

TOWN AREA PLAN WORK GROUP
Meeting of February 6, 2024, at 3:00 pm by Zoom
FINAL AND APPROVED MINUTES

Attending: Mary Anne Easley, Marsha Fader, Mary Longacre, Mickey Rowland, Lee Saperstein, and Henry Terry.

Absent: Regen Horchow, Alison King.

Guest: Gary Roberts, NRTA Administrator

Attendance was verified by a roll call; there was a quorum at all times. The meeting was recorded and can be viewed at the following address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g2QL3hvofPo&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhF3WZ8xvh3sdHgJEvCabR6&index=37>.

1. Call to Order.

After a delay to allow for late sign-ins, Chair Henry Terry called the meeting to order at 3:09 pm. Mary Longacre reviewed the rules on remote attendance meetings and said also that this meeting would be recorded.

She also noted that the Zoom log-in would be the same for all Tuesday meetings through the end of 2024: <https://us06web.zoom.us/join/join?from=register&meetingId=985421234567>.

2. Agenda Approval.

Henry Terry suggested that the late delivery of the minutes should defer approval of the minutes of January 19, 2024, from this agenda and move it to the next meeting. A motion to amend the agenda was made by Mary Longacre, seconded by Mary Anne Easley, and approved unanimously by roll-call vote (Mary Anne Easley, aye; Marsha Fader, aye; Mary Longacre, aye; Mickey Rowland, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Henry Terry, aye).

3. Public and Member Comments.

There were no members of the public present, hence no public comments.

4. Guest Presentation.

Henry Terry reminded the work group that Gary Roberts, NRTA Administrator, has been invited to this meeting to talk about the Wave, Nantucket's bus service: what's new, including service changes. With that introduction, Gary Roberts started to talk about electrification of the Wave fleet. Mary Longacre

asked if a share-screen shot of the Wave routes would help; he answered, not just yet. The system has just purchased two electric buses and expects a grant for three more. These, plus four compact diesel-powered buses, will provide a fleet of nine for the summer. At the moment, they are purchasing and installing tracking and monitoring systems for both their use and the public's. The new fleet is cleaner and quieter than the existing large buses. Because they are smaller in capacity, 12 seated and nine standing, they may have to increase the frequency of bus cycles on busy routes, such as the Mid-Island route, to make up for the capacity reduction. The new buses also have a no-step entrance, which means that passengers can board quickly. A ramp can be extended for passengers in wheel chairs.

The recently announced six-month, free-fare period, April 1 to October 31, will coincide with a NRTA study of ridership, both in total and for locating riders' on and off locations. There is a strong hope that the free period will expand ridership. The introduction of electric buses has created a lot of infrastructure work. Remain Nantucket has paid for high-speed chargers that will allow buses to be recharged during drivers' lunch break. Because of the free period, NRTA has suspended the sale of seasonal passes and reduced the charge for an annual pass by fifty percent. These passes are used a lot by businesses to provide their employees with subsidized travel.

Gary Roberts next spoke of two grants for which NRTA has applied; they are hopeful of success in funding. The first is to revive the ferry connector from the Town's parking areas off Fairgrounds Road to the ferries. Coordination with the shifting ferry schedules, which change substantially during the summer season, will be important. He is hopeful that the attractiveness of this service will cause off-Island contractors to park in the Town's lots instead of the Stop and Shop lot on Straight Wharf and thus free up a lot of space in the latter lot. Mary Longacre asked if this service will be non-stop. During the summer it will be, but in the winter months, it will be a stopping service, he replied.

The second grant is to purchase an Island-Ride software package that will provide computerized dispatch for individualized on-demand service. This micro-transit system is not intended to compete with taxis but to give people who live far from a bus route access to the buses. If established, the system will take people who live in areas with no scheduled service, e.g., Tom Nevers, to a bus stop with frequent service. Mickey Rowland asked how this compares to the existing Paratransit service. The answer was that there are eligibility requirements to use Paratransit and no such barrier would exist to using micro-transit.

At this point, Mary Longacre shared her screen where she had projected the in-Town NRTA routes (https://nrtawave.com/pdfs/WAVE_SysMap2019.pdf) alongside a map of the Town Area (<https://records.nantucket-ma.gov/WebLink/Browse.aspx?id=122939&dbid=0&repo=TownofNantucket>, attached). She noted that most of the NRTA routes are not in the Town Area with the exception of the Mid-Island and Miacomet loops. That is correct, said Gary Roberts, and there are no plans at the moment to alter or add routes. Route planning, which takes potential ridership into consideration first, is also concerned with ease of travel, particularly to avoid very narrow roads. Mary Longacre asked about cobblestone road surfaces and whether they constituted a barrier to travel. The answer was that traveling on cobblestone surfaces was not a good idea but not a limiting factor.

The State, which is supporting this year's fare-free period, has not announced similar grants for 2025 and 2026, hence NRTA is studying fare-collection systems that can be secure while speedy. As he brought his presentation to a close, he said the obvious: summer traffic is a real challenge to a scheduled bus service.

5. New Business.

After Gary Roberts' presentation, members continued a discussion of the impact, or lack thereof, of NRTA on the Town Area. Mickey Rowland noted that the majority of the routes went down Washington Street, which is outside of the Town Area, although they are easily accessed by people who live in that part of the Town. Mary Longacre observed that a lot of unlicensed commuters travel by bicycle; many of them might use the bus when it is free. She noted also that there is no north-south connector between the loading areas at the Greenhound and in front of the Whaling Museum on Broad Street. While it is unlikely that someone in 'Sconset would want to travel to Madaket, which would require walking from one loading area to the other, it is very possible that someone at the Pleasant Street Stop and Shop would want to go to Jetties Beach, which would require that same walk. Lee Saperstein noted that closing that gap would require buses to travel on Easy and South Water Streets, which are frequently jammed in the summer. Marsha Fader wondered if NRTA travel in the TAP was for residents or tourists. Gardner Street, which bypasses the Downtown Area, is too narrow for the buses. If one looked at the Cultural map of Nantucket, many interesting sites are in the Town Area but are not served by NRTA.

