NP&EDC

NANTUCKET PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Nantucket Planning & Economic Development Commission APPROVED Minutes
Remote Participation via Zoom Webinar
October 23, 2023 @ 5:00PM

Commissioners: Chair Mary Longacre, Vice-Chair Barry Rector, Nat Lowell, Bert Johnson, Seth Engelbourg, Joe Topham, Dave Iverson, Kristie Ferrantella , John Trudel, Wendy Hudson, and Dawn Hill Holdgate

Staff: Leslie Snell, Director of Planning, Megan Trudel, Senior Planner, Michael Burns, Transportation Program Manager and Nicky Sheriff, Land Use Specialist

I. Call to order:

Chair Longacre called the meeting to order at 5:01pm.

Chair Longacre read a prepared statement in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 regarding open meeting law, which outlines how the meeting is conducted via remote participation and states the ground rules for any discussion.

II. Establishment of quorum:

In Attendance:

Commissioners:

Wendy Hudson *Aye*
Dave Iverson *Aye*
Nat Lowell *Aye*
Joe Topham *Aye*
Seth Engelbourg *Aye*
Kristie Ferrantella *Aye*
Vice-Chair Barry Rector *Aye*
Chair Mary Longacre *Aye*
Dawn Hill Holdgate *Aye*
John Trudel *Aye*
Bert Johnson *Absent*

Submitted by: Nickesha Sheriff

Staff:
Leslie Snell, Director of Planning *Aye*
Megan Trudel, Senior Planner *Aye*
Michael Burns, Transportation Program Manager *Aye*
Nicky Sheriff, Land Use Specialist
Raissah Kouame, Regional Planning Coordinator, MassDOT *Aye*
Gary Roberts, NRTA Administrator

III. Approval of Agenda:

Motion/Vote: John Trudel made a motion to approve the agenda and the motion was duly seconded by Nat Lowell and the motion was carried unanimously.

Vote taken by Roll Call:
Wendy Hudson Aye
Dave Iverson Aye
Nat Lowell Aye
Joe Topham Aye
John Trudel Aye
Seth Engelbourg Aye
Kristie Ferrantella Aye
Dawn Hill Holdgate Aye
Vice-Chair Barry Rector Aye
Chair Mary Longacre Aye

IV. Minutes:

A. August 21, 2023
There were minor edits to the minutes made by Wendy Hudson & Chair Longacre

Motion/Vote:

Vote taken by Roll Call:
Wendy Hudson *Aye*
Dave Iverson *Aye*
Nat Lowell *Aye*
Joe Topham *Aye*
Kristie Ferrantella *Aye*
Vice-Chair Barry Rector *Aye*
Chair Mary Longacre *Aye*
Dawn Hill Holdgate *Aye*
John Trudel *Aye*
Seth Engelbourg *Abstain*

A. Transportation Program Manager Update

1. **Gary Roberts – NRTA Administrator Update**

- **2023 Summer Season Summary**

Gary Roberts faced challenges when he began overseeing the NRTA 2023 summer season. Upon arrival in late January or early February, the fleet comprised of only four buses. His initial objective was to navigate the season successfully and implement necessary improvements behind the scenes, addressing issues not readily apparent to the public. Despite the challenging start, Roberts achieved the goal of completing all routes without any omissions, unlike the previous year when one route, possibly Polpis, was canceled due to equipment issues. Overall, the season was successfully navigated, and necessary changes were made for smoother operations. Roberts reported on the ridership numbers for the 2023 summer season, noting that there was a slight increase in ridership when considering the fiscal year (July 1 to June), with a total of 241,000 riders. However, he acknowledged that the numbers for October, November, and December were not yet available. The summer season experienced a minor drop in numbers, but winter season ridership saw a slight increase, attributed to the use of newer, gas-powered shuttle buses. Roberts highlighted the transition to smaller, quieter, and more comfortable buses for all three routes, emphasizing improved reliability and service. He mentioned the challenges posed by heavy traffic and the competition from rideshare services, suggesting that people might prefer alternatives like Uber or biking. Roberts also discussed the impact of reliability issues on rider experience and the efforts made to ensure vehicles are ready for service each day. During the discussion, questions were raised about the potential influence of e-bikes and scooters on declining ridership, with committee members expressing the view that these alternative modes of transportation could be contributing to the shift. John Trudel pointed out the correlation between rental market trends and public transportation ridership, suggesting a connection between the two. Mr. Roberts further addressed the statewide struggle to return to pre-COVID ridership levels, noting that NRTA's performance is relatively better than some other transit authorities. He provided insights into the budget and capital performance, highlighting a fair box recovery rate of 21% and a substantial increase in capital expenditures, mainly directed towards addressing the state of the fleet and upgrading various systems.

