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## Master Plan Committee

February 12, 2020

**Present:** Donald Cleary, Joe Cerretani, Beth Ashman-Collins, Sharon Friedman, Adrian LeCesne, Lou Amoroso, Sara Walsh, Diana Bren, Mark Tartlon, Ryan Maxwell, Allen Bryer, Peter Kortright, Walter Jenkins, Frank DeVecchio, Matthew List, Jenn Walsh, Brendan Roche Bill Walker, Airport Commission, Julie Jones, IDC, Steve Schoonveld, Select Board Anna Callahan, JM Goldson; Erik Halvorsen, Economic Development Shaun P. Burke, Director of Planning and Development; Jennifer Davis, Administrative Secretary, Maria De la Fuente, Planning Department Intern

### 1. Meeting called to order at 7:00 p.m.

### 2. Discussion of Vision, Goals and Strategies

Ms. Callahan explained some changes to the Master Plan schedule, including the next two meetings, March 18 and April 15, which will be a joint meeting with the Select Board. The draft Master Plan will be presented and opened up for public comment at the March 18 meeting. Ms. Callahan said she will be sending the action plan and comment matrix to the committee members tomorrow, and will send the draft plan one week prior to the March 18 meeting.

Ms. Callahan said the process has focused on prioritizing how to best use the town's resources to accomplish its goals over the next 10 years.

Ms. Callahan said she met with department heads last week, focusing on capacity and implementation. They talked about some of the things in the document that are already being done, where capacity is lacking, ways to work between departments or find funding to alleviate problems. They discussed whether any of the ideas seemed difficult to accomplish, and about the need for fiscal sustainability, improving infrastructure including schools, roads, sidewalks, open space, recreation and improving the existing trail system, which isn't well maintained because there is no budget. Ms. Callahan said she will incorporate those discussions into the draft that will be distributed tomorrow.

Mr. Jenkins said the last couple of Master Plans have focused on economic development and planning issues, but this one seems to be addressing more issues. He said we have been successful in executing the past Master Plans, and asked how the issues that come out of this one will be tracked. He suggested the stakeholders could get together regularly to make sure we are keeping up. Ms. Callahan said one of the department heads suggested having regular meetings to share resources and talk about problems. Mr. Jenkins said it would be a good idea if moving forward, the different disciplines interact.

Mr. Halvorsen said at the end of a Master Plan his firm worked on in Littleton, the Select Board reviews the plan annually to look at the goals and chose a few to focus on. He said in North Andover, the department heads go through the Master Plan during budget season and try to align their budget to the goals and objectives in their areas.

Mr. Kortright said this is a holistic plan that everyone should be involved with and which should be addressed regularly.

Ms. Callahan said they will distribute the implementation plan and matrix tomorrow and ask for comments. She said the first piece of the document will have the strategies, goals and implementation ideas; the second will describe what type of change it is (zoning, design, programs and services), who will implement it, approximate costs and potential funding sources, a timeline and a comment matrix. She asked everyone to return the comment matrix by February 21 to give her team enough time to draft the plan in advance of the March 18 meeting.

Ms. Callahan explained the draft includes six pillars with 23 goals and 84 strategies. Mr. Tarlton asked if that is a common size; Ms. Callahan said it is on par with other communities. Mr. Halvorsen said less than 100 strategies is a good number.

Ms. Callahan explained some goals have been consolidated, and some have been removed because they are already being done. She said the Sustainable and Strong Services and Infrastructure section has changed a lot based on the feedback from the department heads.

**Movement/Major Changes:**

- All housing-related goals now under one goal (1a)
- 1c iv - Work with the arts community in Mansfield to install public art to provide a unique experience and showcase local artists. (originally from 3a ii)

