

**ATKINSON PLANNING BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES  
FRIDAY, MARCH 3, 2023**

**Members:**

Sue Killam, Chair (present)  
Vice Chair Turell (present)  
Ted Stewart (not present)  
  
Paul Wainwright, Alternate (present)

John Ottow (present)  
(Master Plan Team)  
Barbara Brown (present)  
Paul DiMaggio (not present)  
Beth Cacciotti– Selectman Ex Officio  
(not present)

**Others Present**

Julie LaBranche, Planner (present)  
Karen Wemmelmann, Recorder (present)  
Sue Coppeta, Planning & Zoning Administrator  
(not present)  
Anne Brenton, Master Plan Committee

Ken Grant, Master Plan Committee

**Call to Order:**

Chair Killam called the meeting of the Atkinson Planning Board to order Friday, March 3, 2023 at 3:00 PM. Chair Killam explained that the reason for the meeting is a follow up to the meeting on Zoom Wednesday with Ms. LaBranche, Steve Whitman Resilience Planning and Design, LLC, and Member John Ottow.

**Minutes: Not Reviewed**

**Public Hearings: None**

**Master Plan Update: Not Discussed**

**Housing Grant Application: Not Discussed**

**New/Old Business:**

Chair Killam explained that there were two issues, first, the new master plan, and second the newly awarded grant for housing and regulatory audits. The outreach for the Master Plan starts with a forum on April 11, 2023 at the Community Center. There will be a survey there and an on-line survey as a follow up for a month until May 11, 2023. Some members of the Planning Board believe the newly awarded grant for the housing needs assessment and regulatory audit will interfere with the master plan outreach. Ms. LaBranche had wanted to conduct a 9-question survey and advertise it as early as next week. Planning Board members and Master Plan Committee members had a disagreement on whether the two surveys would interfere with each other.

Member Ottow explained that there is concern that the survey Ms. LaBranche would like to conduct will interfere with the master plan survey, and will weaken the results. The consultant for the master plan committee, Steve Whitman wants to do four questions for housing. The

total number of questions is unknown. Member Ottow believes the master plan survey questions are more open ended. One question on his survey would ask why the respondent moved to Atkinson and what keeps you here.

Ms. LaBranche wants 8 or 9 questions for the housing needs survey. One is optional. Mr. Whitman is willing to work with it, and he could do more than 4 questions on housing. He is concerned that Ms. LaBranche will start her survey in April. The Master Plan Committee would like to see the surveys more tightly woven by having Resilience include all nine questions or work with Ms. LaBranche.

Member Wainwright asked if anything would be lost if the Board waited for 4 weeks for the housing needs assessment survey.

Ms. LaBranche replied that the follow-up survey will happen in four weeks. Vice Chair Turell explained that there is a deadline. The grant sunsets in June of 2024. There are several steps. Ms. LaBranche was hoping to be done by fall. There is another grant round starting in fall dipping into the regulations from the audit. That grant needs to be applied for in September. If all the other moving parts aren't done the regulatory grant proposal has nothing to stand on.

Ms. LaBranche asked if the master plan committee had a strategy. She has a timeline. She asked if they wanted the needs assessment to wait until they were done and what is their timeline.

Ms. McFadden asked if the housing needs assessment should be part of the master plan needs analysis, as an opportunity to update the housing section and good information for the Town. She believes the report will add value to completing the master plan. She is concerned about reports from Resilience Planning being posted.

Chair Killam stated that when she started pursuing grant funding, it was not just for the master plan. The Town needs to understand that the housing needs assessment and regulatory audit are not just part of the master plan.

Ms. LaBranche proposed that some way be found to launch the forum and the surveys together. She was surprised that it was a week or two since the grant to launch the survey. Chair Killam stated that it took that long for Invest NH to get the paperwork to the Planning Board. That has collapsed the time frame.

Ms. McFadden explained that the Master Plan is getting through the existing conditions report and planning for the forum. She believes that a way can be found to launch the housing needs assessment and the master plan outreach together.

Ms. LaBranche explained that the survey she is proposing has 9 questions: own or rent, multigeneration, more affordable, types of housing needed in Atkinson, multifamily allowed, adoption of design, if increasing cost of housing in Atkinson is a concern now or in the future, a100 character summary, and a round table discussion. All are anonymous.

Member Brown stated that it is important that the public understand that the housing needs assessment has nothing to do with the master plan, they are two different things. The housing needs assessment is because of a grant from the State.

Ms. LaBranche explained that she has written a newsletter and a flyer for the housing needs assessment.

