



**LANCASTER BOARD OF SELECTMEN**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**Agenda VIA ZOOM™**  
**Monday, August 3, 2020**  
**6:00 P.M.**



*In accordance with the Open Meeting Law, please be advised that this meeting is being recorded and broadcast over Sterling-Lancaster Community TV*

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Jay M. Moody will call the meeting to Order at 6:00 P.M. via ZOOM™

ZOOM Meeting ID  
867 9603 4295

Invite Link  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86796034295>

**II. PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

6:00 P.M. - Opportunity for the public to address their concerns, make comment and offer  
6:10 P.M. suggestions on operations or programs, except personnel matters.  
Complaints or criticism directed at staff, volunteers, or other officials shall not be permitted.

**III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

Review and take action on Regular Meeting Minutes of July 20, 2020.

**IV. SCHEDULED APPEARANCES & PUBLIC HEARINGS**

6:10 P.M. Michael Penney for GeoInsight, Inc., an engineering consulting firm out of Littleton, Ma is putting together a wetland NOI on behalf of the US Army for some work they are performing next spring at the South Post Reserved Forces Training Area at Devens. He would like to provide summary of the project and discuss what local requirements would be applicable given that it is a government project.

**V. BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND DEPARTMENTS REPORTS - NONE**

**VI. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT**

Town Administrator Orlando Pacheco will update the Board on the status of current projects pending.

**VII. ADMINISTRATION, BUDGET, AND POLICY**

1. Interview Planning Board Candidates
2. Review and discuss the Town Planner vacancy
  - a. Jason Allison opinion: See Pages 3-7.



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3. Update on Occupancy Permits
4. Discussion on formulating a strategy on Industrial and Commercial development.
5. Update on the Land Confirmation, Acquisition and Use Agreement with North Lancaster LLC
6. Proposal to update the BOS Policy and Procedures to require a minimum of two Selectmen's signatures for authorization of payment of all town bills.
7. Review and take action on Intermunicipal Agreement between Municipalities and Devens regarding sharing services and costs of a common Regional Housing Consultant (RHC).
8. Continued discussion on Town Green Committee
9. Outline the plan for opening Town Hall after Early Voting
  - a. See Pages 8-10.
10. Determination of Historical Commission access into Prescott Building.

## **VIII. APPOINTMENTS AND RESIGNATIONS**

### Resignations

Memorial Day Committee – Alphonse Russo, effective immediately.

### Appointments:

Conservation Commission – Greg Jackson, 40 Farnsworth Way, term to expire June 30, 2021.

### Reappointments

Animal Control Commission; Christine Burke, 4 Heritage Lane, term to expire June 30, 2023.

## **IX. LICENSES AND PERMITS - NONE**

## **X. NEW BUSINESS \***

*\*This item is included to acknowledge that there may be matters not reasonably anticipated by the Chair*

## **XI. COMMUNICATIONS**

- Interested candidates for the Affordable Housing Trust will be on the Town's website.
- Board of Selectmen's next meeting will be held on Monday, August 17<sup>th</sup> 6:00pm via ZOOM

## **XII. ADJOURNMENT**

# Lancaster, MA :: June 2020 Town Planner vacancy

July 24, 2020

## Author

The author of this document is myself, Jason Allison, a Selectman in Lancaster, MA. The opinions put forth are solely my own and are intended only to facilitate discussion surrounding the recent vacancy of the Town Planner role.

## Audience

The intended audience of this document is not only the Lancaster Board of Selectmen, but also the town's committees and its residents.

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to explain the current Town Planner vacancy in Lancaster, MA and to create an understanding behind its vacancy as well as to help describe a path forward. Specifically, what were the contributing factors which lead to this vacancy. However, as you will gather through this paper the situation in Lancaster is not as simple as just a vacant Town Planner role. I will show that Lancaster has recently entered new and uncharted territory with community development for which I believe the vacant Town Planner position is a byproduct of.

The document is considered informational only and solely for the purpose of transparency and traceability. This document is not intended to be the final authority on Lancaster community development, quite the opposite. This document is meant to be a catalyst for additional discussion, analysis and strategic planning.

