

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**  
2 **PLANNING COMMISSION**  
3 **April 3, 2023, Minutes**

4  
5 **Commission Members Present:** Peter Hudkins, Cathy Hasbrouck, Tim Roper, Barre Pinske, and  
6 Hugh Quinn at Town Hall.

7  
8 **Staff Present:** Preston Bristow, Zoning Administrator/Town Planner, at Town Hall; and Susan  
9 Bailey, Recording Secretary, via Zoom.

10  
11 **Citizens Present:** Bill Lindsay at Town Hall; and Steve Mancuso, and Malia Cordero and Jason  
12 Rasmussen, both of MARC, via Zoom.

13 **Call to Order**

14  
15 Chair Hugh Quinn called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

16  
17 Decisions Made: None.

18  
19 Action Taken: Hugh said the goal at the April 17th meeting would be to approve the letter to  
20 property owners and the open district language in maps and forward for public hearing.

21  
22 **Agenda Item 1, Changes to the Agenda**

23  
24 There were no changes.

25  
26 **Agenda Item 2, Review and Approve Minutes from March 20, 2023, meeting**

27  
28 Hugh moved and Cathy seconded a motion to approve the March 20<sup>th</sup> minutes. There were no  
29 changes. The minutes were approved as written with Tim abstaining from the vote because he was  
30 absent from the March 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

31  
32 **Agenda Item 3, Citizen Comments**

33  
34 Steve Mancuso witnessed the Planning Commission had done a lot of work in the past year  
35 customizing the zoning to Chester's needs. It came on the heels of the housing crisis the state had  
36 blown the whistle on. The last meeting with Bob Flint revealed statistics from the census that made  
37 Steve think twice. He thought the State was trying to impose itself locally with a one shoe fits all  
38 doctrine and wanted to know their take on it. Peter noted it was the S.100, the Senate bill that  
39 addresses housing and would supersede a lot of what the commission is doing. Peter said it only  
40 affects where there is sewer and water. The map Bob had made over the summer was where the  
41 effects of S.100 would be. A lot of it was already done in Chester, except that they would add more  
42 housing and smaller lots but only where there was water and sewer. So, in Chester, Peter didn't  
43 think it would have the effect that some may think. Preston agreed and thought headlines would  
44 say the bill eliminates single family zoning, but Chester didn't have that. They will say you have  
45 to allow duplexes, but Chester already does. And within water and sewer, they say you must go to

1 a fourplex which was pretty much what they were planning to do. Preston didn't see a lot in the  
2 bill that would affect them. Hugh had scanned the bill and didn't see anything that set off any red  
3 flags. Most of what Hugh saw was what they had been discussing and will get into more detail as  
4 they move forward with zoning districts in and around Village Center. Steve thanked them.

5  
6 Bill Lindsay keeps notes on what they discuss and mentioned there was a proposal for a regional  
7 housing inventory that would be done by Regional Planning and wondered if they had moved  
8 forward with it. Hugh said it was Item 6 on the agenda. Jason said they were hiring a consultant  
9 and were finalizing a contract today. They would start soon and would come to Chester to talk at  
10 some point. They will be working on it over the next few months. Bill thanked him and said  
11 housing was one of their most important issues.

#### 12 13 **Agenda Item 4, Presentation on Municipal Planning for Health Equity**

14  
15 Malia Cordero of MARC gave a presentation entitled Municipal Planning for Health Equity about  
16 how health equity could be incorporated into municipal planning. The presentation is attached.

17  
18 Health inequities are often reflected in differences in length and quality of life, rates and severity  
19 of disease, disability, death, and access to treatment. Planners have an opportunity to reduce  
20 negative health outcomes in communities by creating spaces and places for people to work, live,  
21 and play. Healthy communities and economies go hand in hand. The whole basis of health equity  
22 is community inclusion. During the planning process they ask who is missing from the table and  
23 who is included and how to ensure they are reaching the widest audience.

24  
25 She provided model language that can be incorporated into town and village plans and talked about  
26 land use concepts supporting health equity. Diverse welcoming businesses and places benefit  
27 people's mental health and physical wellbeing. Connected communities are more likely to be  
28 economically successful.

29  
30 Malia's presentation included examples of bylaw areas that could be updated or examined to  
31 improve the environment. She touched upon examples of recreation, parks, green space, and  
32 walking paths and presented examples.

33  
34 She introduced the Vermont Health Equity Toolkit which was a 45-page PDF. It has separate  
35 topics, including Plans and Bylaws, Quality of Place, Transportation, Recreation, and Housing.  
36 Malia noted each of those topic sections of the toolkit provided examples of how to apply them in  
37 your community. She thought it was a good starting point for any project. A Community Resources  
38 Guide included in the toolkit included different planning elements with case studies to provide  
39 what other towns or organizations have done. The toolkit included sample language for bylaws.

