

**ATKINSON PLANNING BOARD MEETING
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2024**

Members Present:

Sue Killam, Chair
Mike Turell, Vice Chair
Ted Stewart
Heidi Mahoney
John Ottow
Paul Wainwright
Sue Coppeta, Alternate

Selectman Ex Officio Baldwin

Others Present

Ken Grant
Jenn Rowden, Rockingham Planning
Commission (via Zoom)
Karen McFadden, Co-Chair Master Plan
Committee

Call to Order:

Chair Killam called the February 7, 2024 workshop meeting of the Atkinson Planning Board to order at 6:31 PM and introduced Jenn Rowden, Rockingham Planning Commission (“RPC”) to the Board. Also attending are Ken Grant, Atkinson representative to RPC and Karen McFadden, Master Plan Committee.

Chair Killam informed the Board that Member Ottow would like to discuss the master plan first and requested he speak.

Workshop Topics:

- **Master Plan**

Member Ottow asked the Board members if they had received a copy of the master plan from Resilience Planning and Design (“RPD”), the Master Plan Committee consultant. He stated that RPD calls it the plan while he calls it the narrative of the plan. To him, the plan is the Vision Statement, the six Goals, the Objectives and the Action Items. He also stated that he and the master plan committee members were very pleased with the plan.

He stated that one thing in particular that he would like to include in the plan is the Action Items section. He would like the table filled out and be part of the plan. Including the action items would show that this is an active plan that needs work. RPD agreed to add the table of action items. They also agreed to change some pictures and add captions.

Member Ottow also felt that some areas were given lesser importance than the MPC wanted to see. For example, he would like to see more information on the Recreation Department and the school added to the plan. Mention of the school was almost absent from the draft plan. Although the school is not part of Town government, it is part of the Town.

Member Ottow asked Ms. McFadden if she would like to add anything. Chair Killam invited her to the Board. Ms. McFadden also stated that she thinks the MPC members are happy with the plan and the contents. She stated that one concern was the layout of the plan. The MPC feels it could be more concise, there is some redundancy. What the Board has read will be there, it will just be easier to read. She stated that some of the take away boxes and info boxes while good information are detracting. A couple of things such as Recreation and Social Capital could use greater emphasis. The MPC is looking at the posters and the pictures to see if some can be taken out. They are also looking at the existing conditions report to see if more data can be added.

Member Ottow stated that he and Ms. McFadden met with the consultants so they could be prepared to discuss the edits. RPD informed him that although they were very close to budget, it was their intent to complete the plan with the money that was budgeted as long as it is not unreasonable. RPD is also very pleased with the plan and would like to see it through to completion.

Ms. McFadden stated she is sure that there will be more conversation about housing. The MPC did not spend much time on housing because of the needs analysis. They are looking to the Planning Board for direction in that area, especially about adoption. Ms. McFadden asked if the Planning Board wanted to wait until the regulatory analysis and the needs analysis are completed and update the master plan and then go through adoption or accept what the MPC has, go through adoption and do an update at a later date.

Member Ottow stated that the MPC there is a lot going on in Town and the consultants are busy. The MPC would like to delay completing the plan for at least another month. That will make a higher quality product and will also be closer to when the housing data comes in, allowing the MPC to add some of that information to the plan. He stated that he feels the MPC is bringing the Board a nice product at a reasonable time.

Vice Chair Turell stated that he feels the Board is satisfied and the other members agreed. Chair Killam stated that there are no concrete adoption plans. She would like to wait until after there is a budget and until after elections.

Ms. McFadden stated that the consultant would like some direction, too. They are prepared to do another draft. Ms. McFadden is confident that the next draft will be the final draft and should be completed February 26, 2024. She asked the Board if they would like the consultant to present the final draft at the workshop meeting March 6, 2024. She will ask the consultant.

Ms. McFadden asked the Board for comments and feedback. Vice Chair Turell had nothing to add. Member Wainwright stated it would take time for him to get used to the format. In particular, the natural resource inventory should be redone at some point. A lot of what was in the Conservation Plan included material that would ordinarily be in an NRI. Ms. McFadden stated that the MPC tried to give a summary. There may have been some confusion with the conservation inventory and disconnects with the numbers. She asked if there was anything Member Wainwright would like to see. Member Wainwright stated that he would like to see some land use maps added but they can be done at another time. The last time the land use map was updated was in

2015. Ms. Rowden stated that land use maps should be updated within the next year. Ms. McFadden also stated that the MPC caught a few things that Conservation missed.

Chair Killam has nothing to add.

