreach avenues that were conducted as part of the vision plan engagement noting that individuals receive information from a variety of outlets. She emphasized the efforts to “cross-pollinate” media outreach, that is, to connect with various groups of people to build new connections and reach a wider group of residents than just those that are already interested in planning for the Town. Ms. Cole stated that she considered a mailer to be the best form of communicating with residents, citing concerns with other online outreach tools.

Ms. Harris-Long noted that in the spring, the water bill mailer included information about the visioning plan and the upcoming survey; she added mailers are often a very costly endeavor and most budgets cannot afford them.

Mr. Gary Doyle at 61 Stillman Road asked the audience for a show of hands as to how many worked for the Town; he observed half of audience members were town employees. Mr. Doyle asked the PB how many people they anticipated attending the current meeting; Chair Charville stated that the public forum is an opportunity for the PB, staff and audience members to hear comments and suggestions about the vision plan. Mr. Doyle asked the PB who writes the master plan and if there is a template; Chair Charville responded the Townspeople author the Master Plan and often, consultants such as MAPC assist towns with putting it together. Ms. Harris-Long stated that regional planning consultants, such as MAPC, often study and review previous master plans to formulate an approach for the next master plan. She noted that in the case of Lynnfield, MAPC drew guidance from the Town’s

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

2002 Master Plan. She continued that part of building a master plan includes an existing conditions analysis for comparison data, and then general policy areas are incorporated to be reviewed such as transportation and economic development. Mr. Doyle asked about Ms. Harris-Long's reference to a "pace" and asked who is setting said "pace"; he asked if there is a need for a residential town to set a "fevered pace" to grow. He stated he believed the development of Market Street constituted a "feverous pace of growth" responsible for the recent school expansion. Chair Charville stated there is no pace that has been set and that therefore, this is not an issue which exists. Chair Charville stated that the visioning plan is a process, not unlike many processes that boards and commissions of many municipalities participate in, to assist the Town in planning for the future improvements and or challenges. He explained that towns cannot afford dedicated staff nor indefinite consultant fees to produce Master Plans on an ongoing basis. He continued the process for the vision plan is a one-year engagement with MAPC to produce a vision plan that will provide a foundation for a new master plan. Mr. Doyle asked if the funding for the vision plan is derived from a grant; Chair Charville stated the project is grant-funded through a community compact grant. Mr. Doyle asked if "spending less money" is an option; he recommended "less people working all the time" and referenced perceived displeasure with the superintendent by residents at a recent school committee meeting where he alleged the superintendent was disengaged. Mr. Doyle asked if his comments and concerns about the superintendent were examples of a transparency; Chair Charville stated Mr. Doyle's questions and concerns about the superintendent would be best addressed by the school committee. Chair Charville noted the limited time allocated for the current meeting and requested Mr. Doyle be considerate of the other residents present who wished to have an opportunity speak. Mr. Doyle made reference to the annual fall Town Meeting and alleged individuals who were against voting in favor of a new library were not given an opportunity to speak; he asked if this was part of Chair Charville's transparency plan. Chair Charville stated he had no transparency plan; he stated the current PB meeting is tasked with providing a community forum for residents to comment on the vision plan. Chair Charville recommended Mr. Doyle direct his questions and concerns regarding town meeting practices to the Town Moderator. Mr. Doyle stated he believed every guiding principle for the vision plan requires spending "exorbitant amounts of money" and questioned rhetorically if this was fiscally responsible,

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

answering he believed it was not. Chair Charville reminded Mr. Doyle that the vision plan had not yet been drafted, and therefore Mr. Doyle's specific claims about the vision plan were unsubstantiated. Mr. Doyle asked a hypothetical question of whether a master plan would need to be done if Town residents opposed it; Chair Charville stated the PB actively considers if a master plan is needed. Mr. Doyle referenced Chair Charville's previous comment about one of Lynnfield's first master plans recommending the Town build an airport over Reedy Meadow as an amusing thought for a space that is now considered a valuable natural resource. He asked Chair Charville if a new master plan would not be reflected on as "laughable" or "foolish" in the future; Chair Charville stated he was confident most individuals would agree today that paving over a natural resource like Reedy Meadow to construct an airport is not a sound idea for the Town. Mr. Doyle commented that the Town recently decided to pave over green space across the Town Common to build a war memorial site, which he believed was not something veterans would want. Chair Charville recommended Mr. Doyle refer his comments and concerns about the war memorial to the Select Board.

Ms. Wilkins addressed Mr. Doyle and expressed gratitude for his attendance. She encouraged Mr. Doyle to read the 2002 Master Plan, and emphasized the importance of understanding the process that goes into shaping development of the Town. Ms. Wilkins stated that one of the reasons for developing a vision plan or master plan is to enable residents such as Mr. Doyle to actively participate in shaping the Town's future priorities, values, and guiding principles. Ms. Wilkins acknowledged Mr. Doyle's previous frustrations but stated she wished he had presented them sooner to the PB at one of the over six PB meetings and events on the vision plan this year; she emphasized the PB's commitment to involving all residents in the development of the vision plan.