40  
41 Hugh thanked Malia for her presentation and noted it was timely to their working with the bylaws.  
42 Hugh thought it provided an opportunity to step back and look at it from a different perspective.  
43 Malia thought Municipal Planning for Health Equity was a well thought out process as the 11  
44 regional planning commissions met regularly to prepare it and sent it out to partner organizations,  
45 such as hospitals, to consider everyone and what they may be missing.

46 Peter asked for the website that the language was pulled from. Malia provided the link:

1 <https://www.lcpcvt.org/healthequitytoolkit> which would get them to the Health Equity Planning  
2 Toolkit, the Resources Guide, and the Matrix of Sample Town Plan/Bylaw Language.

3  
4 Tim also thanked Malia and thought it looked well thought out and said some of the things  
5 presented were on their radar such as mixed use and thought the toolkit would be helpful.

6  
7 Barre said he lived in Minnesota as a young man and his friend's family had invented the  
8 NordicTrack and the town ended up with a community recreation center and their tax dollars went  
9 to support it. He thought what was presented seemed wishful for Chester, given its size of 3,200  
10 without the taxbase due to the lack of industry and so many people being second homeowners. He  
11 thought one of the best things going in Chester is the environmental group that was instrumental  
12 in getting the walking trail. He wondered how much depends on planning and how much was boots  
13 on the ground getting the finances. Barre asked if the towns that provided the information Malia  
14 presented were as small as Chester and if they were successful. Malia said she would check  
15 whether small towns were specifically considered but thought the Resources Guide had a mix of  
16 town sizes and communities. She would investigate and follow-up. Hugh agreed with Barre and  
17 was happy to be informed about things that were visionary and if they could execute based on  
18 people's ability to want to finance them through taxes but thought they wouldn't know if they  
19 didn't try. Barre said there were 3 buildings for sale, including the restaurant on the Green, the  
20 antique store, and yarn shop. For years Barre has thought it would be nice to have a family style  
21 restaurant and to partner with a culinary school and have the students live in the town and run the  
22 restaurant and help it be sustainable. Barre wondered how to rally the community behind it because  
23 the benefits would be great. He wanted to see the Planning Commission become more involved,  
24 secure financing, and be more forward thinking. He's considering moving if things don't change.

25  
26 Peter said when they did the Village Green District, they came up with combining the Cobleigh  
27 Lot with the downtown, greenspace, and a list, and they presented it to the Selectboard. Some of  
28 it was in the Master Plan and some Julie was working on. The list had nothing to do with zoning  
29 but rather a good basic plan. Peter thought the open space they were considering fell into this plan  
30 and they were going in the right direction.

31  
32 Tim thought it was a great discussion but wanted to address inclusion. He said everyone was  
33 missing from Planning Commission meetings except the board, Bill Lindsay, and Steve Mancuso  
34 who were regular visitors, and maybe others if there was a controversial topic that was covered in  
35 the press. He wondered how to get others to offer their input. Often, he thought it followed income  
36 lines. It was one of the reasons for doing the survey. He wondered how to reach out to renters and  
37 working-class people for their input. He wanted them to be aware it wasn't just them they had to  
38 plan for. Preston said some towns try to turn Planning Commission meetings into social events by  
39 providing food and entertainment or bring in a graphic designer and format their town plan like a  
40 magazine with pictures. Those things cost money and many towns lack the budget for that. Preston  
41 knew Two Rivers offered coffee and donuts with the planner at the general store.

42  
43 Barre thought they were put in a position to lead and implement ideas and this information was  
44 helpful, but he didn't think they should be afraid of trying to move ideas forward. He wasn't so  
45 excited when someone wanted to get rid of the streetlights and have a dark town nor when someone  
46 else wanted to get rid of cars and have all bikes. But Barre thought there were a lot of good ideas.

1 Tim said they need to discuss mixed-use more and be creative on how they can zone for it. He  
2 wondered if they could have mixed-use on the main roads no matter the zoning district.

3  
4 Barre thought Chester shared the same value as any town on Cape Cod for artists and crafters for  
5 a lot less money. When he tries to recruit workers, nobody wants to live here because there's not  
6 enough going on unless they're into hiking and skiing. There's not enough culture. If you want to  
7 live a quiet life out in the woods and drive to Claremont to shop, it's not a big deal but it is if you  
8 want to have a vital life where there's entertainment and culture, and things to do other than walk  
9 in the woods and ski. It's lacking unless you're willing to drive. He has lots of talented people  
10 respond to his ads but learn he's in Chester and decide to stay in Burlington or Brattleboro.