Alternate Coppeta asked about the dates. Ms. McFadden stated that she had the consultant penciled in for the February 21st meeting but if there is not enough time, she will coordinate with them and the Planning Board. Member Wainwright asked if Ms. McFadden could present the draft to the Conservation Commission on February 28, 2024. Alternate Coppeta stated that the edits are the question mark for the final product. Ms. McFadden stated that she will have to work with the consultant regarding the public hearing.

Member Ottow stated that the MPC can give the consultant their edits as they are complete.

Ms. McFadden informed the Board that RPD said some nice things about Atkinson, especially regarding conservation, protected lands and rural character. They stated that Atkinson has done something special with cluster development, zoning and protected land giving the Town has as much conservation land as it has.

Chair Killam stated that the Master Plan narrative seemed like an advertisement for Atkinson.

Member Ottow would like to publish the plan on Amazon and have it for sale. Ms. McFadden will touch base with the consultant to see if they can appear at the Planning Board workshop in March.

Chair Killam thanked Ms. McFadden and asked if there was more discussion. There was none.

Chair Killam requested the Board turn to the Housing Needs Assessment and requested Ms. Rowden present her report.

Member Stewart appeared.

Housing Needs Assessment (Jean Rowden, RPC by ZOOM)

Ms. Rowden stated that she requested to appear in order to touch base with the Planning Board regarding the work she has done so far with the Housing Needs Assessment. None of the documents she is presenting are final. There are a few aspects that would fit in well with the master plan. It might shift some of the dates for completion, but nothing significant.

The scope of work presented when Ms. Rowden and the Planning Board met with Invest New Hampshire a few weeks ago is basically three tasks. First is the Housing Needs Assessment which should be complete in March. She would like to coordinate it with the master plan and when she has a final draft she will coordinate with the Planning Board and RPD. She would like to present the Housing Needs Assessment to the Planning Board in March, possibly at the March 20th meeting.

The next task is the Regulatory Audit. The intent is to get the Regulatory Audit to the Planning Board by the end of April or early May for review and then do a public presentation in May. This would be the public engagement component of the grant requirement. There are three parts to the community engagement component. The first two parts are conducting surveys. One survey will be targeted to Atkinson officials, staff and volunteers. The second will be distributed to private employers in Town such as Lewis Builders and Palmer Oil. The last community engagement will be the presentation of the Housing Needs Assessment in March and the Regulatory Audit in May.

She would like to review the draft of the Housing Needs Assessment. They will be adding content from the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission Regional Housing Needs Assessment as it relates to Atkinson in addition to the RPC needs assessment. RPC will also be giving background information on housing in Atkinson and pulling a few items from the existing conditions plan that you have worked on as part of your master plan. General data will be added as well.

For background planning, RPC has already pulled in the vision that is the component of the Atkinson master plan as well as the goals and objectives. She would like to verify if these are the current verbatim ones. She has used the ones on the web site in the draft. These are the goals and objectives from the master plan that are directly or tangentially related to housing. She should also have more description as it relates to housing needs results from the MPC engagement efforts and results from the surveys.

There are also some key housing data reports and laws included as description. Some of the information may be more current than the data in the current existing conditions section. RPC probably has more updated data than Resilience Planning and Development would have been able to use when they were drafting the existing conditions. Some of the data they have pulled is even more current than RPC's March 2023 Regional Housing Needs Assessment. They have data about affordability, sales prices, rental units, projections, age of homes and lot sizing. She wants to give Alternate Coppeta credit for pulling the dwelling unit data that is in the assessing data.

RPC has included a description of their regional housing assessment and the statutory aspects of it. The workforce housing law is discussed. The projections from RPC's regional needs assessment are included. They will also do a call out of the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission housing needs assessment for this vicinity as well because Atkinson is uniquely situated at the eastern border of Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission. They want to make sure data from adjacent towns is included.

The intent of the summary of outreach is to bring in the results of the targeted surveys and the employer survey. They will also include the more general survey that was conducted this spring and summer. The numbers were not high but it was done so the effort should be reflected. They have also started pulling all of the housing data available for Atkinson. They want to compare it with the region and State as well. If they are able to, they will pull in key data points from Southern New Hampshire Planning so that the Board can see a representation of all the surrounding towns.

There are demographics, housing statistics, income statistics, etc. RPC wants the information available when the Town makes decisions.

