

To: Master Plan Working Group

Subject: Recommendations for Aug. 16th meeting

From: Tim Logan

Date: Aug 14th, 2017

The following comments are written after receiving written comments from Meryl Mandell (via email), Mike Vinsky and Jeff Lacey (via our first meeting). I will refer to their suggestions throughout my comments.

1. Clarifying the current charge of the MPWG: The charge is comprised of two statements. The first is from the original Vision document, page 27, option 2: "The Select Board could define a series of topics to be addressed through focused studies, community engagement, and recommendations leading to actions. This might be best achieved by appointing a new working group to mine the vision to develop and articulate specific topics, then have the Select Board assemble working committees of interested citizens to address them." The second statement is from the July 11, 2017 Select Board Minutes, page 6: the motion was made to directly implement the vision (page 27) with the addendum modification "that the MPWG further develop specific topics and strategies in order for the town to directly implement the Vision." By the suggestion of "mining" the vision, I 1) interpret this only as a suggestion and not a requirement and 2) I do not interpret this to mean "re-mine" the data, rather I interpret it to mean to mine the vision statement (2nd paragraph on page 9 of the Shutesbury Community Vision Report). The Report offers four "priority" areas related to the vision paragraph: Community, Finances, Infrastructure, and Land Use/Housing. I suggest to the MPWG committee that we accept these four priorities as the defined "series of topics" requested originally of the Select Board.

Priority 1 Finances: A key phrase of the Finance priority is "reduction of the property tax burden". This is unfortunately a nebulous statement. It does not indicate if this means a reduction in the tax rate or in the absolute dollar value of taxes paid. It does not indicate a reduction from a stated baseline. For example, it does not say a reduction of the current tax rate. Nor does it say, again for

example, reduction of a future tax rate which may exist, perhaps, after development of future municipal building projects. Thus I believe that the most significant phrase in the Financial Priority statement is "Shutesbury is fiscally sustainable." *To this end I am in agreement, conceptually with Meryl's suggestion for a fiscal sustainability committee with some caveats.*

Caveat 1 I recommend that the committee be a joint sub-committee of Fincom. This is because the initial steps of sustainability are already being explored by ongoing meetings of members of the Finance, Capital Planning, and Building committees. These three committees have engaged the service of Joe Markarian, Jr., under the Community Compact Project. Joe is a Municipal Finance Specialist from the Franklin County Regional Council of Governments. *I have attached his resume which will elucidate his extensive experience in municipal issues.* Joe is reviewing, updating, and coordinating (so there is no conflicting overlap) policies of these three committees and also the relationship of their policies to the Select Board Policy Manual. He is also introducing a 5 year forecasting system to be maintained by Fincom with the help of the Town Administrator. *I have attached Joe's document "Revenue & Expenditure Projections as part of a Town Master Plan".* You should note the absence of demographic considerations and the 5 year vrs. 10 time line. In Joe's experience the attempted use of demographics is an impractical task and has not been seriously attempted by any of the 20 plus towns he has worked with. Also, projecting beyond 5 years has proven impractical in that the projection becomes a dynamic document which changes from year to year. I am relaying Joe's view because it is a modification of Mike Vinsky's observations and recommendations.

Caveat 2 I recommend that the sub-committee be asked to consider both Joe Markarian's and Mike Vinsky's observations as starting points for their deliberations on fiscal sustainability.

Priority 2 - Community: This priority focuses primarily on respectful listening and offering of cultural, activities, programs, and social settings to enhance residents' lives. It also mentions a library which I will address under infrastructure. I believe that respectful listening can primarily be promoted through the various

committee members training in public meeting/group dynamics and communication. I would therefore recommend to the Select Board that such training, provided locally, be identified by the Town Administrator, suggested for all committee members, and be paid for by the town. I believe that the cultural activities et al can be expanded by addressing the issue of a library with community space which I will, again, discuss under infrastructure. *I also believe there may be some potential in activities promoted by a "Low Hanging Fruit Committee" and I therefore am in agreement with Meryl's recommendation for such a committee.*

Priority 3 - Infrastructure: I am conceptually in agreement with Meryl's idea of a New Community Space Committee with the following caveats:

Caveat 1 I would rename the committee "Lot O-32 Development Committee" and task it to do a phased exploration of Jeff Lacey's suggested project which potentially encompasses a renewable energy project, library/community center, and senior housing. I would caution, by the way that we try to clarify if the Vision was referring to TWO separate centers (a community center and a library) vrs. a single structure library with community space.

Caveat 2 I would task the committee to first address the concept of a solar field on O-32. This project would likely take about two years to complete. Then, in year 3 or 4 planning for a library with community space could begin. In year 5 or 6 grant application for a library could begin. In this manner the projects, changes in the town, and projections could be constantly monitored and feasibility issues revisited year by year.

Priority 4 - Land Use/Housing: I believe much of what is required regarding the aspirations for land use and housing have already been put into action by the Planning Board and that no further action is necessary other than consideration of senior housing as mentioned under Priority 3. I will defer to Jeff Lacey's assessment in this area.