11  
12 Hugh thought it was a lot of good input but as planners, they want to make sure they're not creating  
13 roadblocks for what they're attempting to do. He would love funding to create projects. To Barre's  
14 point, he wondered if it was something related to the arts or in general, young people don't want  
15 to live in a rural area. Peter said they were considering a student representative on the Selectboard,  
16 and he had suggested one for the Planning Commission, as well.

17  
18 Cathy suggested having Preston give them an overview of how other towns raise money, such as  
19 the local options tax. Preston said they have it in Woodstock where part of the money earned goes  
20 toward promoting the town. They collect around \$160,000 annually and spend \$100,000  
21 promoting the town. Preston ran the numbers in Chester according to sales tax revenue and he  
22 thought Chester would make \$35,000. Barre said they have some of the wealthiest people in the  
23 country with land here. He said they still had locals versus flatlanders which was ridiculous  
24 because with the amount of money here, they could have a cultural center. He wanted a cultural  
25 center with a theater and a little café and public gallery and a place to gather. Unless you're  
26 involved in the school, you don't gather in the community and that was part of what was lacking.  
27 Barre said they just spent a million dollars on a nice firehouse, but a cultural center would be better  
28 in his opinion. He thought a cultural center/place to gather was the next thing they needed to do.

### 30 **Agenda Item 5, Final Review of Proposed Open Space District and Maps**

31  
32 Hugh's goal was to have the Planning Commission get to a point where the language in the maps  
33 has everything needed and then vote and move it to a public hearing. He wanted to iron out  
34 anything that needed tweaking now because when they got to the public hearing, they should have  
35 all their stuff in order and be listening to feedback from the public. By the time it gets to a public  
36 hearing, he did not want to be discussing what they wanted to change. The agenda was to look at  
37 the language in the maps and make sure they were in a good place to move it forward.

38  
39 Preston's recollection of the last meeting was that people were satisfied with the language about  
40 90% but wanted it to be 100%. In the past two weeks, he worked with Otis, who did a great job,  
41 and the two maps were before them. Preston wanted the new district to be entirely in floodplain  
42 but also exclude properties like the American Legion and Sewer Treatment Plant. He felt the map  
43 was 100% accurate in the sense it was entirely floodplain and didn't include any significant  
44 buildings. Preston said statute requires they adopt a Planning Commission reporting form. Jason  
45 agreed with Preston and said Otis and Preston had worked hard on the map. The language in the  
46 bylaws had not changed since the last meeting. At the last meeting, they felt a brand-new district

1 that didn't allow development needed to stand on its own. If they approved it for hearing, the  
2 nearest hearing date would need to be May 1<sup>st</sup>. Cathy thought the map submitted should be the  
3 existing map with the new district on it. Preston said when it went to the Selectboard they would  
4 modify the entire map of the entire town but wasn't sure it needed to be done that way for the  
5 Planning Commission hearing. Jason thought they could easily make changes as needed. Cathy  
6 would have to transmit it to all the towns and didn't think they should transfer the interim map.  
7 Preston saw Cathy's point about informing the surrounding towns. Preston said that Otis found the  
8 base map was done years ago and wasn't as simple as it could be.

9  
10 Barre thought the amount of work put into it was extraordinary and he didn't want to get in the  
11 way of moving it forward and wanted to see it move forward as written. Tim thought it was terrific  
12 and liked what he thought it would do for the town. Tim wanted to know if anyone had spoken  
13 with the landowners. Preston thought at the very least, they should identify all the parcels in the  
14 district and mail something to them. Tim thought the Selectboard would want the information also.  
15 Preston said the owners of Baba Louis said they hadn't realized the zoning had changed, so  
16 something like this should be informed. Peter said they weren't doing anything that hadn't already  
17 been imposed on the landowner and Tim thought they should communicate that. Preston said the  
18 State of Vermont is very negative about building on floodplain so it wouldn't happen here.