Mr. Roberts also provided an overview of efforts to enhance passenger services and experiences. The focus was on the implementation of new software to improve bus tracking, streamline Paratransit trip bookings, and enhance communication with passengers. The goal is to provide real-time information on bus locations, simplify Paratransit trip management, and offer better overall efficiency. Roberts reported a 96% on-time performance for regular routes and an impressive 99.4% for the Island Ride. Despite challenges during the summer months, he attributed the reliability of on-time performance to the flexible scheduling based on departure and arrival times at specific locations rather than fixed stop times. Discussing health and sustainable transportation trends, Roberts highlighted a drop in operating expenses per vehicle revenue hour to $94. He attributed this decrease to investments in preventive maintenance programs, ensuring the vehicles are in good condition daily, and reducing the need for costly on-road repairs. All routes, including Polpis, were operational, and the emphasis now lies in rebuilding ridership on previously underserved routes. During the discussion, committee members raised questions about the ridership patterns, with a focus on year-round service and specific route performances. John Trudel inquired about the percentage of revenue generated by the Mid Island Loop, while chair Longacre asked if weather conditions were considered in tracking ridership fluctuations. Gary responded by mentioning the strong ridership in the Mid Island Loop and the impact of rainy days on beach traffic, adding that the cameras in the vehicles help track ridership on such days.

- **Fleet Replacement Update**

Gary Roberts discussed the challenges with the current fleet, stating that the buses are past their intended lifespan. The original plan for replacement, starting in 2017, did not materialize, leaving 19 buses in need of replacement. To address the immediate need, funding was secured to purchase four Ford Transit vans, specifically designed for winter service. These vans have a 12-seat capacity and do not require a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), making them more accessible for drivers.

Roberts expressed concern about the lack of funding for vehicle replacement in the coming years (2024-2028) and discussed difficulties with a grant for propane-powered vehicles. The grant, totaling $4.5 million, faced challenges as no manufacturer bid on it. Roberts explored the possibility of switching to hybrid vehicles, but the preferred manufacturer shifted its focus to 100% electric buses, leaving the grant in limbo.

He introduced a battery-electric bus, tested during Daffodil weekend, with a 12-passenger capacity and a range of 130 miles on a full charge. The cost for this bus is around $300,000, and Roberts is working on securing funding to purchase two of these vehicles. He mentioned potential infrastructure challenges and the need for a Level 3 charger in town to support these buses.

John Trudel inquired about the feasibility of leasing buses, and Roberts explained that bus leasing isn't as common as in other industries. He emphasized the challenges in the bus market, the need for long-term planning, and the difficulty in predicting the future of electric bus technology.

During the discussion, John Trudel continued to explore the idea of leasing as a potential solution to regularly update the fleet. Gary explained the challenges in the bus industry, including long lead times for new buses, and the difficulty in planning and securing funding for fleet replacement. The focus remains on starting with a small number of electric buses to test their viability and gradually replacing the fleet over time.

Gary Roberts mentioned the Volkswagen Mitigation Grant, which aims to remove diesel engine vehicles from the road and replace them with low-emission vehicles. Although there was a smaller grant specifically for municipal refuse trucks, transit vehicles were also acceptable. The grant had a total award amount of $1 million, with a $500,000 maximum per award. Unfortunately, the transit agency did not receive an award from this grant. He explained that another grant opportunity is expected to be released in a month, and they plan to apply for that one as well. Gary shared his past experience with the Volkswagen Grant, where the entire cost of replacing six vehicles was covered by the grant, providing an opportunity to transition to electric vehicles. The agency continues to actively search for grants and explore funding options, including carbon reduction funding. They are considering the potential fit of such funding for their needs, and the state shows interest in this approach. The goal is to secure additional funding to support the transition to more sustainable and environmentally friendly transit options.