6. Adjournment.

At 3:53 pm, Henry Terry suggested, with no further comments coming from work-group members, that it was time to adjourn. Mary Longacre concurred with such a motion, Mickey Rowland seconded it, and roll-call approval was unanimous (Mary Anne Easley, aye; Marsha Fader, aye; Mary Longacre, aye; Mickey Rowland, aye; Lee Saperstein, aye; and Henry Terry, aye).

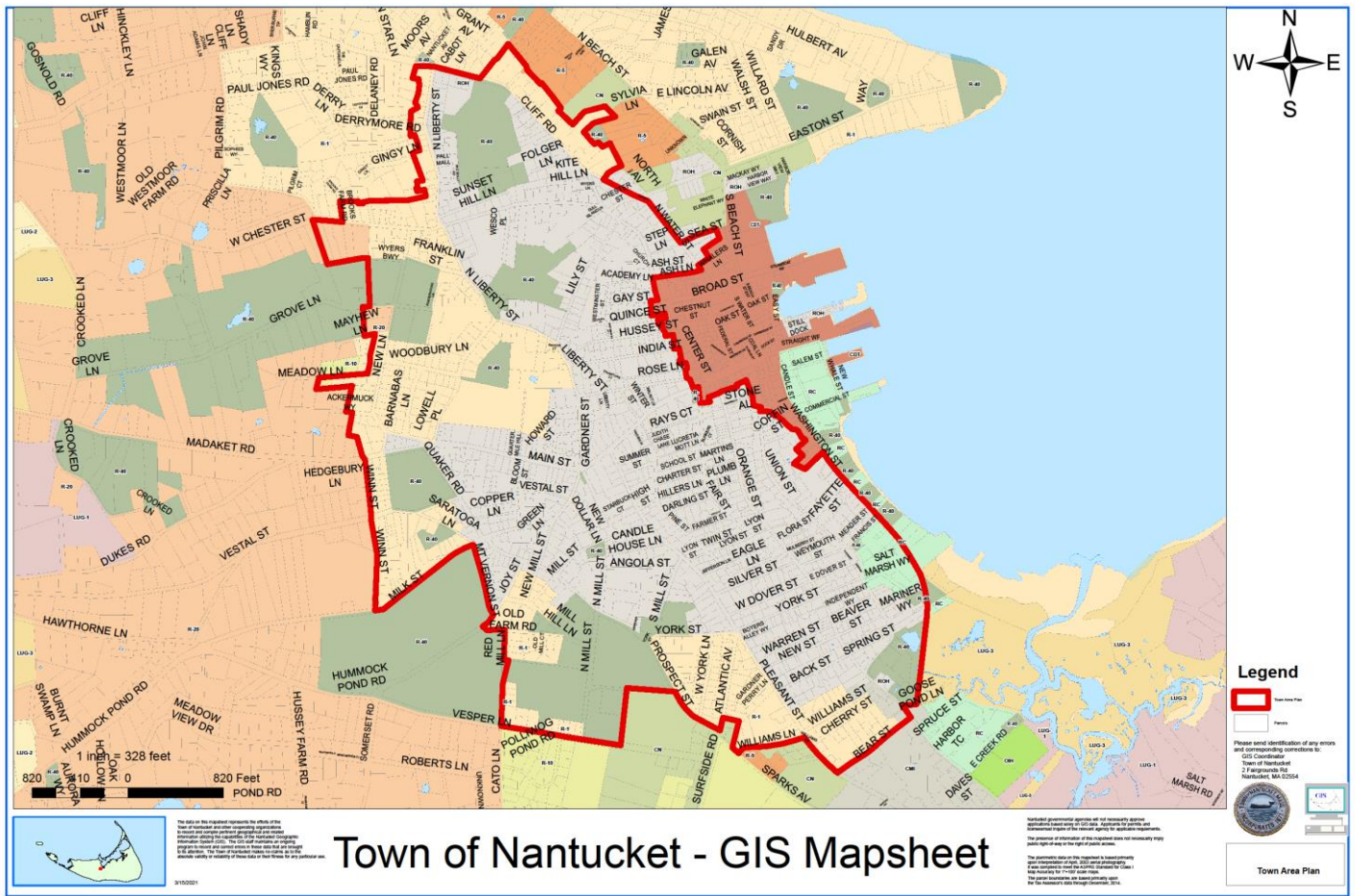
The next scheduled meeting is Friday, February 23, 2024, at 4:00 pm. This meeting will be by Zoom. Please remember that the Zoom link for Friday meetings is different from Tuesday's link.

For reference: Subcommittee composition.

2. Land Use: Liz Almodobar and Mary Anne Easley
3. Housing: Marsha Fader and Mickey Rowland
4. Economic Development: Alison King and Mary Longacre
5. Natural and Cultural Resources: Liz Almodobar and Marsha Fader
6. Open Space and Recreation Plan: Mary Anne Easley and Henry Terry
7. Services and Facilities: Regen Horchow and Mickey Rowland
8. Circulation; Mary Longacre and Lee Saperstein

Lee W. Saperstein, Secretary, saperste@mst.edu

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Town Area Plan shown in red outline.