19  
20 Jason asked if they wanted to proceed with the hearing and invite the landowners or have an  
21 informational meeting before they got to the hearing stage. Peter said once they had the hearing,  
22 they could always correct it and have another hearing. Cathy said she could find the property  
23 owners and mail them a hearing notice and map. Preston agreed. Hugh thought they should do that  
24 so if they had feedback, they would attend the hearing and provide it. Tim wondered if they needed  
25 to include a letter. Cathy said she could put a short note together with the materials they sent and  
26 a list of who was getting it. She would circulate it to the board and send it out as soon as they  
27 approved it. Cathy pointed out it was changing their zoning district but not what they could do  
28 because they were in the overlay district. Tim agreed and thought although the changes were  
29 minimal, they may not agree. He suggested it be synopsisized and made clear. Barre thought the  
30 letter should come from Preston, state the work put into it and written well. Preston said he could  
31 write it but thought it could come from Hugh as the Chair. Hugh was generally in agreement with  
32 what he was hearing. Hugh thought the Commission should have a look at it and that he and  
33 Preston should write it. They could approve the letter at the next meeting. Hugh didn't think a  
34 special meeting for the landowners was necessary. Tim agreed. 15 days' notice would need to be  
35 given before the hearing. Barre suggested they plan the hearing out that far and the letter went out  
36 in between. Hugh said the landowners should receive the letter before the notice of hearing was  
37 published. Preston said they could have the hearing on May 15<sup>th</sup> if the notice was published on  
38 April 26<sup>th</sup>. Hugh thought the most important thing was before the grant ran out at the end of 2023,  
39 was to make sure they got through the districts in the Village area at a minimum. Hugh was okay  
40 with reviewing the letter at the next meeting and then getting the hearing scheduled. Jason agreed  
41 to review the letter at the next meeting and schedule the hearing for May 15<sup>th</sup>. He also thought they  
42 could review the draft of the Village Center District and the Neighborhood District at the April  
43 17th meeting. Hugh said the goal at the April 17th meeting would be to approve the letter and the  
44 open district language in maps forward for public hearing. The others agreed.

1                                   **Agenda Item 6, Discuss Regional Planning House Study RFP**  
2

3 Jason said they had done the Keys to the Valley initiative, were working on zoning, and trying to  
4 eliminate hurdles for housing. To further housing efforts, they are talking with Dartmouth and  
5 other regional planning commissions, and looking into a super-regional program to help people  
6 navigate complicated permitting, design, and finance in the process of building housing. They are  
7 also trying to hire a consulting firm to do an inventory. Windham & Windsor Housing Trust had  
8 mentioned at a previous workshop how helpful it is, as developers, to know where sites are so they  
9 can get a head start on considering where to do a housing project. MARC is trying to hire a firm  
10 who they want to identify potential housing development sites. They will seek the Planning  
11 Commission's input. Jason was hoping for 10 to 20 sites where it made sense to develop housing.  
12 Barre thought whenever there was a supply and demand issue and there was money to be made  
13 because there was more demand than supply, people in the supply business ramp up but they  
14 haven't seen that with respect to housing in Vermont. He wondered what the reason behind it was.  
15 Jason said from what they were hearing, the economics weren't there. The costs of supplies and  
16 labor are high making it difficult to build a small house for less than \$500,000. It's very expensive  
17 right now. There is a worker shortage, the permitting process is long, and sometimes the neighbors  
18 come out with pitchforks killing the project. If they can expedite the local permitting process, and  
19 identify available sites where zoning works with water and sewer, that helps. That combined with  
20 financing benefits the state and others have available will be enough to make some projects happen.  
21 To Barre's point, Hugh thought part of the problem was if it wasn't profitable, people don't want  
22 to do it. Hugh thought if locations could be identified, the community was behind it, and there  
23 were incentives from the state or feds to make it profitable, it may be the magic formula to make  
24 it happen. Hugh thought there was discussion by the town about creating a housing committee, but  
25 he hadn't seen any movement on it. Initially, it would be the Planning Commission, but if a housing  
26 committee was formed, they may be the more appropriate point of contact. Peter noted Julie is  
27 going to form a housing commission, but it will take time.  
28

29 Peter thought they had paid MARC to do a housing study and wondered if this was part of it. Jason  
30 said they did the Keys to the Valley Housing Study, and they are doing the Bylaws Modernization  
31 work which included the 4 workshops and other helpful information. They thought this would take  
32 it a step further and have a document and 15 or so development sites that would work. The  
33 Springfield Development Corp. is working with them, and they could promote it on their website.  
34 Jason said they were trying to focus on having priority sites that could happen. Cathy said Peter  
35 and she had looked at some sites. Peter said Otis had the information already. Jason asked if it  
36 was around the same time, they were looking at the water and sewer. Peter said the key to the sites  
37 was having sewer and the map lit up several places where it would be easy to have a neighborhood.  
38 Peter said there were two good sized pieces that were close enough to water and sewer. Peter  
39 having worked for developers before, said it was easy for him to put his finger on potential sites.  
40 Jason thought they should circle back after working with the consultants to see what works. Hugh  
41 wondered if they would ever consider not just land but a building that wasn't being used. Jason  
42 and Peter said it could be anything. Cathy wondered if existing buildings gave anyone an  
43 advantage. Barre thought it cost more to renovate an existing building than to build new. Peter said  
44 given the high real estate prices, it was still cheaper to buy a house than build one. Jason said with  
45 this effort, they weren't looking at ADUs but something on a larger scale. Tim suggested a vacant  
46 church. Hugh knew Londonderry was doing a housing study and suggested reaching out to them.