**Deleted based on input:**

- 1a ii - Amend zoning to allow for tiny or “small house” or modular house development in accordance with Appendix Q of the Massachusetts Building Code. (combined into another strategy)
- 1b ii - Create a centralized online community forum—one moderated by the town—for residents to discuss town affairs and to be better alerted to upcoming events and opportunities. (combined into another strategy)
- 2a ii - Connect downtown businesses to South Common, Fulton Pond, and Kingman Pond through improved wayfinding and multi-modal connections. (combined into another strategy)
- 2a v - Create and distribute a map showing the locations and access points of Mansfield’s open spaces, natural habitats, and conservations areas. (already being done)
- 2b ii - Maintain existing walking and hiking trails and improve wayfinding signage and parking to promote ease of access and enhanced usage. (duplicate strategy – combined into another strategy)
- 2b iii - Construct “adult playgrounds” and circuit training facilities to encourage fitness and wellness among older adults. (combined into 2b i)
- 3a iii - Improve wayfinding signage to direct people to downtown and key community spaces from surrounding streets and bike paths. (duplicate strategy – combined into another strategy)
- 3b iii - Ensure the design of new mixed-use buildings provides for appropriately placed commercial spaces with enough depth to accommodate a wide range of potential tenants. (combined into another strategy) Deleted based on input
- 3c (all) Create a town-wide branding and identity centered on Downtown. (combined into other strategies)
- 3d ii - Conduct focus groups with property owners to surface any issues related to zoning and permitting, tenant fit-out needs, or marketing to help reduce vacancy rates. (felt like it was overstepping into private businesses)

- 3d v- Design a temporary rent reduction grant program that could help subsidize downtown rents for new tenants looking to fill vacant spaces. This program could also be tailored to specific business types deemed desirable or categories that may be missing from the Downtown today. (felt like it was overstepping into private businesses)
- 4a iii - Evaluate pedestrian desire paths and consider installing new crosswalks and sidewalks. (combined into another strategy)
- 4b iii - Restripe on-street parking spaces to maximize the number of parking spaces on North Main Street. (already being done)
- 4b vi - Provide bicycle parking and benches throughout Downtown. (combined into another strategy)
- 4c iv - Evaluate interchange alternatives to provide new I-495 northbound off-ramp to Route 140 (South Main Street) to minimize impacts to surrounding neighborhoods and private property. (people felt this was catering to a specific resident's issue rather than a town-wide concern)
- 4d ii - Create a connected network of on-street and off-street cycling facilities that connect to downtown and the train station from nearby neighborhoods and employment centers. (duplicate strategy – combined into another strategy)
- 4d iii - Install safe and secure bicycle parking at the train station. (duplicate strategy - combined into another strategy)
- 4d vii - Coordinate with the MBTA to expand service and accommodate late-night users—such as concerts at Xfinity Center; performances at MMAS; or community events in Downtown. (concerns about feasibility/usefulness)
- 5c i - Consider reconnecting West Street at Rt 140 to better connect the Cabot Business Park to Main Street and Copeland Drive. (concerns about feasibility/usefulness)

**Reworked based on input:**

- 1a ii - Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA)
- 1a iii Pursue new means of funding for community resources.
- 2c i - Improve language on the Town Website to reflect a broader land protection and stewardship agenda + 2c v - Continue to collaborate with the Mansfield NRT to proactively engage and broaden resident populations to bolster awareness and interest in the community's open space and natural resource offerings. Create a broader land protection and stewardship agenda that fosters engaged and informed residents.
- 4e i - Evaluate critical intersections for ADA compliance + 4e ii - Perform Road Safety Audits (RSAs) at remaining high-crash intersections and implement recommendations. Evaluate all transportation infrastructure; maintenance projects; and critical intersections for ADA compliance in order to serve all users.
- 6c iv - Act on identified and specific needs before a crisis strikes + v - Update local and regional evacuation planning and routes + vi Update Emergency Communications equipment. + vii Develop a comprehensive plan to address vector-borne diseases. Further develop a more comprehensive plan for emergencies and address specific needs before a crisis strikes.

**New Strategies**

- 2c ii - Protect the Canoe River Aquifer and associated town wellheads.
- 4c iv - Coordinate with MBTA to develop a reverse commute fare for people who live in Boston but commute to work in Mansfield.
- 6c ii - Pursue Green Community designation with the Massachusetts Green Communities Division.

- 6c iii - Explore ways to reduce food waste.
- 6c iv - Explore ways to shift the community's trash/waste management burden onto market forces and off tax rolls.
- 6d iii - Continue to explore opportunities for regional consolidation of municipal services, using the MFN model.

**New Goals:**

New Goal under #5- Explore ways to integrate the Mansfield community into the industrial and business park.

- i. Explore ways to encourage employees of park properties to access the Towns green spaces for pre/post work hours as well as breaks.
- ii. Evaluate regulations on temporary or mobile food services operations within the parks.

New Goal under #6- Proactively address the deteriorating physical conditions of Mansfield's school facilities and other public buildings.

