

Westmoreland Planning Board
Joint Meeting with Master Plan Committee
May 13, 2025
Approved Minutes

Attending: Lauren Bressett, Alison Fissette, Bruce Smith, John Stronk, Mark Terry, Liana Capra, Tim Thompson, Lisa Prince, Kristen Riley (clerk)
Masterplan: John Harris, Alan Bell, Michelle Hayward, Emily Allen. Excused: Larry Siegal.

Bruce Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Bruce Smith recounted why the board is meeting, which is to answer any questions the MP committee may have at this time. He said there are 2 sections that are required by the state to be included. Those are the Vision Statement and the Land Use statement.

John Harris asked Bruce Smith if the 2016 masterplan uses the sections from the previous 10 years. Bruce Smith said that they used a lot of them. They wrote the goals from the data. The survey and data helps shape the final plan. Thus then will help the Planning Board decide on what ordinances may need changing or adding. John Harris said that the committee will take the 2016 masterplan and layer it with current results.

John Harris said the committee discussed replacing "Utilities" with "Renewable Energy". Alison Fissette said that utilities can't be taken out, because cell towers could be built in the future. Lauren Bressett suggested putting renewable energy as a subsection of utilities as they are utilities.

Lauren Bressett said the committee next needs to look at the data and ask, "What does this mean for the town?" For example, a quick dive into data shows that the population is aging. There are less middle income residents, while there are more at the poverty level, and more with a higher income. What will this likely mean for Westmoreland over the next 10 years? The master plan committee can get some relevant and useful data by looking at reports from various state departments. The data she just shared came from the NH Housing Financing Authority. Bruce Smith said that SW Regional Planning Commission is also a great help. While there would be a cost for them to write the plan, as a member town, there are a number of services related to data and maps that are available.

Emily Allen mentioned that on the survey, the 18-34 age demographic is in favor of tiny homes. Lauren pointed out that while a tiny home on its own is not a positive for the town because the related services would cost significantly more than the tax revenue, that there may be options. such as a tiny homes cottage court idea where they are grouped, share utilities, and have common land. The state regulations are more favorable to shared septic systems now. This may be more town revenue friendly. Emily said there were only 29 respondents in that age bracket so the survey wouldn't be representative. Lauren mentioned that this needs to be compared to the actual percent of that age as total town population. The committee had talked about having some forums. Once the committee has looked at current data along with the survey results then a forum to discuss things that the committee noted as patterns or has further questions on could help shape what that means for the final plan.

Lauren Bressett noted the master plan should look into any changes in the town's natural resources. For example, the recent placing of a large portion of the Chickering Farm into a conservation easement was a nice asset to the town. Cheshire County owns a large portion of land in town. Lauren suggested getting in touch with Chris Cotes, County Administrator to see what current strategic plans are for that land.

John Harris said that in 2016 there was a desire for senior housing. He noted there is still a strong desire for senior housing. He asked if ADUs satisfy this. Lauren said that that is a help but other options could be a discussion point at a forum.

John Harris asked if there is enough information in the survey that we sent out, to write the masterplan. Lauren suggested looking at the data, then take a look at the survey, and decide if you have what you need to write the plan or need some forums to clarify or gather thoughts in areas the committee feels they need more information on. However, the committee needs to gather more information beyond the survey first. The plan does not come just from the survey. Lauren agreed to send some potential sources for data gathering.

Liana Capra made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alison Fissette seconded that motion. All voted in favor. The meeting adjourned at 7:12 pm. Recorded by Kristen Riley, Clerk. Draft.