Ms. Rowden stated that is all for the needs assessment. Alternate Coppeta asked if there will be a projection for Atkinson derived from the data from RPC and Southern New Hampshire. Ms. Rowden stated that projections for workforce housing were done at the State level by all the Planning Commissions. Even if Southern New Hampshire was included, the numbers would be the same. The only differences would be the population growth and income level. Alternate Coppeta asked if the numbers were for the county or Atkinson and Ms. Rowden responded that the data is for Atkinson specifically to the degree possible. The goal is to show how Atkinson compares to the rest of the two regions that Atkinson is in or borders.

Ms. Rowden then presented the two surveys RPC put together. They will be on-line surveys for efficiency and ease of taking it. The first survey goes to Atkinson employees, volunteers and Town officials. It will include the school, the Fire Department, Town Hall and Police. Alternate Coppeta will assist with distribution. Her goal is to send out the survey within a week or two. It is a simple survey, positive and with as few questions as possible. Ms. Rowden reviewed some of the questions. There is room for comments and they will be anonymous. It was an opportunity to ask residents what they like about Atkinson and what can be changed. There will also be questions about housing. She expects comments on affordability and water. There are also demographic questions. It asks how long the respondent has been involved in Atkinson. It also asks the age of the respondent.

The other survey is intended to go to the major employers in Town. The survey will ask where the respondent works, how long they have worked there, do they live in Atkinson, will your current home meets your current needs, do you rent or own and include household income. Chair Killam stated she would be hesitant to answer information on income. Ms. Rowden stated income ranges could also be used. Alternate Coppeta asked how the information would be used. The Board members discussed how to ask about information on incomes and agreed that broad ranges would be feasible. Ms. Rowden stated that the questions can be skipped.

Land Use Audit

Next, Ms. Rowden turned to the land use audit. The framework is based on the New Hampshire Housing Toolbox which comes from the New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority in collaboration with the Office of Planning and Development and a couple of other partners. It is intended to provide resources for municipalities to make decisions about opportunities to increase housing. The land use audit is intended to find opportunities or barriers to increase housing opportunity. Some Barriers can include wetlands and flood plains.

Regarding the Land Use Audit, information about the Invest New Hampshire blueprint, the work related to the master plan, the housing needs assessment, and developing the land use regulatory audit will be included. Content to identify potential strategies, the function of these strategies, how they may already exist in Atkinson, potential benefits

and barriers and opportunities of using these tools, the next step and strategy for implementation as well as local examples will be included.

The summary of key findings for the land use audit are to adopt a work force housing ordinance; ideas for infill development that may work in Atkinson; and changing Accessory Dwelling Unit requirements. These are examples of some of the high level findings. If the Planning Board identifies an area it wants to explore, it can read more of the document.

Member Wainwright asked about infill development. Chair Killam stated a lot line adjustment can be an example of an infill adjustment.

Ms. Rowden stated that there is a summary of the impact of different land use tools. Some have good impact in terms of increasing the number of housing units but may have negative impact related to community character. There also may not be support of that land use regulation change. Other questions are feasibility, is it expensive, or is there infrastructure change. This is just a sample. Different strategies for implementation are also listed. There is also a snapshot of how these land use tools can impact Atkinson. RPC will be doing an evaluation of what housing types Atkinson allows in its districts at present. Housing terminology definitions are also included. These are the quick descriptions of the different housing strategies. More information is in the document. She used infill development as an example.

The Board members thanked her for her presentation. Ms. Rowden requested to appear at the Planning Board March 20, 2024 meeting if time is available on the agenda. She would like to show the draft surveys and get feedback at the March 6, 2024 meeting. If time is not available, she can provide the information for the March 6, 2024. Chair Killam stated it would not be practical to have her appear at the same time as the Master Plan presentation. Ms. Rowden will try to send the Board a draft a few days before the March 6, 2024 meeting. She would like feedback on the draft needs assessment survey. Not all of the outreach surveys may be done, because not everyone will be able to respond, but the Board will be able to see the needs assessment up to that point and give RPC feedback.

Ms. Rowden asked if the Board had any questions. She will be in touch with Alternate Coppeta with regard to assistance in distributing surveys. The Board thanked her for the information. Chair Killam requested to review minutes.

Minutes: January 3, 2024 Workshop Meeting and January 17, 2024

Member Ottow left the meeting.

January 3, 2024 Workshop Meeting

Chair Killam stated that the Board started to review the January 3, 2024 workshop meeting minutes but tabled them. Alternate Coppeta stated there was a concern about a comment by Alternate Rizzo, Ms. Wemmelmann reviewed the tape again and the Board has the amended minutes before them. Member Mahoney stated that she attended the meeting.