- i. Assess the physical conditions of Mansfield's school facilities in relation to projected needs, through a School Facilities and Utilization and Needs Study.
- ii. Coordinate with other departments to understand probable town growth and build-out scenarios to plan for future school enrollment.

**4d vii - Coordinate with the MBTA to expand service and accommodate late-night users—such as concerts at Xfinity Center; performances at MMAS; or community events in Downtown (concerns about feasibility/usefulness)**

Ms. Bren said she was surprised this item was removed; Ms. Ashman-Collins said it is a significant issue, but she understands that is not just the town's issue, but would also involve the MBTA. Mr. Kortright asked about working with GATRA and other transportation companies, not just the MBTA. Dr. Amoruso said the issue should be included in the Master Plan. Ms. De la Fuente asked how often that service would be needed; the answer was there are around 40 concerts a season, some of which are huge traffic generators. Mr. LeCesne suggested leaving it in as a general goal - work with transit sectors - rather than focusing on a specific agency. Mr. Bryer agreed. Mr. Kortright said there are several mini-loop traffic situations that need to be addressed, including Xfinity and the business parks. .

**5c i - Consider reconnecting West Street at Rt 140 to better connect the Cabot Business Park to Main Street and Copeland Drive. (concerns about feasibility/usefulness)**

Mr. Bryer said one of the underlying themes of the Master Plan is multimodal transportation. He said it may be a better idea to reconnect the two sides of West Street and the business park for pedestrians and bicycles rather than for vehicles. Mr. Kortright said it may be worth reconnecting it for vehicles. The group discussed the train tracks in that area that would make a vehicle crossing difficult. Mr. List suggested making that goal a more general one about crossing Route 140 from one portion of West Street to the other, rather than specifically at that spot.

**4e i - Evaluate critical intersections for ADA compliance + 4e ii - Perform Road Safety Audits (RSAs) at remaining high-crash intersections and implement recommendations. Evaluate all transportation infrastructure; maintenance projects; and critical intersections for ADA compliance in order to serve all users**

Mr. LeCesne said he was concerned about the critical intersection concern being watered down by the combination of several strategies. He suggested keeping ADA compliance and traffic

accident reduction as two separate strategies, or changing that to “critical intersections and ADA compliance.” Mr. Tarlton said ADA is the law and asked if it needs to be specifically included; Ms. Callahan said calling it out makes it a priority. Mr. LeCesne said traffic safety, pedestrian safety and ADA have different regulations. Dr. Amoruso suggested phrasing it “traffic safety, pedestrian safety, bicycle safety and ADA compliance.”

Ms. Callahan said new strategies were added, including protecting the Canoe River Aquifer and wellheads, coordinate with the MBTA to encourage reverse commuters, Green Community designation, shift the community’s trash/waste management burden onto market forces and off tax rolls and explore opportunities for regional consolidation of municipal services, using the MFN model. Ms. Bren suggested the town coordinate with local businesses on the reverse commute issue. Mr. Schoonveld suggested removing “and take off the tax rolls” from the trash/waste management item.

Ms. Callahan said they also added strategies to explore ways to integrate the business parks into the town, and to look at the physical condition of schools and other public buildings.

### **Economic Development**

Ms. Callahan said economic development has come up a lot throughout this process, including where the market is going for retail and the increase in online ordering and delivery.

Mr. Halvorsen said retail is not dying; mall retail may be struggling, but he said that does not relate to retail in downtowns, which are resurgent in the retail market, particularly in towns with an MBTA stop and those that are adding a residential component. He said that is building in a customer base, and noted a household may spend \$20,000 a year. He said he thinks Mansfield is on the right path. He said there is a shift happening with more retail purchases made online, but that still only makes up 10% of retail purchases in the country. He said malls are having trouble because they are losing their anchor tenants, then smaller retailers start to leave. He said there has been more focus on food and beverage offerings, but there is still a lot of retail because people want to try things on and talk to people. He said retail is not going to go away, but is changing and property and business owners have to try to keep up.

