

Lancaster Economic Development Committee (Ad Hoc)

Report to the Board of Selectmen 11/4/2020 (final)

It is the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Lancaster Economic Development Committee that a permanent Economic Development Committee be established. This Economic Development Committee (EDC) would be advisory and would not have any statutory authority. The EDC would work with the Town of Lancaster's Planning Director, business, and real estate development communities to promote responsible business and residential development in Lancaster.

The EDC will act as a collaborative body to help shape proposed projects towards the Town's best interests. This process should be in each developer's financial best interest due to a more efficient, and thus potentially less expensive, planning process and increased certainty of successful project completion.

The committee should include the Town Planner as an ex-officio member. Regular members should include representatives of Planning board, Historical Commission, Conservation Commission, and other interested citizens.

Mission Statement

Through the Director of Planning and Economic Development Committee, assist and advise:

- Work with Lancaster's Planning Director to advise businesses and developers on their projects with the goal of being a collaborative body helping shape proposed projects so they address Lancaster's business and housing needs. This includes advice on how those projects might better fit with the Town's history and rural character, including its architecture, scenic roads, farms, fields, and open spaces;
- Analyze barriers to economic development and support the creation of bylaws, policies, regulations, and zoning to address those barriers, foster economic growth, and strengthen the local economy consistent with the goals of Lancaster's Master Plan;
- Advise the Lancaster Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and other Town boards and committees concerning Lancaster's economic development issues and trends;
- Develop recommendations to better support existing businesses and attract new businesses;
- Support public and private initiatives related to business retention, business attraction, business development, workforce development, entrepreneurship, infrastructure to support economic growth, and redevelopment of sites and buildings;
- Actively consult with Lancaster's existing small and large businesses and local Chamber of Commerce on economic development issues to better understand Lancaster's changing economy and business needs;
- Support the pursuit of grants (or other available revenue sources) to enhance Lancaster's economic development and planning.
- Support activities promoting a sustainable economy that will create quality employment opportunities and a broadened tax base for Lancaster and its residents and work with other public and private entities to promote the economic well-being of the community and participate in regional economic development efforts.

Appendix

Background

On Sept 20, 2020 Jay Moody (chairman of the Board of Selectman) Charged a group of individuals (the Lancaster Economic Development Committee) in an AD Hoc fashion to explore the following:

The Town of Lancaster had the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission wrote an economic development plan in 2015. In section 4 proposals and recommendations the first proposal is to re-establish a local Economic Development Committee.

I would like this ad hoc committee to decide if this would be a benefit for the town of Lancaster. This committee would meet with proposed developers and existing businesses to try and bridge the gap between the planning board and zoning needs of the town and help shepherd development before it comes to the planning board and to try and make the process smoother and correct.

This plan will be on the town website and should be used as a tool. Many other towns have committees on their websites with mission statements,

I would like this committee to come back to the selectmen with an answer if this is good direction for the town at the first Select meeting in Dec 2020

From the 2017 Master Plan



I. THE TOWN WE WANT

BACKGROUND

As members of the Lancaster community, notwithstanding our diversity, we are united in wanting our Town to maintain and strengthen the qualities which make it the town we want.

The things we cherish most about Lancaster include its heritage, its farmland, woods and open space, its beautiful rivers and ponds, education, and its people. We want to preserve its rural, historic character at the same time as we want business and job opportunities for local residents to expand. We want the new homes and buildings that come to Lancaster to be located, designed, and used in harmony with the historic land use tradition and pattern of the town. Too often, in Lancaster as in other towns, this hasn't been achieved in the current era.

We also want affordable opportunities for our young people to have their own homes and to be able to continue living in the town in which they grew up. We want to continue to preserve and protect the Town Green and its ring of historic buildings – the jewel and centerpiece of our community. At the same time, we look forward to having an enhanced ability to walk among both businesses and public facilities that serve our needs within an integrated town center where we can encounter and mingle with our community neighbors from around the town.

We value all the residents of our community, and we want a town government that continues to give priority to services to meet citizen needs, at the same time as it continues mindful monitoring of municipal expenditures and seeks appropriate expansions of the tax base. We cherish our children and our youth, their enthusiasm and their energy, and are committed to working to meet their needs for activities, gathering places, and ability to move safely around the town. We respect and value our elders, and are dedicated to working to ensure that they can remain living in their own community in their later years, and that they, too, have a gathering place which they can call their own. We will work to improve communication between town government and the community it serves, between the town and its institutions, and among town departments themselves.

We see a future where visitors and tourists come to Lancaster to admire its beautiful, historic buildings, its traditional New England green, to canoe and kayak on the lovely Nashua River; and to pick apples and buy fresh produce from local farms.

We look forward to the day when our working citizens no longer have to commute long distances to far away jobs and endure hours of traffic congestion, but rather can work at locations in or near Lancaster, or even telecommute from their own homes. We see a time when the currently ever-increasing traffic through our town begins to decrease as a result of our efforts to work together with the other communities in our region to better coordinate land use, new development, and improve public transportation. We see the day when we and our children can bike and walk through large areas of town on trails connecting to neighboring communities and the larger region, safe from traffic.

Even as the town has grown larger, the quality of life here has remained high, in large measure owing to our good public and private schools, the institutions of higher learning in our community, and our ability to preserve our small town atmosphere and history. We recognize the value and increasing fragility of our natural resources – our water, our river, our woods and open fields with their wildlife inhabitants – and we understand their critical importance to both the local and regional ecosystems and to our quality of life as residents of our town and also members of that ecosystem. We have come to understand better how our human behavior directly affects that ecosystem – for better or for worse – and we are committed to being good ecological citizens within that ecosystem.

The Lancaster we want in 25 years will be as different from today as today's Town is from that of the 1970s; but we want it to be recognizable as Lancaster – its historic village character intact, open space, woodlands, wild river frontage, and rural character preserved - a place for people of all ages and types.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

These are our most basic goals and objectives for the town we want.

- To protect and preserve the Town's rural and historic character, its ponds, rivers and wetlands, its physical landscape and historic buildings, its classic New England pattern of village and working countryside. We recognize that the regulatory structure of our Town is largely what will make this possible.
- To create a Town Center where people of all ages can come together at gathering places, where small businesses of appropriate scale and type thrive, and where people can safely walk among these businesses and civic places for service, visiting, and recreation.
- To encourage business development that is appropriate in type, location, and design so that it enhances its surroundings, rather than having to be shielded from them.
- To participate in long term regional initiatives to reduce the volume of traffic flowing through Lancaster, and in shorter-term initiatives for safer traffic flow and control.
- To promote and increase safe biking and pedestrian alternatives and, if feasible, public transportation alternatives to drive-alone car travel.
- To continue to preserve and manage important farmland, open space and woodlands in Lancaster, including:
 - Improvement and support for recreation facilities such as trails, fields, and public beach areas;
 - Protection for Lancaster's important natural resources, including the Town water supply, ponds, wildlife habitat, and the Nashua River.
- To increase the supply of affordable housing in Lancaster so as to enable Lancaster's young people and elders to continue to live in their home community.

- To continue to maintain a balance among appropriate service provision, community investment, and a moderate tax burden.
- To reflect in all that we do the uniqueness and diversity of the various villages, neighborhoods, and other distinctive areas of the Town, while at the same time unifying them in terms of connectedness, shared vision, and equitable services.