- **Fare-Free Implementation**

Mr. Roberts discussed the potential implementation of fare-free services in the Nantucket Regional Transit Authority (NRTA). Drawing on his experience as a director of maintenance, he highlighted the elimination of maintenance downtime associated with fare boxes, emphasizing the high costs of electronic fare boxes. The benefits of fare-free services included increased ride efficiency, particularly in tourist destinations, where the confusion around fare payment could slow down the boarding process. M. Robert's mentioned the downsides, such as the need for supplemental income to cover the loss of fare revenue. He also explored the possibility of generating revenue through advertising on buses, both internally and externally. While acknowledging the controversy surrounding paid parking programs, Gary provided insights into the financial challenges faced by NRTA and the ongoing discussions about fare-free services. In response to questions from the committee members, he clarified that he was presenting both sides of the fare-free option and not advocating for a specific decision at this point. Seth Engelbourg touched on potential funding sources, including revenue from parking tickets and the need to explore alternatives beyond controversial downtown paid parking. Nat Lowell expressed gratitude to Gary Roberts for his presentation and welcomed him to the meeting. He echoed Seth Engelbourg's sentiments about supporting fare-free services and shared his positive experiences with the service. Nat inquired about the revenue generated from ticketing vehicles downtown, questioning where the money goes—whether to the state, town, or a split. He suggested exploring alternative funding sources, such as redirecting a portion of parking ticket revenue to support the discussed program. Nat Lowell also discussed the challenges of coordinating parking and transportation to the boats, emphasizing the need for reliable bus services every 15 minutes to address traffic issues. He mentioned potential revenue sources from Harbor Place and future considerations for a parking garage. Mr. Lowell sought clarification from Mr. Roberts on whether certain groups, like businesses, would still have bus passes even if the public were to ride for free.

- **Micro Transit Operations**

Mr. Roberts provided an overview of the micro transit on-demand service as a potential option for the transportation system. He explained that micro transit is a software-based system where riders can use their smartphones to request a ride, which would be dispatched to micro transit vehicles, including smaller 12-passenger vans equipped with wheelchair lifts. This service allows users to book rides for specific destinations within a geo-fenced area, addressing the needs of riders in locations where fixed routes might not be practical. Gary emphasized that micro transit is not a taxicab service, but rather a flexible system that can adapt to the needs of users, especially in rural or offseason scenarios where fixed routes might be less efficient. The software program for micro transit was mentioned to be an extension of the one purchased for the island ride service, with plans to transition and assess its effectiveness. He also highlighted the possibility of using micro transit to serve areas like the park-and-ride lot, providing more convenient shuttle options for individuals heading to the boat. Gary expressed his intent to present these ideas to the Board in the upcoming weeks for further consideration. Chair Longacre asked Mr. Roberts to expand on the registration aspect of the island ride. Gary Roberts explained that the island ride service is for elderly and disabled individuals, with age restrictions and priority given to those with disabilities. There are different categories, and eligibility requirements include age and disability status. Once registered, individuals are in the system and can book trips through the island ride service.

2. Transportation Program Manager Update

- **Safe Streets and Roads for All Grant – Authorize Director of Planning to Sign MassDOT Agreement for Matching Funds**

Mike Burns discussed a request for authorization regarding the Safe Streets for All project. There is a Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) agreement for matching funds to the Federal grant received. The agreement covers 20% matching funds, with a total amount of $115,000. The term of the agreement extends through the end of June 2025. The request is to authorize the director of planning to sign and execute the Safe Streets for All matching funds agreement with MassDOT.

Motion/Vote: Nat Lowell moved to authorize the director of planning to sign and execute the safe streets for all matching funds agreement with MassDot.