Mr. Jenkins said affluent communities seem to have healthy downtowns and asked how to build a retail base with a demographic that doesn’t have that kind of disposable income. He said Mansfield has some good businesses downtown, but he is concerned they are not the type business that will attract people downtown. He said there are also a lot of other retail options around, both in other parts of Mansfield and in adjacent towns. Mr. Halvorsen said Mansfield’s median income is relatively high and he did not see a lot of vacancies downtown. He said North Main Street is very long, and it is a long walk between town hall at one end and the train station/TOD at the other, and sections are broken up physically or visually. He said Easthampton has a long downtown with a couple of different areas; one with primarily business like banks and small offices, another with primarily services like a grocery store, bakery and nail salon, and a third with restaurants, coffee shops, gallery space and small local retailers, which is also a Cultural District. He said North Main could be broken into a couple of different pieces, and the town could work with the property owners to rethink space or make small investments to help. He said Lynn did program to refurbish neon signs, which helps to attract people to the next

thing along the street. He said Lawrence has a program with LED light installations on structures like bridges to light the areas people think of as unsafe. Mr. Halvorsen said the North Main Street sidewalks feel narrow, so the parking study could help the town look at ways to do simple things like making a couple of parking spaces into tiny parks to add some visual interest and give people a place to stop, which would be easier and less expensive than trying to widen the sidewalk.

Mr. Halvorsen said good uses around train stations would be things like food and beverage and convenience retail. Mr. Penney said he thinks food will help attract people, and noted South Station has a lot of food options. Mr. LeCesne said at South Station, people have to go past the businesses on their way from the front door to their train; he said the traffic pattern around Mansfield's train station can be a problem. Mr. Jenkins said he thinks the 1 Mansfield retail space suffers because of its proximity to the train station and because the traffic patterns make it hard to get in and out. He said there isn't enough parking on Mansfield Avenue between the station and Chauncy Street. However, he said there is a small public parking lot in front of 1 Mansfield Avenue that is rarely full. Ms. Ashman-Collins said she thinks there is a lot of potential in that area. Mr. Halvorsen asked if the Planning Board wants the focus around the train station to be more residential, which will bring people to downtown to support business. He asked what would happen if the retail on the first floor requirement were changed; Ms. Ashman-Collins said she would be concerned no one would ever build retail downtown. She asked how to achieve the feeling of a downtown if things like amenity space for residences were allowed on the first floor. Mr. Halvorsen said Malden requires first floor retail, two of which sat vacant for a year or two; one is now a seasonal market, and the other became an amenity space and gym; however, they did not put up shades, so it is still an active space people can see from the street.

Ms. Friedman said as we are building and adding density downtown, she is concerned the feel and look of downtown are changing from something more organized to something denser. She said we are almost developing a city sense around the downtown, with buildings right up to narrow sidewalks. She said the idea of adding residential downtown has been in the works for years, and it is now coming to fruition with some problems. She asked how we can make that new downtown work and how something like a Cultural District would be integrated. She said she is concerned about the development happening without a plan. She said the board has been told by some that retail is in trouble, but a few years ago it was told retail would flourish downtown. Mr. Halvorsen said at some point, downtown will reach saturation and retail space may sit vacant longer than it used to; he suggested it may help to have a market study; Ms. Callahan said that could be part of an economic development study. Mr. Halvorsen said BETA is working with Littleton on a downtown study, with housing and commercial retail study portions.

Dr. Amoruso said he is concerned some of the retail space being constructed downtown isn't realistic because it doesn't have enough depth. He said he thinks people will go to downtown businesses if they are attractive, even if they do not have a lot of parking. He said the narrow sidewalks may contribute to the problem because there isn't room to stop to window shop and for others to pass by.

Mr. Schoonveld said he thinks the 1 Mansfield Avenue space needs something to draw people's eye to it. Mr. Halvorsen said there could be an activation strategy with the town and building owner working together, which could include holding regular events there to draw people in. Mr. Cerretani said a large national retail or food is unlikely to go into these spaces; it will likely be small local businesses. Mr. LeCesne suggested making a space like the one at 1 Mansfield Avenue available to small food or retail offerings, but adding two sets of doors to draw people through the space.

Ms. Ashman-Collins asked for examples of towns with active downtowns and TOD areas. Mr. Halverson said Beverly has seen new projects in the last five years, and Melrose is struggling with this in its Smart Growth district near Orange line.

Ms. Jones asked about subsidizing small businesses to help attract them. Mr. DeVecchio said we are hearing the building owners can't fill the space. Mr. Penney said he talked to the 1 Mansfield Ave owners, who said they would be happy with \$15-16 a square foot for the commercial space, but they want long-term leases, which are difficult for small retailers. Mr. Penney asked if restaurants anchor downtowns; Mr. Halverson said he thinks they do. Ms. Friedman said Dedham Square has an interesting mix of restaurants and retail; Mr. Halverson said that area has strict design guidelines. Ms. Friedman asked if there is something that happens in places like that that we could learn from; she said if the town understands how something like that works, it could provide guidance for downtown development.