## Environment

The Lancaster Town Planner position was vacated June 2020. When this occurred, 3 things happened:

1. The Town Administrator is now the acting Town Planner
2. The previous Town Planner was retained as a part time contractor for Lancaster
  - a. Time commitment of 10-15 hours per week
3. The Administrative Assistant to Community Development and Planning (as well as to the Board of Health) has taken on additional workload

## Analysis - Town Planner role

It is undesirable for the Town of Lancaster to lose such an important position as the Town Planner. The Town Planner oversees community development and planning for the entire town.

This includes being a pivotal member of the Planning Board. The Massachusetts Municipal Association defines the Town Planner role as:

The Town Planner makes recommendations regarding regulations, policies and procedures involving planning and advises related boards, commissions and committees as needed in the planning areas. The Planner will work on the development of short and long-term plans for the Town.

The circumstances under which the Town Planner left Lancaster were undesirable. It is my opinion that the most significant contributing factor to their departure was that the existing policies and procedures which govern the permitting process for the community development of Lancaster did not, and still do not, have the necessary support structure to execute on the Town Planner role properly. Meaning, by not having a well defined, adopted, evangelized, and persisted structure for community development, the role of Town Planner was not adequately supported in situations which necessitated it. For the majority of development and planning within Lancaster the existing level of process was, and could still be satisfactory. However, after reviewing other towns permitting process, the Massachusetts Municipal Association Best Practices, and a detailed data analysis (shown below) my conclusion is that this is an area of needed growth in Lancaster if we want to have a fully supported Town Planner.

One specific aspect from our existing process which seems to be missing is the usage of Tech Teams. Tech Teams had been previously prescribed and adopted for projects as defined by Lancaster's permitting process. The history on the Tech Team can be found in the 2007 Annual Town Report:

Under the direction of the Planning Director, cross-communications between the Planning Board and other departments and boards in the community have improved with the introduction of the Tech Team. The Tech Team is comprised of representatives from several town boards, commissions and departments and meets monthly to review projects that come before the Planning Board and provide critical comment from their various perspectives. This feedback is directed back to the applicant and incorporated into the plans so that the final product is a useful and supportable project for the Town.

My research has these teams stop being utilized around 2016. I believe this to be a misstep as this is one specific area, if utilized as prescribed would, in my opinion, improve a significant amount of process lapses. I believe it is these types of process lapses that directly contribute to a decrease in board communication and resident transparency. When those process lapses are corrected, and the necessary structure is put into place, an immediate level of transparency is generated. In addition, a well documented process for permitting has an inherent feedback loop which allows residents the freedom and opportunity for healthy participation in the process.

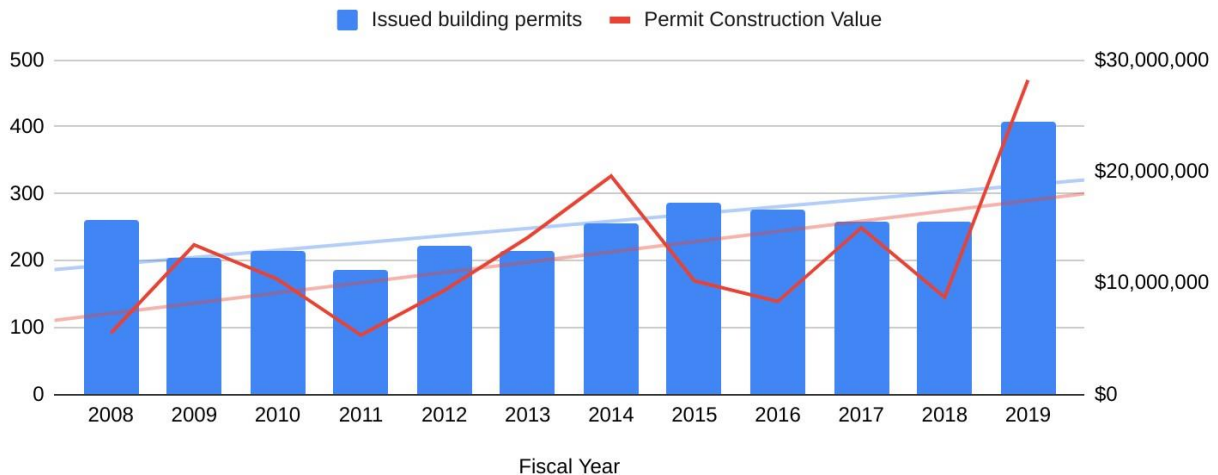
Some resources for review:

- Lancaster Expedited Permitting Guidebook
  - [https://www.ci.lancaster.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlif4586/f/uploads/expedited\\_permitting\\_guidebook\\_-\\_october.pdf](https://www.ci.lancaster.ma.us/sites/g/files/vyhlif4586/f/uploads/expedited_permitting_guidebook_-_october.pdf)
- Massachusetts Municipal Association - A Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting
  - <https://www.mass.gov/doc/permittingbestpracticesguidepdf/download>
- Guide to Permitting in the Town of Concord, Massachusetts
  - <https://concordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1446/Concord-Guide-to-Permitting-PDF>

## Analysis - Increased community development

To compound the weak community development process, Lancaster has seen a dramatic increase just this past year in not only total building permits issued, but also the construction value of those permits. Please note the chart below:

Issued permits and Construction value



This yearly chart represents the previous 12 years of building permits issued and total permit construction value. The data is as follows:

- The blue bars (left axis) show the total number of building permits issued
- The light blue line is the trend of the number of building permits issued
- The red graph line (right axis) shows the total construction value of the issued building permits
- The light red line is the trend of the total construction value of issued building permits

Notable metrics:

- For the 11 years prior to 2019 the average number of issued building permits per year was 239

- For the 11 years prior to 2019 the average construction value of building permits per year was ~\$11million
- The number of building permits issued in 2019 (409) was over 1.7x the previous average
- The construction value of the building permits issued in 2019 (\$28,193,458) was over 2.5x the previous average

From this data we can directly infer some notable outcomes. The most important being in 2019 Lancaster saw an unprecedented level of construction in both quantity and value. Based on this data, it is easy to reason that Lancaster's internal procedures for moving community development through its processes were strained, and possibly crippled. Based on this data, it's also easy to reason that all boards and committees which support community development were also stressed at levels never seen before. To sum this all up, 2019 was a challenging year for Lancaster at every level of community development.

To bring this full circle, while the Town Planner vacancy in Lancaster was unexpected and undesirable, it is my opinion that we must accept each underlying factor which contributed to our current situation. I would like to categorize these contributing factors into two buckets:

1. Unprecedented levels of community development in Lancaster
2. Aging and under-utilized process and procedures for community development in Lancaster

I believe that once we accept #1, not as our new norm but as our current norm, we can then aggressively address #2 through support from our boards and residents in updating our processes and procedures.

## Resourcing

Today we have a part time consultant performing Town Planner duties. We also have an overloaded Administrative Assistant with an ever growing backlog of work. The good news is that the fee for the consulting work is approximately 30% of the budgeted Town Planner salary. While we have coverage on basic community development activities, we need to provide additional assistance to the Administrative Assistant role. I believe we should explore the saved monies from the Town Planner salary and try to invest this into short term bridge support for the Administrative Assistant until we have solidified the next steps with our Town Planner role. Ideally the support provided to the Administrative Assistant can come from existing internal resources. The hope being this short term solution will be enough of a bridge for us to create and finalize a plan for addressing the underlying issues.

## Proposal

It is my opinion that the community development hurdles in Lancaster will not be solved simply by hiring a new Town Planner. Nor do I believe Lancaster can continue to use its existing procedures and expect to successfully manage the increase in quantity and value of the

development in Lancaster. I believe the right approach is to update and expand the Lancaster Expedited Permitting Process by leveraging additional available resources and best practices to create a more complete and healthier process in all aspects of Lancaster community development which will serve the Town staff, boards, residents, and even our developers. Through this work we will better understand the type of Town Planner Lancaster requires. A Town Planner that can thrive in a well structured and supported ecosystem designed for success.