<u>Vote taken by Roll Call:</u>
Wendy Hudson *Aye*
Dave Iverson *Aye*
Nat Lowell *Aye*
Joe Topham *Aye*
Seth Engelbourg *Aye*
Kristie Ferrantella *Aye*
Vice-Chair Barry Rector *Aye*
Chair Mary Longacre *Aye*
Dawn Hill Holdgate *Aye*
John Trudel *Aye*
Bert Johnson *Absent*

- **Continuing, Comprehensive, and Cooperative (3C) Program Update**

Mike Burns reported that staff participated in the Southern New England conference in New Haven, gaining insights into resiliency, historic preservation, and equity. He informed the

Commission that a request to initiate a 45-day public review to amend the public participation plan is expected at the January meeting, pending guidance from MassDOT. Burn's also echoed Gary Robert's comment earlier for the need to amend the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for bus replacements. Lastly, Mr. Burns noted that the title 6 updates to the website are in progress.

- **Planning Priorities Update & Implementation of Approved Projects Update**

Mike Burns highlighted planning priorities, emphasizing staff coordination with the town to align transportation goals with strategic goals. He mentioned the ongoing Regional Safety Action Plan, with proposals closing soon, aiming to start the project by December 1. Capital projects, including Milestone Road improvements, were reviewed by MassDOT's Project Review Committee. Milestone Road project submission is set for December, with other projects like Tom Nevers, Pleasant Street, Sparks Avenue, and Wauwinet in the surveying and design phase. Staff will present design recommendations in future meetings, and coordination with the town's finance department is ongoing to update the local Capital plan in sync with the long-range transportation plan.

B. Public Discussion – Area Plan Guidelines

Chair Longacre read a prepared statement:

I want to thank all of the groups and individuals who submitted comments, they are appreciated and will help us clarify and fine-tune the guidelines. There were multiple requests for a meeting with the NP&EDC on the guidelines. THIS meeting tonight was intended for that purpose, and I'm sorry if that invitation wasn't clear.

It's apparent from the comments that there are several misconceptions and before we begin discussion, I want to give some background on how and why the guidelines were developed.

In its enabling legislation the NP&EDC is assigned the responsibility for creating Local Area Plans. These plans are developed separately from the Master Plan, which is statutorily the responsibility of the Planning Board. Naturally the Master Plan informs the Area Plans and vice-versa, however there is not a deadline or requirement that each neighborhood have or update an Area Plan prior to the updating of the Master Plan. The processes run in parallel and on separate timelines.

In accordance with best practices for Planning, the NP&EDC desires to have significant grassroots public involvement in the creation of Area Plans even though the ultimate authority remains with the NP&EDC to approve the Area Plans. Fortunately, there are many active Neighborhood associations on the island who can help facilitate public engagement. However, as a public body, the NP&EDC is bound by the Open Meeting Law, and those constraints must apply to its Workgroups. Importantly, Workgroup members must refrain from accidentally or purposefully having a quorum of Workgroup members discuss the development of the Area Plan outside of a properly noticed public meeting. The Area Plan Workgroups are not sub-committees of the Neighborhood Associations, they are sub-committees of the NP&EDC.

Members of Neighborhood Associations may of course have their own discussions regarding issues in their neighborhoods, however these aren't exempt from Open Meeting Law if a quorum of Workgroup members are or could reasonably be expected to be involved. Additionally, through public outreach during the formation of the Work group, the NP&EDC will strive to include representatives from across the community who have interests in the area, regardless of whether they are members of the Neighborhood Association, which will also help to allow flexibility for private conversations that don't violate Open Meeting Law.

The NP&EDC will prioritize the selection of Workgroup members who have an active interest in an Area through their residency, property ownership, or commercial activities in the development of the Local Area Plan for their neighborhood, especially members of the public who are not already serving the Town in an elected, volunteer, or employment capacity in other leadership roles. The latter preference is intended to ensure that the public's voice isn't overshadowed by or intimidated by influence a community leader may have. Notwithstanding these priorities, the NP&EDC will select what it feels is the best makeup for an Area Plan Workgroup from the pool of interested applicants. In the spirit of grassroots participation, Workgroup members will be selected to represent their personal, not professional, interests.

The use of professional services, if deemed necessary, should be coordinated through and approved by the Planning Director, and professional service providers will not have a voting or membership role in the Workgroup.