1 Jason said MARC received seven decent proposals and thought who they selected was a good firm  
2 Chester had worked with before.

3  
4 Barre wondered if it would take a while for a housing committee to get up to speed and if they  
5 would be able to do something quicker because it was their specific task. Because the Planning  
6 Commission was more involved with it already, Barre wondered if it would be better for them to  
7 take it on or was there too much to do already. Hugh thought if there was a housing committee,  
8 they would work with the Planning Commission and Preston and thought the Commission had  
9 enough going on currently that they needed to move forward. Hugh looked forward to more bodies  
10 focusing on housing and the Commission connecting with them when necessary.

11  
12 Jason wanted to clarify the study was regional and not 15 sites in Chester but rather the region,  
13 specifically areas served by water and sewer such as Chester Village, Ludlow Village, downtown  
14 Springfield, and Windsor, or similar areas.

15  
16 **Agenda Item 7, Presentation on Proposed Replacement of Town-Based Property Appraisal**  
17 **with State-Wide System**

18  
19 Hugh felt this was important but wasn't Planning Commission work. He asked Cathy to put this  
20 on as a separate item.

21  
22 Cathy said traditionally listers were elected and there were three of them. They kept track of parcels  
23 and determined what they were worth. When the state decided to pay for education with a statewide  
24 tax in a statewide manner, things happened. Until then, there was no issue with towns having their  
25 own way of valuing their own parcels, naming them, numbering them, determining their value,  
26 and collecting the taxes and spending it on their municipal services and schools. The school tax is  
27 two-thirds of the tax burden, so it is a lot of money. They decided if everyone in the state is paying,  
28 they should value every parcel across the state fairly. There are 256 towns and many ways of  
29 valuing parcels even though they use the same software. After decades of trying to get it to be fair,  
30 they suggested using one method of valuing property for the state education tax. So, there's a  
31 proposed bill to hire someone to do it for the entire state. Cathy thought it made sense but had also  
32 watched the state attempt to implement other projects that made no sense because they do it so  
33 poorly. She wondered if the change would replace the way they value and keep track of parcels.  
34 Since it will apply to two-thirds of the tax, she wondered why they would use a different way to  
35 determine the remaining third. The other impact of the changes that statewide education tax  
36 brought is it's become a more complicated job and electing people to do it doesn't make sense  
37 because you would have no idea if they were capable. So, in 2013, Chester took the option the  
38 state offered to not elect listers but appoint them. Cathy wanted the Commission to know things  
39 are changing and the reason behind it and she wasn't sure how they would work out.

40  
41 Hugh hadn't realized in some towns listers were elected. He read somewhere that Vermont was  
42 the only state in the nation that continues to do this at a municipality level while everyone else  
43 does it at a state level. Cathy agreed. Hugh was in favor of anything that would happen to create  
44 consistency of how property is valued and would support moving it to a state level. He wondered  
45 what the ability was of the state to execute. He saw a difference between it being a great idea and  
46 the state's ability or not to execute the idea. In a perfect world, if everyone used the same software

1 and techniques statewide and it was done well, that would be great. In an imperfect world, if they  
2 couldn't execute on that vision, it could cause a lot of problems for Chester. He didn't know how  
3 it would turn out but in theory it sounded good. Peter took issue with it, as he knows his  
4 neighborhood well. There was a house that took three years to get assessed. Peter said there were  
5 two houses that had never been assessed and had been there more than a year and another one of  
6 considerable value that had been upgraded and didn't get assessed again until this year. Peter  
7 brought it to Cathy's attention as a lister. It didn't happen until April 1<sup>st</sup>. Peter said to imagine it  
8 on a statewide scale. Peter thought the total of the three houses was well over \$1.5 million. Hugh  
9 didn't know if that was a problem with people not knowing something needed to be assessed or  
10 that there weren't enough assessors to do the work. If the problem was there weren't enough  
11 assessors, maybe it would get better if it were a statewide system. But then Hugh mentioned that  
12 they said it would take 10 years to do the 165 towns they are requesting so something needed to  
13 get fixed with the process regardless. Hugh wasn't sure if moving it to the state level would solve  
14 the problem. Cathy thought it could generate more interest among companies who do assessments  
15 to come to Vermont, but they would be doing big chunks regionally if not statewide. Cathy agreed  
16 with Hugh that it would attract more companies because it would be a state contract rather than a  
17 town contract. Cathy said it currently costs \$100,000 to have a full reassessment of the inventory  
18 and recalculation of the values for the Town of Chester. Cathy said the bill that established a rental  
19 registry passed and the bill to establish a statewide appraisal process passed. Cathy noted these  
20 were House bills and the Senate bills that correspond may not look the same and the whole thing  
21 could be shipwrecked but thought it should be on their radar. The others agreed. Barre thought  
22 losing the element of a community appraiser and having someone on a computer in Montpelier  
23 could be an issue. Barre wasn't anti-government but appreciated having someone in town available  
24 to contact. Hugh thought the fact every town could use its own techniques was insane. Cathy said  
25 at one time it was okay but not anymore.