There is concern that the housing needs assessment and the master plan outreach are competing with each other. It was agreed that the Planning Board must indicate that there will be more to come, and not all will be from the same source.

Chair Killam suggested that the surveys be launched simultaneously and that the Planning Board explain why there are two surveys. According to the contract signed with Invest NH, any communication regarding the housing needs assessment must tell exactly who funded it. In that regard, it does not have anything to do with the master plan.

Ms. LaBranche stated her first report will be released on April 10, 2023. If the report is not released, she will not bill, and will not provide it to the State. She would like the information about the housing needs assessment published in the Town newsletter and in a flyer. The wording on anything about it must clearly state that it is a housing needs assessment, and it is funded by a grant from Invest NH. It will not say anything about planning or the master plan.

Chair Killam would like to move forward in a mutually compatible direction for the benefit of the Town.

Vice Chair Turell asked who the surveys are going to. He remarked that people need to understand that there are multiple activities and all need to be responded to.

Member Brown suggested that something be added stating that the housing needs assessment is separate from the master plan.

Chair Killam explained that there are different audiences. The master plan is a broad look while the housing needs assessment is singularly focused. There are different subsets of people to sort out once the surveys are launched.

Member Ottow explained that there will be multiple tables at the forum for information gathering. There may be one table with butcher paper. There will be surveys at the tables. People go to the table they are interested in. For example, the Conservation Committee has a table and a survey.

Chair Killam explained that there will be links in the newsletter and on the Planning Board web page. There has been a curious uptick in people clicking on the master plan link. There will also be emails.

Chair Killam stated that there must be 2 links in the newsletter, on the Planning Board web page and on the Town Facebook page. The master plan link must remain separate from the housing needs link. The housing grant has stringent reporting requirements. Chair Killam also stated that the housing survey will have input to the master plan. Chair Killam stated that the master plan needs to be done by the end of December.

Member Ottow asked about cobranding where Ms. LaBranche would be welcome to have a table at community forum. He asked if outreach could be done after by the master plan committee. The general public would have access to both.

Chair Killam stated that the timeline given by the State is that the housing assessment must be done by October.

Ms. McFadden stated that the forum is to gather information, it is an opportunity for focus groups, and asked if the master plan committee wants housing focus groups.

Ms. LaBranche informed the Board that her focus groups are specific to employers, reaching out to them regarding surveys for employees, they will be very confidential, and will be focused on whether people who work in Atkinson want to live in Atkinson.

Ms. McFadden stated that up until Wednesday it was her impression that the housing needs assessment would incorporate all housing, not just workforce housing.

Ms. LaBranche informed the Board that affordable and workforce housing are the reasons for the grant.

The Board discussed cobranding and the need to differentiate surveys. Chair Killam remarked that Resilience used the term and it could be used as a method to introduce the topic. The Board must be careful about funds, grant money cannot go for the master plan.

Member Brown stated that as she would understand it, something has to be said that the housing needs assessment survey is entirely different from the master plan surveys. She also stated that it has to indicate that it is a different tool from the master plan.

Ms. Brenton reminded the Board that the public does not care where the surveys are coming from.

Vice Chair Turell and Member Brown agreed that people need to know the difference.

Ms. Brenton remarked that most people think all this is coming out of the Planning Board office.

Chair Killam agreed that that is the co-branding.

Ms. Brenton stated that timing is important, whoever is out of the gate first will get the best response, it would be best to be concurrent.

Vice Chair Turell agreed, people need to understand the target audience. The target groups are different. The target for the master plan is anyone in town, the housing needs survey could be anyone, but the focus is on workforce housing.

Vice Chair Turell and Member Brown agreed something should be right on top of the page.

Ms. LaBranche suggested a joint statement right under the headline, right above the Planning Board member list. It should state that there are 2 projects, a housing needs project which is grant funded, and a master plan project, funded by the Town. Each project is issuing its own survey, in a month or so, and participation in both would be appreciated. The statement can be put on all Facebook pages, on the Planning Board website and in the newsletter. Chair Killam agreed that everyone should understand that 2 data collection efforts are going on. One is for the master plan and the other is for the housing needs assessment.

Ms. Brenton suggested 2 bitlys and 2 scamlys. Ms. LaBranche suggested inserting a hyperlink. Chair Killam stated there should be one statement and 2 links. Member Brown asked about the time frame.

Ms. LaBranche agreed that the surveys can go out the day after but at same time. She plans a survey at the forum with a poster, and her laptop to go online.