Notwithstanding the priorities just mentioned, any individual who has an interest through residence, property ownership, or commercial operations is eligible to serve as Workgroup member to represent that interest, subject to the NP&EDC's approval of their Workgroup membership.

The guidelines we are developing are intended to make the Workgroups aware of the resources available to them, reduce their administrative burden, and understand the requirements of the laws that apply to them. Some of the comments claimed some guidelines were "unworkable". These comments are important to follow up on to determine if changes to the guidelines or additional resources are necessary from the NP&EDC to enable the Workgroups to function effectively. The guidelines are also meant to establish a standard process for every Area Plan Workgroup to follow, which has not happened in the past, while still allowing the NP&EDC to tailor the process to suit the individual circumstances, needs, and resources of each neighborhood.

-Mary Longacre, Chair, NP&EDC

Submitted by: Nickesha Sheriff

Director of Planning Leslie Snell emphasized the importance of clarifying that the guidelines were intended to ensure consistency across all area plan work groups. She stressed that the guidelines aim to guarantee compliance with the open meeting law and the boards and committees manual, not to hinder public comment or discourage participation. Leslie wanted to dispel any confusion and assure the public that the commission welcomes and encourages public participation. The goal is to ensure that involvement is conducted in a legal and compliant manner with applicable state laws.

Charles Stott, co-president of the Nantucket Civic League, conveyed the concerns and requests of the league regarding the proposed area plan guidelines. He mentioned that remarks from at least five neighborhood associations, out of the 25 within the league, expressed questions and concerns about the guidelines. The Civic League, representing around 2,000 members, requested a deferral of consideration for the proposed guidelines and urged the Planning and Economic Development Commission (NPEDC) to meet with them before any action on the guidelines.
Mr. Stott highlighted that the Civic League, along with several associations, sought to assist local communities in understanding the area planning process in relation to the Town Master Plan.
They requested a presentation and explanation of the guidelines for the Civic League and local association leaders before meaningful comments could be made. The league requested the inclusion of citations to statutory or regulatory requirements and the rationale for discretionary policy provisions in the guideline presentations. To facilitate broader access, he suggested conducting the meeting on Zoom, recording it for availability on the NCTV Channel, and providing information to those unable to attend. He emphasized that neither the Civic League nor the area association leaders possessed expertise in the town's local area planning process and requested an updated presentation by planning officials responsible for implementing the process.

Bruce Mandel, representing the Madaket Area Plan Work Group, highlighted concerns about the proposed area plan guidelines. He mentioned that several dozen comments had been submitted based on the draft guidelines, expressing hope that the commissioners had a chance to review them. He emphasized that the comments were posted only a few days prior, and there were additional documents posted with comments.

A major concern raised by Bruce Mandel was the lack of training provided to neighborhood groups, including the Madaket Area Plan Work Group, on the open meeting law and its requirements. He noted that there had been no training on this matter for their groups, despite discussions about them being considered as quasi-employees or subgroups of the NPEDC. Bruce compared this situation to volunteering at various town organizations, where HR courses and exams are typically required.

Bruce Mandel pointed out the complexity of the open meeting law guidelines, with hundreds of pages and certification requirements. He mentioned that they had been provided with links to lengthy YouTube presentations about the open meeting law but hadn't had the opportunity as a group to go through them. He highlighted the need for clarification on whether their workgroups are considered town employees and emphasized the importance of understanding the open meeting law before being asked to comply with it.

Bruce Mandel expressed support for the request to defer any vote on the guidelines, echoing the sentiment that the process is complicated and requires time for thorough understanding. He emphasized the need for a class or presentation about the open meeting law to ensure compliance and requested that the commissioners, having reviewed the submitted comments, engage in discussions with the Madaket Area Plan Work Group concerns and questions.