Mr. Bryer asked whether downtown Mansfield is going to be a destination for others, or its own concentrated ecosystem, and what the difference is between those types of downtowns. Mr. Halvorsen said used Andover and North Andover as an example of one downtown that is a destination for people from surrounding communities and the other that serves its own residents. Mr. Cerretani said he thinks Mansfield's downtown is much better than it was 10 years ago, and is in transition now with several hundred new and soon-to-be built residential uses. Ms. Friedman said we are getting the residential density, but asked how the retail is going to fit in. Mr. Halvorsen said the specific retail isn't really in the town's control. Ms. Friedman said we may need a retail gap study; Ms. Ashman-Collins said she isn't sure that would tell us much more than we already know. Mr. Jenkins asked why the clothing store next to the post office didn't locate downtown; the answer was because there wasn't a large enough space downtown when the owner was looking. Mr. Jenkins said two or three stores like that together could make downtown more of a destination.

Dr. Amoruso said he thinks additional restaurants will help downtown. Mr. Feck said downtown North Attleboro has added a lot of restaurants; Mr. Walker said he thinks that is because they have parking and downtown Mansfield restaurants do not have enough. Ms. Ashman-Collins asked how to make the shift to look at parking as more of a community asset than a private property issue. She asked if the existing successful restaurants could meet the current parking requirements; Mr. Burke said he thinks Jimmy's Pub would. Mr. Walker said if it is more convenient for him to go to a restaurant with available parking, he would do that. Ms. Bren said downtown has parking, but people may have to walk a little bit. Mr. Walker said he thinks potential business owners will want to know there are a certain number of people going past their storefront. Ms. S. Walsh said if a restaurant is good enough, people will go there despite the

parking situation. Mr. Schoonveld said there is a lot of investment happening downtown, including the renovation of the Tahana restaurant.

Mr. Feck said increasing the height in the Cabot business park was intended to attract different types of business than traditional warehouse, like office and R&D, and asked how to attract those types of businesses. He said the business park has a lot of single-story transportation type buildings and asked how to add value to those properties. Mr. Penney said no one has taken advantage of the increased height. Mr. DelVecchio said newer office parks have a mix of uses, with restaurants and retail. Mr. Halverson said Malden allows residential in its business park. He said it doesn't surprise him that single-story logistic buildings are still being built because no one is building office parks the way they were 40 years ago. He said there is a huge demand for logistics and warehousing because of online retailing, and for cold storage uses because of online food services. He said old-style warehouse uses needed 30-40 foot ceilings, but now warehouse businesses need higher ceiling heights. He said business parks have been allowing buildings with more technical, higher paid jobs rather than standard picker and packer jobs. He said he thinks transitioning to office will be hard. He said business parks are starting to integrate restaurants or coffee shops because they tend to be isolated and not all businesses have cafeterias. He said Mansfield has existing R&D and flex space, which is still working. Ms. Bren said not many buildings in the business park have cafeterias, so restaurants could be a useful addition. Mr. Bryer asked who owns the sidewalk space in the business park, which he said could be a space for food trucks. He asked about parking requirements; Mr. Burke explained there are a number of parking options, depending on the use. Mr. Feck asked how to attract different businesses to the park; Mr. Halvorsen suggested a marketing study and a dedicated economic development person. He said he thinks Mansfield is headed in the right direction, but it may take awhile. Mr. Penney asked about light manufacturing; Mr. Halvorsen said there is a mix of types of industrial use options, depending on the building's construction.

Mr. Cerretani asked if marijuana will be a big industry. Dr. Amoruso said there are large corporations involved in that business, but the industry is so new, no one knows what will happen.

Mr. Penney said one of the challenges is that Cabot Corp used to own the whole business park, but now there are multiple owners. He said Mansfield is in competition with several other business parks in the area, including the Myles Standish in Taunton. Mr. Kortright said the City of Taunton has a dedicated management team for that business park.

Mr. Halvorsen said the Ryan Elliot Business Park's business incubator space is very interesting; he said there is room to grow those types of business.

### 3. Adjournment

**Motion:** To adjourn at 9:15 p.m. (Feck- ) All in favor. PASSES

Next Master Plan Committee meeting: March 18, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

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Signature of Clerk

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Date of Approval