Mr. Steve Fantone of 40 Summer Street addressed the PB and stated he and his wife, Elizabeth, have been residents of Lynnfield for over 37 years and praised the PB for their dedication to the Town. Mr. Fantone expressed his desire to see the value of open spaces and particularly, the rail trail, be incorporated into the vision plan. He continued that he would like to see timelines and responsibilities for Town projects incorporated into the vision plan. Mr. Fantone also stated he supported the adoption of a new form of governance for Town Meeting. He noted that with the demands of travel, work, and other responsibilities, lengthy, in-person Town Meetings are often difficult for residents to attend and

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

have their vote counted. He suggested the vision plan recommend proxy voting for Lynnfield to allow more participation from residents and to create a more productive and fair voting environment for all. Mr. Fantone cited his vision for Lynnfield is to be an “exemplar of good government” and “outstanding schools.” He stated he believed the Town’s staff and administration continue to be accessible and willing to listen to residents as they have done for many years. He emphasized his overall approval of the Town’s fiscal responsibility, accessible government and schools and advocated that Lynnfield continue to strive for excellence.

Ms. Sofya Cooper of 6 Hart Road addressed the PB and stated she grew up in Lynnfield, and moved back to raise her own family. She stated this is a common characteristic of the town, where many children of Lynnfield choose to return as adults with families to raise their own children. As President of the Lynnfield Moms Group, Ms. Cooper stated that in her many conversations with parents in town, she believes there is a need for more community spaces accessible to both community groups and families. She noted she was excited for the prospect of a new library that could provide space at night and on weekends to groups and town residents without high rental costs. She noted that she has been involved with restoration efforts for Newhall Park and Jordan Park, and found her interactions with town staff such as DPW Director John Tomasz, Select Board Member Phil Crawford, Town Administrator Rob Dolan and others to be friendly and collaborative. She expressed gratitude for the strong volunteerism that can be found among residents in Town.

Ms. Michele Cole 6 Baldwin Lane addressed the PB and stated after reading the vision survey results she found a number of comments that expressed a lack of trust in town government. She alleged residents who attended previous Town Meetings were “shut down” and not allowed to speak; she expressed concerns over the motivations of individuals who motion to end debate at Town Meeting. Additionally, Ms. Cole questioned the validity of population growth census data presented by MAPC at the meeting, citing her own anecdotal observations of population growth over the past five years in town. She cited concerns over the recent school expansion projects and water quality issues but expressed support for the recent public safety renovation projects. Ms. Cole expressed her concerns that Lynnfield was getting “too big too fast” and echoed her prior comments and frustrations with the vision project outreach. She asked the PB if there were any areas for redevelopment planned in Town;

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

Ms. Harris-Long stated that a vision plan would not specify cites for specific project developments. Ms. Cole asked if the vision plan was near completion; Chair Charville stated that this forum, as well as other PB meetings, allows for individuals to comment on the vision plan as it continues to evolve and a draft plan is assembled. Ms. MacNulty stressed that the vision plan is a first step towards a master plan, and provides the necessary strategic framework with which to embark on a master plan and seek additional grant funding to do so. Chair Charville stated the master plan would be an 18-24 month process where there would be community forums about specific topics in the master plan such as housing, education, etc. Ms. Cole expressed concern that if transportation is a topic in the master plan that this equates to the town “getting a lot bigger;” Chair Charville emphasized that the Town and its residents decide what shapes the master plan.

Clerk Champy asked Chair Charville to confirm that the draft vision would be available online for all to read and leave comments; Chair Charville confirmed this was the case. Clerk Champy encouraged all in attendance to participate in reviewing and commenting on the draft vision. Clerk Champy addressed Ms. Cole’s comment about the topic of transportation necessitating a specific outcome; he explained the topic is to generate discussion and perspectives on what types of transportation are needed or important to residents but does not prescribe at the outset a conclusion. Clerk Champy also noted that when most parcels in a Town like Lynnfield are developed and few undeveloped parcels remain, re-development can feel as though the “pace” of housing development is increasing but in reality, it is not.

Ms. Harris-Long encouraged attendees to leave their name and email addresses to stay informed with updates about the vision plan.

Erin Hohmann of 171 Salem Street addressed the PB and stated she has lived in Lynnfield for over 55 years. She voiced concerns over the Market Street development, which transformed the intersection of Walnut and Salem Street by her home into a busier, louder roadway. She noted that while she understands the Town may be in favor of progress, it should not come at the expense of the few. She denoted that more recently she was made aware of the distinction between Lynnfield and South Lynnfield; she advocated for more equity in Town. Chair Charville stated that should the Town

LYNNFIELD PLANNING BOARD SPECIAL MEETING:
VISION PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM – November 29, 2023

build off of the vision plan to complete the next master plan, the Town could review and address improving traffic issues for specific areas in town.

Ken MacNulty of 40 Merrill Road addressed the PB, stating he has been a resident for over 35 years. He noted that he was in favor of the tenets presented of the vision plan. He stated that common themes of “access” and “connectivity” were viewed as important goals in the vision plan presentation, and that the rail trail is a perfect example of how Lynnfield can achieve these goals. He cited the value of trails as means of connecting towns across the North Shore, as well as connecting schools and municipal buildings in town. He noted that the trails would also provide an alternate means of recreation and transportation, citing how other towns and cities make frequent use of the trails in their communities.

Chair Charville requested further comment from audience members; hearing none, Chair Charville asked for final remarks from MAPC and PB members. Ms. Harris-Long thanked all who attended and encouraged individuals to stay involved in the vision plan process.

10. 7:23pm – Adjournment

Chair Charville announced the PB would adjourn the community forum and take a seven-minute break. He stated the PB would resume the regular monthly PB meeting at 7:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Sondria Berman