Chair Longacre expressed agreement with Bruce Mandel's comments, acknowledging the challenges posed by the complexity of the open meeting law and the responsibility of volunteers to familiarize themselves with its requirements. She mentioned that the town provides resources for this purpose, and individuals typically submit a statement certifying that they have reviewed those resources. Ms. Longacre also highlighted that one of the reasons for the proposed guidelines is to ensure awareness of these responsibilities and consistent compliance across all groups. She clarified that the guidelines aim to address concerns and misconceptions raised in the comments. Having read through all 59 pages of comments twice, Chair Longacre acknowledged the importance of incorporating valid points into the guidelines. Regarding the Madaket Area Plan Work Group, she expressed a willingness to schedule a meeting with Leslie and Mr. Mandel, along with a couple of people from the Madaket Area Plan Work Group, to discuss how the guidelines will apply to their specific circumstances. Chair Longacre emphasized the goal of flexibility, allowing each group to customize its approach based on its unique situation.

Joe Topham shared insights into the challenges faced by the Madaket Area Plan Work Group, highlighting the initial surprise and need for education when the proposed guidelines were introduced. He mentioned that in 2006, the Madaket Area Plan Work Group was able to work more freely, and the introduction of formal guidelines caught them somewhat off guard.

Joe Topham emphasized the importance of providing education on the open meeting law, acknowledging that the links provided may seem substantial. He mentioned reaching out to Erica Mooney at the Town Administration's office for assistance and passing along the links to Bruce Mandel. Mr. Topham also mentioned that Erica Mooney is working on a solution, possibly involving a seminar similar to the one conducted by Laura Goldberg from Copan and Page in 2006. He praised Goldberg's seminar as fantastic, covering a range of topics including Robert's Rules, and recommended that everyone involved with the town attend. While recognizing the need for a bit more formality and adherence to town guidelines, Joe reassured that the work done to date wouldn't be undone. He proposed swearing in individuals and organizing a presentation by Laura Goldberg to provide clarity on various aspects, including the open meeting law. Mr. Topham encouraged widespread attendance, suggesting that the information presented would be highly beneficial for anyone associated with the town. He also commended Bruce Mandel for his efforts in steering the Madaket Area Plan Work Group through the challenges and emphasized the positive turn of events in their favor.

David Ernst raised two related questions. Firstly, he inquired about the practical effects of completing all the local area plans. Specifically, he wanted to understand if these plans would drive regulations and what enforcement mechanisms would be attached to them. Essentially, he sought clarity on the tangible outcomes and impact of the extensive work put into developing these plans. Secondly, Mr. Ernst asked about the urgency to complete the local area plans and the envisioned timeline going forward. He wanted to understand the reasons for expediting the process and the expected schedule for completion. This question aimed to shed light on the overarching goals and priorities associated with the planning efforts.

Chair Longacre responded to David Ernst's questions, explaining that in a manner of speaking, area plans are never truly "done." They remain available for updates as circumstances warrant, allowing for ongoing adjustments. One issue that was brought to her attention through the comments was that area plans have been taking years to complete, which poses a challenge as more areas express interest in developing plans. Regarding the practical effects and enforcement mechanisms, Chair Longacre did not provide a detailed response but indicated a need for discussion with the Director of Planning to explore ways to facilitate more rapid development of area plans. As for the urgency and timeline for completing the plans, Chair Longacre noted that there is currently no specific timeline, and the process is more needs-based. She then called on Leslie Snell to provide further information and address additional questions.

Leslie Snell provided clarification on the nature of area plans, explaining that they are advisory rather than regulatory. These plans follow the same format as the master plan but operate at the neighborhood level. The goal is to impact decision-making across all town boards, committees, and offices. Leslie gave examples of how recommendations from area plans have influenced zoning changes, transportation improvements, and infrastructure developments. She emphasized that these plans provide an opportunity for the community to voice its concerns and preferences. In response to the question about urgency and timeline, Leslie stated that there isn't a specific timeline at the moment. Recent area plans have experienced delays, partly due to reduced staff support for these initiatives. Leslie acknowledged the need for a discussion between herself and Chair Longacre, to explore ways to provide more support and move the plans forward in a timely manner. The goal is to ensure that area plans are completed efficiently and effectively.

