



**Town of Swampscott**  
**Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**  
Monday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 – 7:00 PM  
Virtual Meeting

**FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT**

Tim Dorsey (Chair), Mary Ellen Fletcher (Vice-chair), Eric Hartmann, Joan Hilario, Matthew Kirschner, Cinder McNerney, Gail Rosenberg, Jill Sullivan

**OTHER TOWN OFFICIALS PRESENT**

Amy Sarro, Director of Admin. & Finance; Patrick Luddy, Treasurer/Collector; Trang Vu, Asst. Town Accountant

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

Public Comment

None.

Discussion with Chair of Planning Board – Overview of Masterplan/Items in Development Pipeline

Chairman Tim Dorsey provided an overview of the goals of the conversation with the planning board, which includes expanding dialogue between the planning board and the finance committee to gain knowledge around the master plan and items in the development pipeline.

Angela Ippolito provided a presentation regarding the master plan. She stated that the Master Plan serves as an “action plan” for the town and prioritizes based on community input. This is a multi-faceted plan that addresses a variety of community needs

The current master plan was developed using guidelines from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which helps guide the process of creating the plan. Many community meetings were held to solicit community input which has further guided the plan.

Housing is a major category of need that the master plan contemplates. Ms. Ippolito commented that the planning board is currently updating their housing production plan (the plan is to be updated every five years). New units have to be accessible and comply with current building code. Many lots in town are considered “non-conforming” lots because they pre-date existing zoning regulation. Redevelopment of a lot requires significant zoning changes.

366 new residential units have been permitted in the last ten years in Swampscott. Most of the housing production results from reconstruction projects (tear-down of an existing structure) because there is limited land in town.

The master plan also identifies land that can be redeveloped based on transportation and other infrastructure that currently exists.

Joan Hilario asked Angela Ippolito to clarify which precincts the existing affordable housing units are located.

Angela Ippolito commented on some accessory apartment zoning that is under development which may allow property owners to add a unit to an existing structure under certain circumstances, and those units may be able to be classified as affordable.

Jill Sullivan commented that it would likely be difficult to have those units certified as affordable; Angela Ippolito agreed that it would be difficult to meet compliance requirements for those units to be certified.

Angela Ippolito contrasted the Elm Pl project with the Machon redevelopment project, commenting that because the Elm Pl property is privately-owned the town has fewer mechanisms for it to influence the project. The Machon property was town-owned and the town was able to have significant input on the redevelopment.

Angela Ippolito commented that she had concerns about the traffic that could be generated by the Elm Pl project. Although it is a transit-oriented site, there needs to be increased amenities near the site to support the residents (i.e. grocery store).

Gail Rosenberg asked Angela Ippolito if any changes have been made to the size of the building or the number of units originally proposed.

Angela Ippolito responded that the developer proposed reducing the project from 128 units to 120 units.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked Angela Ippolito if the Police and Fire departments review the project during the planning board's review process. Angela Ippolito confirmed this.

Angela Ippolito commented that the Open Space committee and the Planning Board advocate for open-space acquisition and preservation. Maintaining open space is critical as denser housing developments are increasingly prevalent. Ms. Ippolito further commented that the Community Preservation Act is a mechanism that is popular in other cities and towns, and allows for a fee to be added to quarterly tax bills which can be used toward acquisition of open space, historical preservation, and affordable housing. The fee is percentage based and lower-value properties are exempted.

Hazard mitigation and resiliency is another facet of the master plan. Angela Ippolito stated that a hazard mitigation plan was developed with the Kleinfelder group several years back which led to revisions to the town's coastal resiliency rules and guidelines. There is significant critical

infrastructure, which is vulnerable to coastal flooding. Kleinfelder recommended revegetating dunes and increasing the height of the seawall, for example.

Angela Ippolito commented on a state mandate, which requires that towns allow multi-family housing in areas surrounding MBTA stations.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked for clarification regarding the town's affordable housing stock, and what qualifies a unit as affordable. Angela Ippolito commented that the affordability of a unit is based on a percentage of median area income. She also commented that the town is well below the 10% target for affordable housing stock that the state sets.