Ms. McFadden agreed that Ms. LaBranche's activities are different.

It was explained that Resilience Consulting didn't understand why Ms. LaBranche would have a table at the forum but shifted their tone at the Wednesday meeting. Member Ottow stated that Resilience Consulting is working for the Planning Board.

Ms. LaBranche summarized the following: the projects can be launched at the same time; a communications strategy must be developed; there should be a joint statement on social media; an email; a PowerPoint slide on ACTV to advertise; a presence on the Planning Board web page; a joint statement that the projects are different - short and clean; and a survey monkey link should be available once the content is loaded to the Planning Board web page.

There should also be an article in the Carriage Town News with links; flyers for distribution with a disclaimer that the housing project is different from the master plan; and links to both. It should be made clear that they are separate and distinct, so the public will understand.

Member Ottow remarked that the goal for both projects is to have as many as possible show up at the forum and have access to the links. Ms. LaBranche and the master plan committee can work together on communication. He believes the housing needs assessment project will benefit by working with the master plan committee.

Ms. LaBranche stated that from past experience there should be 80 or 100 people at the forum, 400 will answer the survey, which should be mailed to every household. There will probably be a 70/30 split, 70 electronic, 30 hard copy.

Member Ottow agreed there should be a townwide mailing with notification of the forum, after campaigning is finished.

Ms. LaBranche suggested that the goals should be for the information to be punchy and interesting: why; what the project is about; and a timetable.

Chair Killam remarked that there is a one day intersection at the forum on April 11, 2023. Things may happen simultaneously, but there are 2 tracks. A big part will be sitting down with the Planning Administrator who has access to putting things on the website. Access is important.

Ms. McFadden suggested a separate website for Resilience.

Ms. LaBranche suggested an introduction with tabs the on main page and different content areas. She is creating a separate page with a link on the Town Planning Board web page to her page. The page would include dynamic content and illustrate different kinds of housing.

Chair Killam requested Alternate Wainwright speak.

Alternate Wainwright agreed that he is happy to have both projects start at the same time, that Ms. LaBranche should have a table at the forum for the housing needs assessment; he is ok with 2 separate surveys; and the housing needs survey is more focused. Ms. LaBranche stated it has a different focus – workforce housing and affordable housing.

The housing needs analysis is everybody, even the really rich people.

Alternate Wainwright is concerned that the questions on the housing needs assessment survey are too leading. Member Brown is concerned that they are intimidating, too specific. Ms. LaBranche responded that the general master plan survey includes demographics, such as how much people earn, and she doesn't see her survey as being more personal than that.

Alternate Wainwright asked if the questions are prescribed by the State and if they are similar to other towns. Ms. LaBranche responded that the questions are similar, but each town is different and she doesn't think asking if someone rents or owns, and is anyone living with them are too personal.

Member Brown stated the respondents may be concerned about over occupying and will not answer. Ms. LaBranche responded that all responses are confidential and the information is not shared.

Vice Chair Turell agreed that there should be 2 surveys, and they do not dovetail. Housing needs may not be pertinent to master plan, and he is fine if it starts on the first or same day.

The Board agreed there should be one event, Ms. LaBranche should be at the event, and there will be more people if cohosting.

Chair Killam agreed that documentation needs to explain that the Planning Board is working on two things.

Ms. Brenton suggested that the message on all documents explain that it is from the Planning Board.

The Board discussed an article in the Town newsletter. Alternate Wainwright suggested that the Town allow a special edition newsletter. He suggested the Master Plan Committee talk to the Assistant Town Administrator. Ms. McFadden agreed.

Ms. LaBranche asked about moving forward after the forum and after surveys at the forum, and about outreach. She asked about online outreach groups and engagement. She had intended to do outreach for regulatory assessment, and asked if can it be combined. There would not be a second event, possibly focus groups and interviews. She doesn't want to wait until after the survey for outreach.

Ms. McFadden stated that the master plan committee will also start working on a plan and start vision sessions.

Chair Killam agreed that they both projects can start and that Ms. LaBranche and the master plan committee need to communicate.

Ms. LaBranche agreed to coordinate on what she is doing. Her monthly report for the grant is due by the 10th. She will send it to the master plan committee.

**Member Ottow moved that both the housing grants assessment and the master plan committee be instructed that their surveys and projects will launch on April 11, 2023. The housing grant assessment will be given ample space at the master plan community forum on April 11, 2023. Planning Board communications will include both projects. Both projects will share communication plans with each other. Member Turell seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0/0. All members present voting. Unanimous.**

Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.