### 26 27 **Agenda Item 8, PC Roundtable** 28

29 Hugh shared a ground rule about the roundtable. He included it so people could share information  
30 or propose an item for another agenda. He did not intend it to be topics for debate.

31  
32 Preston said they had passed onto the Selectboard the administrative changes and the ad would  
33 appear for the hearing notice on Wednesday for the May 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

34  
35 Tim wanted to reiterate his thought about considering making main thoroughfares through town  
36 into multiple use districts. He wasn't sure it was possible but thought it made sense.

37  
38 Hugh said at the next Planning Commission meeting, the folks from the company submitting the  
39 application to erect the wireless tower will be joining their meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup> to address their  
40 questions about the cell tower.

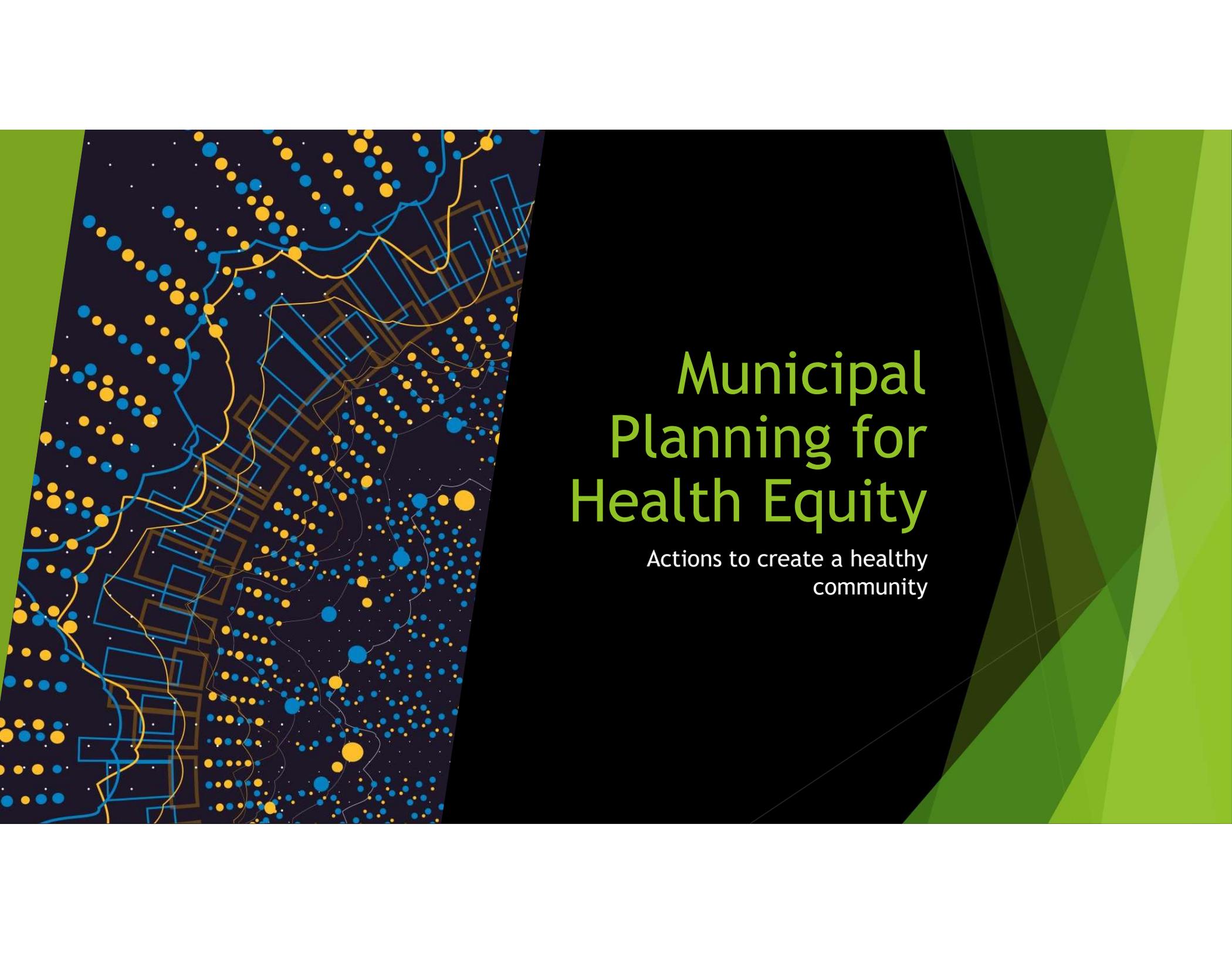
41  
42 Tim said the Selectboard will be appointing the vacant seats on the Commission at the April 19<sup>th</sup>  
43 meeting. Cathy said they're asking for letters of application by April 12<sup>th</sup>.