My hope in creating this opinion piece is to stimulate new conversation on how to grow and improve Lancaster. I am seeking support from anyone reading this including existing staff, committees, boards, and residents to help make this transition. The output of this effort being a newly revised process with adequate checks, balances, and support for not only town residents but the staff which are tasked with the successful implementation of our towns projects.

Thank you - Jason Allison

## **Town of Lancaster, Board of Health**

### **Summary: Commonwealth of Massachusetts guidance as of July 21, 2020 for Mandatory Safety Standard for Office Practices (from Office Spaces: MA Safety Standards)**

#### **1) Social Distancing**

- a) No staff that may reasonably do their job remotely should come into the office
- b) No meetings that may reasonably be carried out remotely should occur in the office
- c) Occupancy must be limited to not greater than 50% of the building's maximum permitted occupancy as documented in its occupancy permit on record
- d) If there is no official permitted capacity, there may be no greater than 10 persons per 1,000 square feet of accessible space
- e) Must ensure separation of 6 feet between individual workstations
- f) Physical partitions separating workstations must be installed for areas that cannot be spaced 6 feet apart. Physical partitions must be at least 6 feet in height
- g) All staff must wear a face mask or face covering upon entering and exiting the building, and whenever a 6-foot distance cannot be maintained between individuals.
- h) Establish directional hallways and passageways for foot traffic if possible, to minimize contact. Post clearly visible signage regarding these policies
- i) Limit visitors where feasible, and avoid congregation in common areas (e.g., lobbies)
- j) Mark rooms, hallways, and counter windows where people might wait for a turn to be attended to, to indicate 6 feet separation
- k) Limit meeting sizes, ensure 6 feet of social distancing, and encourage remote participation.

#### **2) Hygiene Protocols**

- a) Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water, wherever possible and encourage frequent handwashing; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol may be used as an alternative
- b) Supply staff at workplace location with adequate cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfecting wipes)
- c) Post visible signage throughout the site to remind staff of the hygiene and safety protocols
- d) Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol should be made available at entrances and throughout floor areas for staff
- e) Require regular and not less than daily cleaning and sanitation of all high-touch areas such as workstations, door handles, and restrooms
- f) Avoid sharing office materials / equipment or disinfect equipment between use (e.g., telephones, fax machines)

#### **3) Staffing and Operations**



- a) Provide training to staff on up-to-date safety information and precautions including hygiene and other measures aimed at reducing disease transmission, including:
  - i) Social distancing, handwashing, proper use of face coverings
  - ii) Self-screening at home, including temperature and symptom checks
  - iii) Importance of not coming to work if ill
  - iv) When to seek medical attention if symptoms become severe
  - v) Which underlying health conditions may make individuals more susceptible to contracting and suffering from a severe case of the virus
- b) The office must screen all staff at each shift by ensuring the following:
  - i) No persons are experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0 and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
  - ii) Assure no staff has not had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, while that person was symptomatic
  - iii) Staff have not been asked to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official
  - iv) Staff who fail to meet any one of the above criteria must be sent home
- c) Maintain a log of staff, vendors, residents, and other visitors to support contact tracing (name, date, time, contact information) in case needed
- d) Staff must wear face mask or face covering when social distance of 6 feet is not possible, except where unsafe due to medical condition or disability
- e) Staff must stay home if feeling ill
- f) If any staff tests positive, the Town must notify the Board of Health and assist the LBOH as reasonably requested to advise likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other staffs may be recommended consistent with guidance and / or at the request of the LBOH

#### **4) Cleaning and Disinfecting**

- a) Clean commonly touched surfaces in restrooms (e.g., toilet seats, doorknobs, stall handles, sinks, paper towel dispensers, soap dispensers) frequently and in accordance with disinfectant solution or wipes
- b) Conduct frequent cleaning and disinfection of site (at least daily and more frequently if feasible)
- c) Keep cleaning logs that include date, time, and scope of cleaning
- d) Conduct frequent disinfecting of heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs,

elevator buttons, staircases, vending machine, bathrooms)

- g) Clean shared spaces (e.g., conference rooms) between use and supply cleaning products (e.g., sanitizer, disinfectingwipes)
- h) In event of a positive case, shut down site for a deep cleaning and disinfecting of the workplace in accordance with current CDC guidance