Member Wainwright made some comments, line 56 page 2 refers to a Road Agent that the Town does not have. The Board agreed the old term should stay. On Line 116 and Line 118, Chief Holigan is Deputy Chief Holigan. Line 260, should be (2) 20,000 gallon tanks one 30,000 gallon tank of oil. On page 13 in the motion to approve on line 536 it still says office building, omit office and just say building. Alternate Coppeta stated that she does not know what is in Raymond. The Board decided it should be 20,000 gallon tanks. Line 620 should stay study not grant. Same issue on Line 643.

Vice Chair Turell made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2024 workshop meeting of the Atkinson Planning Board as corrected. Selectman Ex Officio Baldwin seconded the motion. Vote: 7/0/0. Unanimous.

January 17, 2024

Member Wainwright had some corrections: Line 155 should say study, not grant.

Vice Chair Turell made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 17, 2024 workshop meeting of the Atkinson Planning Board as corrected. Selectman Ex Officio Baldwin seconded the motion. Vote: 7/0/0. Unanimous.

Other Business:

Chair Killam advised the Board that the Rockingham Planning Commission has requested the Town of Atkinson nominate a person to sit on the Transportation Advisory Committee ("TAC"). They meet the fourth Thursday of every month from 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM. Nominations can be made from any of the Boards or a resident at large in the Town of Atkinson. The TAC deals with road construction. They are looking for someone who has a knowledge or interest in road construction. Chair Killam requested suggestions from the Board members. Selectman Ex Officio Baldwin stated that he might be interested. The deadline for returning the forms is February 16, 2024. Alternate Coppeta stated that she has the forms in her office. The member appointed will serve for a two year term retroactive to January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2025.

Member Wainwright informed the Board that the Rick Schafer land is about to be conserved. The Schafer family has agreed to donate the land to the Southeast Land Trust. They will rely on some funding from the Conservation fund. There will be a public hearing on Thursday, March 14, 2024 at Town Hall to hear the public input. It will cost around \$180,000 but it is 141 acres. It is an opportunity to conserve a wonderful piece of land and have it managed by a professional group. Chair Killam informed the Board that Southeast Land Trust does an annual inspection of conserved property that they have responsibility for. If there are violations, they will approach the people. They go out once a year with knowledge of their baseline report to inspect. Member Wainwright stated that there will be a walk tomorrow at 9:30 am with members of the South East Land Trust and invited the Board members. There will be a prehearing walk for the general public possibly the Saturday before with a rain day of Sunday. Member Wainwright will mention the walk in the notice of hearing.

Member Wainwright stated that the property will be open to the public. SELT is pleased with the trails there and their condition after so many years. The trails will be kept, there

will be kiosks, a formal entry probably at the end of Oak Ridge and maps. They may allow bow hunting only, There will be no motorized vehicles. Member Wainwright also believes mountain bikes will not be allowed. There will be a parking area, probably at the end of Oak Ridge and built by SELT. There are no trails at the end of Commerce Drive, another natural access; there is access. Member Stewart asked about the access on Industrial Way. Member Wainwright informed him that there is a steep cliff there. There is an old hand drawn trail map of that area but Member Wainwright cannot find them. Member Wainwright believes that this parcel is the largest parcel left. He believes there are around 12 parcels over 10 acres left in Atkinson.

Member Wainwright stated it would be easy to find 4 acre parcels in the 2 acre zone that could potentially be subdivided. Alternate Coppeta stated that she has the raw data in a spread sheet. Member Wainwright stated he would like to put it on a map. Alternate Coppeta asked if he was considering the frontage requirement. The Board discussed whether due to a variety of issues if any of those lots could be subdivided and developed. Another issue is willing land owners. The Board discussed the current use tax.

Chair Killam requested to discuss the comments on social media regarding the advisory warrant the Planning Board requested be placed on the ballot. She stated that the issue has been blown out of proportion in regard to the intent and the reason for it being on the warrant. Some of the comments were uninformed and completely rude. She stated that the Planning Board requested the Selectmen put the warrant on the ballot because the Planning Board wanted to know if it should be working on expanding the Permitted Use Chart to include some other housing options. Alternate Coppeta stated that some of the comments are scary and there are other warrant articles being discussed on the site. People are asking questions about issues that have been presented to them over and over. Selectman Ex Officio Baldwin stated that these people are hiding behind a keyboard rather than engaging in a debate.

Adjournment:

Vice Chair Turell made a motion to adjourn. Member Wainwright seconded the motion. Vote: 6/0/0. All in favor.

Chair Killam adjourned the February 7, 2024 meeting of the Atkinson Planning Board at 8:00 PM.

The next Planning Board meeting will be February 21, 2024 at Atkinson Town Hall.