Jill Sullivan commented that the town can proactively try to develop some units to add affordable housing stock through the affordable housing trust etc. This allows the town to retain adequate oversight and control of the project, while meeting the specific needs of the town. Jill Sullivan alluded to projects that Marblehead developed on their own.

Angela Ippolito commented on an opportunity that existed to relocate Duncan Terrace residents from the Housing Authority to a new building, demolish and reconstruct the units on Duncan Terrace, resulting in additional units. However, she commented that the Housing Authority was not amenable to the proposal.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked Angela Ippolito to clarify if there is a state agency that helps finance new affordable housing. Angela commented that DHCD is the primary state agency in charge of affordable housing.

Angela Ippolito will follow up with population figures, AMI, breakdown of affordable housing units, percentage of total housing stock classified as affordable, a summary of developments in the pipeline and unit census for the Elm Pl proposal.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked Tim to clarify going forward how the Finance Committee addresses the financial impact of the developments. Tim Dorsey suggested that the Finance Committee engage in conversation on the topic, especially with a budget mindset.

Angela Ippolito asked MaryEllen Fletcher to clarify which impacts she would be interested in exploring for a particular project. Specifically, Ms. Ippolito asked if the finance committee would be interested in calculating intangible costs i.e. the cost of increased congestion, or if the committee is more interested in understanding additional tax impact and line-item expenses.

MaryEllen Fletcher clarified her perspective, which is that the committee would be interested in understanding any operating or capital costs attributable to a particular development, the net cost of the same, and whether there are any costs that the town would require a developer to finance rather than the town bearing a particular cost where appropriate. MaryEllen Fletcher felt that the intangible impacts/quality-of-life concerns are matters where the planning board would chime in.

Angela Ippolito commented that the planning board is required to update its implementation schedule every couple of years.

Tim Dorsey asked Angela Ippolito when the next round of updates will be made to the master plan. Angela Ippolito commented that the plan is being updated now, the revised plan does not need to be submitted for another year or two, and she would welcome any input or involvement from the committee or its members.

#### Review of Capital Spend Reporting by Project

MaryEllen Fletcher asked if the middle school roof project is expected to be completed soon. Patrick Luddy responded that he will follow up with Max Kasper on the status of the project, but it may need to be completed in two phases due to delays.

Cinder McNerney asked Patrick Luddy if expected start or completion dates are known for the projects listed, and if there is any opportunity to rescind any project(s) and repurpose capital. Patrick Luddy responded that he will follow-up with department heads and project managers to make those determinations.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked if there is any ability to use capital project appropriations to pay for a project manager. Patrick Luddy commented that there have been internal conversations about that possibility, but it had not been fleshed out yet.

MaryEllen Fletcher asked for clarification regarding timeline surrounding borrowing for the new school. Patrick Luddy affirmed that the borrowing is still targeted for springtime. Tim Dorsey asked for clarification surrounding the process; Cinder McNerney provided an overview of the next steps necessary for borrowing. Patrick Luddy commented that he will keep the committee updated on the progress of the borrowing.

#### Old and New Business

##### **ARPA**

Amy Sarro commented that staff has had conversations with town counsel to this effect but review of this as a possible use of funds has not been completed yet.

Amy commented that ARPA funds are expected to allow expenditures for project management, grant reporting etc. Based on federal guidance, up to 5% of the obligated amount to ARPA can be used to pay for this administrative role. MaryEllen Fletcher asked if it makes more sense to hire a couple of assistants for the Finance Department or Department of Public Works. Amy commented that we could hire an employee rather than contract with a firm, but the benefits of the employee(s) would need to be borne in the operating budget because they are not covered under ARPA, and there is no budgetary opportunity to retain that staff upon expiration of ARPA funding.

Tim Dorsey asked Amy Sarro if a date had been set for the special town meeting. Amy commented that there has been discussion regarding the special town meeting, but there is no date set yet by the board. Possible items include but are not limited to: Traffic Infrastructure Network appropriation, Free Cash Appropriation, water/sewer retained earnings appropriation, and ratification of union contracts.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

True Attest,  
*Patrick Luddy*

Patrick Luddy, Treasurer/Collector

*Approved by vote of the finance committee 10/25/2021*