44  
45  
46

**Agenda Item 9, Adjournment**

- 1
- 2
- 3 Tim moved to adjourn, and Hugh seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion carried.
- 4 The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

DRAFT



# Municipal Planning for Health Equity

Actions to create a healthy  
community

# Goals



WHY HEALTH  
EQUITY?



HEALTH EQUITY  
TOOLKIT



SHARING IDEAS  
AND EXAMPLES

## Equality



## Equity



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Health  
Equity  
Definition

Opportunity to attain  
full health potential

No one is  
disadvantaged

# Planning for Healthy, Equitable Communities

Most things that we experience every day in our communities are the result of planning decisions.



ELEMENTS OF COMMUNITIES	HOUSING	TRANSPORTATION	PARKS & OPEN SPACE	EDUCATION	FOOD
<p><b>PLANNING PRACTICES &amp; POLICIES THAT HARM HEALTH</b></p> <p>Planning practices often benefit some communities while burdening others. The differences can be stratified by income and race/ethnicity.</p>	<p>Discriminatory housing policies lead to residential segregation, insufficient affordable housing, and poorly maintained housing.</p>	<p>Auto-oriented planning leads to over-reliance on cars for travel and neighborhoods that lack infrastructure for walking, biking, or public transit.</p>	<p>Inequities in budgeting lead to neighborhoods with poor access to safe and well-maintained parks, playgrounds, and open spaces.</p>	<p>Policies perpetuating residential segregation lead to under-resourced schools, and neighborhood designs (eg, poor walkability) isolate school communities.</p>	<p>Land use decisions create poor access to affordable, nutritious foods.</p>
<p><b>PLANNING PRACTICES &amp; POLICIES THAT IMPROVE HEALTH</b></p> <p>Planners and public health practitioners can remedy past harms through equity-forward planning practices, authentic and inclusive community engagement, and cross-sector collaboration.</p>	<p>Plan mixed-income neighborhoods by preserving, protecting, and expanding affordable housing.</p>	<p>Invest in multimodal transportation networks to serve neighborhoods that historically have lacked capital investment.</p>	<p>Increase access and availability of high-quality parks, playgrounds, and open spaces, especially in underserved neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Design school neighborhoods that include safe, walkable access to schools and connect to key community resources.</p>	<p>Plan for and incentivize access to healthy and affordable foods in areas that have historically lacked access.</p>

# Community Inclusion



# Applying Community Inclusion



Who is missing?



Alternative ways to include  
underrepresented groups



# Health Equity Integration

- ▶ Health Equity Lens
- ▶ Questions to ask:
  - ▶ Who benefits?
  - ▶ Who pays?
  - ▶ Who decides?
  - ▶ How will we measure success?

# Health Equity within a Municipality



TOWN PLAN



MUNICIPAL BYLAWS



TRANSPORTATION  
PLANS



GRANT  
WRITING/PROJECT  
MANAGEMENT



RECREATION AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONSERVATION



# Objectives

This Plan recognizes that diverse housing, employment, civic, and recreational opportunities are essential for the future health of the community. The Plan seeks to manage and direct growth in ways that preserve Cambridge's rural, agricultural character and quality of life **for all residents** while preserving the property rights of the town's landowners.

Development and change within the municipality is inevitable, this plan seeks to manage and direct growth while remaining inclusive and ensuring that all populations and minority groups can participate and help guide decision making within the municipality.

To provide a healthy and scenic recreation environment **for all**.

To provide residents with services that promote safety, well-being, **and health equity**.

To plan for an efficient **and equitable** system of public facilities and services.

A collection of white, 3D-printed house models of various sizes and shapes, scattered on a light-colored surface. The models are simple, boxy structures with gabled roofs, representing different types of residential buildings.

