

**FRANKLIN PLANNING BOARD**  
**Master Plan Public Hearing Minutes**  
**October 11, 2017; 7:00 p.m.**

Call to Order: 7:03 pm

Planning Board Members Present: Jo Brown, Scott Clarenbach, Tim Flaherty, Tim Stangroom, Ted Starkweather, Brian Sullivan, David Veysey, & Jim Wells

Director Richard Lewis presented a power point presentation on the 2017 Master Plan remarking that this version is an update of the 2005 Master Plan. By state statute a public hearing is required and public comment and suggestions on improvements to the draft are greatly appreciated. The Planning Board has already given its input and those ideas have been incorporated in the draft that is posted on the city website. It is hoped that the final draft will be adopted by the Planning Board within the next few months. At that point students from Colby-Sawyer will be asked to assist with the graphics and the completed 2017 Master Plan will go on the website.

Slides 1 through 6 provided the audience a general overview of the purpose of a Master Plan and the various programs, plans and charrettes that have brought us to the 2017 Master Plan draft.

Slides 7 and 8 listed the accomplishments since 2005. Included in this is mention of the 2017 TIF plan. Todd Workman remarked that more emphasis needs to be placed on the TIF plan since it is integral to future downtown revitalization. In additional TIF comments, Mr. Workman also mentioned that the establishment of the TIF committee should also be referenced since the committee will need to be formed soon so that discussions on possible TIF projects can be conducted. He and others mentioned the need for an improved transportation plan that allows for cars, bikes and pedestrians, along with more public transportation to meet the needs of the older generation. Going hand in hand with transportation is directional signage for both City assets and the buildings behind Central Street.

Slides 9-12 outline the Vision Statement which is one of the two required parts of any Master Plan. It is recognized that a vibrant downtown is necessary to the overall health of the city. Creating a revitalized downtown is a joint effort, bringing together many components, government, business, housing, and schools, to reach that goal.

Mayor Scott Clarenbach suggested that stronger language is necessary when speaking of the character and quality of existing neighborhoods in Franklin. There is a housing issue with too many absentee landlords buying up properties, with some tenants who have no vested interest in maintaining many of the City's neighborhoods that help attract new families. The current school system isn't encouraging new, young neighborhood investors. He indicated that if we are going to move forward as a city, all the boards need to be headed in the same direction to challenge our difficulties.

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Annette Andreozzi added that it is important historically that we keep and maintain our older housing stock; many neighborhoods have been adversely impacted by the conversion to multifamily housing on smaller lots that were created before so many housing units had multiple vehicles. Zoning needs to be strengthened.

Todd Workman added that most of the problems faced by different city departments arise from a relatively small number of neighborhoods that can easily be identified; efforts need to be made to more effectively address these issues and clean-up these area.

Leigh Webb said that the overarching phrase is that there should be a decent standard of living for everyone in Franklin to enjoy a decent quality of life. Brian Sullivan suggested that the phrase, "protect and enhance the quality of life in the City", should be used in the appropriate locations of the Master Plan.

It was suggested by multiple parties that the Master Plan needs to outline what steps are necessary to achieve the overall vision. It was noted that the 2005 Master Plan listed either a problem or a need and identified the responsible party, along with action items, and it was suggested that this same approach be utilized in this new update. Director Lewis proposed the inclusion of links to the vision statement as a way to identify goals and solutions.

Addressing a question about new neighborhoods, Director Lewis said that Franklin has some great neighborhoods that have been impacted by a higher percentages of tenants versus property owners; additionally there is a mix of older homes some of which are in good repair, while some significant TLC. The removal of some structures to provide opportunities for new in-fill development, that appeal to a broader range of individuals, might pave the way for improvements to certain neighborhoods. It was also noted that the 2007-2008 economic downturn has impacted the City; some approved subdivisions were put on hold, and property values decreased. Downtown improvements that are going on right now will turn that around and we'll see more new housing plans.

Brian Sullivan stated that new in-fill development can improve neighborhoods and can help bring new customers to the water and sewer utility systems.

Annette Andreozzi stated that increasing the quality of existing neighborhoods would increase housing opportunities while avoiding sprawl.

Director Lewis added that no department in the city works in a vacuum and some of the issues that the audience has raised can blend into the code enforcement, life safety, fire safety, public safety, and health.

Slides 13 through 16 outline the Land Use section of the Master Plan.

Annette Andreozzi suggested getting rid of the qualifier "If the Northern Pass project triggers new housing demands", review zoning to insure that housing density and design provide for good use of

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vacant or under-utilized parcels especially in the core downtown / urbanized area and make any necessary adjustments.”

Mayor Clarenbach made the suggestion that some of the city’s sidewalks be eliminated, thereby creating more room for parking while saving money on plowing and maintenance.

Todd Workman said there are storm water issues that need to be addressed. For example, drain lines that empty directly into the rivers.

Mr. Davis suggested that City Officials review the River Walk in Pueblo Colorado to serve as a design model for Franklin.

David Veysey felt that a lot of good ideas have been put forward, but the problem is the funding for these projects. Perhaps the City Council could come up with a timeline for when to tackle various projects.

Brian Sullivan reminded everyone that a Master Plan, which looks at the City as a whole and not just the downtown, is only suppose to identify issues, not resolve them. He suggested an appendix to the Master Plan where the issued are addressed with possible solutions. He added that so many of the issues and needs of the City boil down to the availability of funds to create solutions. The City maintains a Capital Improvement Plan that identities key projects throughout the City; right now the CIP discusses over 24 million dollars in projects that need to be accomplished. Our Infrastructure is old and in need of upgrades; unfortunately the state or federal funds to assist with these upgrades are becoming more limited.

Mayor Clarenbach said that the challenge is that the city manager, working cooperatively with the different departments, creates a budget every year that fits into the tax cap, and presents that budget to the City Council. The Council can modify the budget and override the tax cap, but there needs to be enough public support to approve an override so that additional funds can be spent on the important projects facing the City.

Sam Durfee offered to assist with the Plan update. He suggested that a triage be established in the Master Plan so everyone knows what projects need to be undertaken first. He also felt that this is possibly the City’s most important Master Plan as it will help shape the projects that can improve the downtown and create new vitality in the City.

Director Lewis thanks everyone for their participation and comments. This was a very helpful discussion, and the game plan will be to incorporate these comments into a revised draft that will be presented to the Planning Board. He indicated that while it was first hoped to get the plan completed in a few weeks, he realizes that this plan is important and the comments and suggestions this evening will help shape an improved revised draft.

Adjourn: 8:35 pm