Lynn Filipski, the past chair of the Sconset Civic Association, shared insights based on her experience and provided suggestions for the planning process. She emphasized the advantages of involving civic associations, stating that they often have extensive contacts and relevant experience in interfacing with various town departments. Ms. Filipski highlighted the importance of including civic associations from the beginning, as they can bring valuable resources, such as surveys and local knowledge, to the planning process. She urged a reconsideration of the composition of planning committees, suggesting that civic associations, Land Bank, Nantucket Conservation Foundation, and other relevant entities should be at the table, reflecting the diverse interests of the community. She pointed out that civic associations often have more resources than the planning department can provide, such as creating survey tools to gather information from residents. She acknowledged the efforts to formalize the process but expressed concerns about the challenges posed by a fixed committee size and the potential impact on the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Lynn advocated for flexibility in the planning process, considering the unique characteristics and challenges of each area. She suggested a hybrid approach that combines the planning department's ideas with the successful elements from other civic associations' responses. Lastly, Ms. Filipski emphasized the importance of considering the complexity of each area, such as conservation, coastal resiliency, population, and traffic, when determining the planning process. She encouraged a thoughtful and responsive approach that accommodates the specific needs of each area. Overall, Lynn Filipski highlighted the need for a nuanced and adaptable planning process that involves the various stakeholders in each community.

Chair Longacre clarified that there is no intent to remove or restrict neighborhood associations from the planning process. She emphasized the importance of neighborhood associations in providing local contacts, community knowledge, and representing various interests in the area. The goal is to continue involving residents, conservation landowners, business owners, and other stakeholders in the planning process. Chair Longacre addressed any impression that may suggest a change in the involvement of neighborhood associations. She made it clear that the intent is to continue the process largely as it has been done in the past, with a strong emphasis on local engagement. However, she stressed the importance of conforming to open meeting law, emphasizing that there is no flexibility on that aspect as it is a legal requirement. The guidelines are intended to inform people about the resources that the NPEDC will make available to support work groups in the planning process. These resources include Survey Monkey accounts and other survey software, along with additional assistance from the NPEDC to ensure that work groups have the necessary support and are not working in isolation. Chair Longacre underscored the message that the NPEDC is there to help work groups navigate the planning process effectively.

Wendy Hudson expressed her interest in understanding the relationship between the area plans and the master plan. She initially believed that completing many area plans before the master plan process was a goal but sought clarification on this point. Wendy then shared her perspective on the importance of community involvement, recalling the positive impact of past master plan efforts that involved public meetings at the high school. She suggested considering a similar approach to gather people and promote community engagement, acknowledging the challenges of virtual meetings but expressing a preference for in-person interactions. Wendy directed her question to Leslie Snell and Chair Mary Longacre, seeking clarification on how the area plans align with the master plan and also expressing curiosity about the upcoming master plan process and its timeline.

Vice Chair Barry Rector addressed Wendy Hudson's question and clarified the relationship between the area plans and the master plan. He emphasized that while the master plan does rely on information extracted from area plans, the two are independent of each other. If the master plan were dependent on having all area plans in place, it would take an impractical amount of time, possibly more than 10 years. Mr. Rector highlighted that the master plan and area plans function independently and serve different purposes. While both processes encourage public engagement, their areas of focus can differ. The master plan looks at a holistic view of the island, considering various aspects like transportation on a broader scale, whereas area plans drill into specific subsects of the island. Barry also mentioned that there is a generating myth that the two planning processes are intimately locked to each other, which he dispelled. He explained that the master plan and area plans utilize information from different sources and serve distinct functions within the overall planning framework.

Leslie Snell provided further clarification on the timing and relationship between the area plans and the master plan. She mentioned that it would be beneficial if ongoing updates to area plans could be completed before the master plan update is finished, but she emphasized that the two are not highly dependent on each other in terms of timing. Leslie informed that the Planning Board has voted to endorse the recommendation for a consultant, Judy Barrett and her Planning Group, to update the master plan. The process for the master plan update is anticipated to take around a year, with the possibility of it being a little more or less. Leslie mentioned that the timeline includes significant public engagement, leveraging the increased public interest and comments observed during recent updates like the long-range Transportation plan. Overall, Leslie Snell highlighted the intention to have area plans and the master plan work together effectively, acknowledging the interconnectedness of the two planning processes while ensuring that they proceed independently in terms of timing.