## Land Use

- ▶ Mixed-use developments are encouraged in Village and Growth Areas to allow commercial, business, low-intensity industrial, and residential uses. **Mixed-use allows for goods and services to be accessible to all and encourages walkability and community health.**
- ▶ Especially in the Rural Residential and Conservation/Forest areas, the clustering and/or siting of development is encouraged in order to protect rural and scenic character and to maintain contiguous tracts of resources and open spaces **for recreation and environmental health impacts.**

# Economic Development



Mixed use  
development



Increase  
transportation  
connectivity



Space for pop-up  
shops in a village or  
town green

# Bylaw Updates

## Areas of Reform

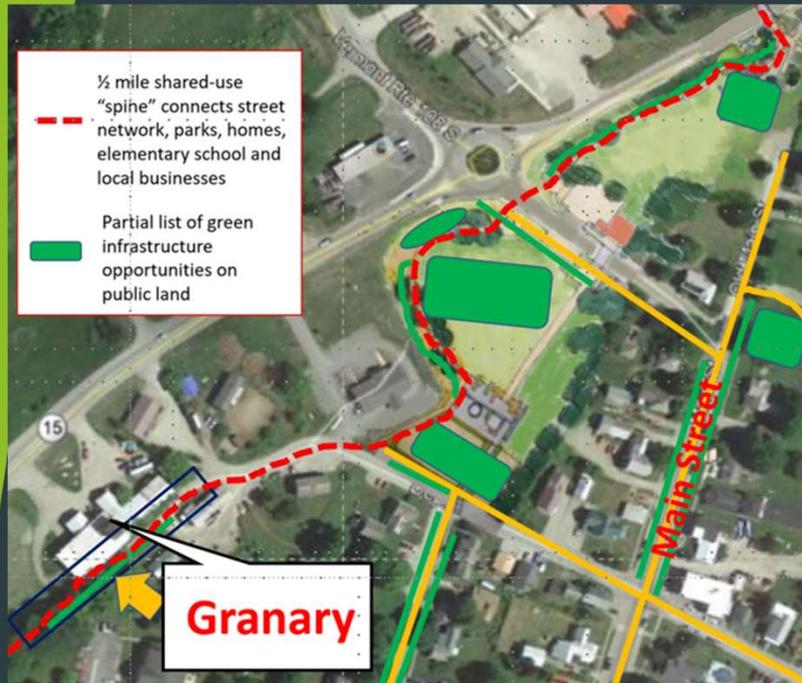
- Main Street Revitalization and Workforce - reduce barriers to economic viability, promote local businesses and jobs
- Walkable and Affordable Neighborhoods - build exercise into daily life and provide options on where and how to get around
- Street Design - standards that enable active lifestyles, increase efficiency of public infrastructure, reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Stormwater and Open Space - protect and preserve open space for recreation, forests and habitat, farming, watersheds

# Bylaw Updates

## Introduce Health Equity as a community goal:

- Zoning provides the legal framework to encourage healthy uses, activities, or development patterns that can positively impact community health.
- Conduct a health impact assessment when updating the comprehensive plan, a comprehensive zoning reform, or land development processes
- “Sell” residents with placemaking activities that welcome people coming together to envision change
- Place “audits” - get input on what would you like to see/do that you can't now (comments about the built environment reveal social attributes that are lacking)

# Recreation, Parks, & Green Space



In the Village of Jeffersonville, walking and biking for local transportation and healthy exercise coordinates with use of public spaces and ROWs to manage stormwater in the flood prone village. A planned public walking and biking route includes a segment of an abandoned rail that once delivered goods to a former Granary, a historic landmark and Brownfield property being repurposed as a hub for local food-based businesses.

People with visual impairment or who use a wheelchair have difficulty connecting with nature. When designing trails consider who in the community faces barriers to access.

## Nature for Everyone

Sensory and “Braille trails” enable the visually impaired to walk unassisted. Guided ropes help with footing and signage in braille orients and informs. Paths can be designed for direct sensory experiences - feeling textures, scents, sounds, etc.



Above, a spherical block on a cable alerts a braille trail user in Watertown, MA that there is a bench opposite. *(image credit Robin Lubbock/WBUR)*

Left and right (above). The 600' long 5' wide boardwalk at the Barnes Camp Visitor Center in Smugglers Notch allow two wheelchairs to pass each other. Raised outer curbs provide safety and multiple interpretive panels describe the area's special features. *(image credit LCPC)*

# Health Equity Toolkit

- ▶ [Health Equity Planning Toolkit](#)
- ▶ [Community Resources Guide](#)
- ▶ [Sample Language for Municipalities](#)