C. Ongoing Discussion – Enabling Legislation

1. Membership Positions

Chair Mary Longacre explained that the discussion at hand was at the brainstorming level, emphasizing that the listed organizations were not yet approached or invited, and no individual representatives had been identified. The purpose was to generate ideas for potential roles that could be beneficial to the membership of the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NPEDC). She presented a list of organizations currently represented on the NPEDC, followed by a list of potential positions for consideration. Mary sought input from the Commissioners regarding additional suggestions for groups that might be beneficially represented in the NPEDC or other ideas on how to proceed with the discussion on this topic.

Wendy Hudson shared her thoughts on the potential inclusion of a businessperson in the NPEDC. She raised the question of whether the Chamber of Commerce was considered to represent the business community or if they were a token representation. Chair Mary Longacre clarified that the brainstorming was at a preliminary stage, and there hadn't been a specific decision about including a representative from the Chamber of Commerce. Wendy also mentioned the question about the other boards and committees that NPEDC members were currently on and wondered if the list was exclusive to NPEDC-related roles or if it included other organizations. Mary acknowledged the question but deferred further discussion on that topic, asking Wendy to remind her later so they could address it appropriately.

Nat Lowell expressed his view on the discussion, emphasizing the importance of having a representative from the Land Bank on the NPEDC. He suggested that there might not be a need to set a specific number of representatives but agreed that the Land Bank should be included as a member. Mr. Lowell found Wendy Hudson's point about various organizations interesting and mentioned the challenge of picking one without excluding others. He proposed finding a neutral way for one person to cover multiple organizations. Regarding the "at-large" positions, Nat suggested keeping them as they are with three representatives elected each year.

Wendy Hudson shared her perspective, suggesting that the Civic League could be a valuable organization to consider for representation on the NPEDC. She also pointed out that, as an At-Large member, she indirectly represents the business community. Wendy emphasized the value of maintaining flexibility in considering representation from different segments of the community.

Chair Mary Longacre emphasized the point made by Wendy Hudson, stating that even if a dozen members from various organizations are not added to the NPEDC, the list can still be used as helpful criteria for selecting at-large members. She mentioned the possibility of inviting organizations to select a candidate for an at-large position and using the list as evaluation criteria for at-large members. Mary also highlighted the flexibility in utilizing these criteria, such as inviting people to attend meetings to offer their perspective on relevant agenda items. The primary goal is to identify areas of the community where representation would be beneficial.

Commissioner Barry Rector shared several considerations. First, he highlighted the importance of being careful with the number of members on the commission due to quorum requirements. A larger commission might face challenges in meeting quorum requirements, potentially hindering its ability to conduct business effectively. Secondly, Rector emphasized the regional aspect of the commission's role as a regional planning agency. When considering potential members, it's essential to look at how they interact with other regions, such as Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard, and even Franklin County. Thirdly, he expressed a concern about the commission becoming too expansive and potentially overshadowing existing workgroups. While advisory roles for certain groups might be appropriate, integrating them continuously into the commission might not align with the commission's main mission. Lastly, Rector discussed the challenges associated with having staff members from town departments, such as the DPW director, on the commission. This approach proved problematic in the past, particularly concerning matters like contracts for the director.

Chair Longacre appreciated Barry Rector's insights and acknowledged the value of exploring ways for participation beyond strict membership. She emphasizes the importance of remaining in a brainstorming mode to identify the best approaches for serving the community. Longacre encouraged commissioners to consider various possibilities for involvement, recognizing that membership is just one avenue and that public participation through meetings and comments is crucial. This reflects an open and collaborative approach to exploring different ways the commission can effectively engage with and benefit the community.

Bruce Mandel raised two points. First, he inquired about the possibility of the public providing comments or suggestions regarding the proposed list of entities for NPEDC representation. He specifically mentions concerns about some entities that have posed challenges in past collaborations. Second, he references a potential town meeting article that addresses the composition of NPEDC and asks how its passage might affect the proposals outlined in the document.

Chair Mary Longacre acknowledged Bruce Mandel's question about the public providing comments or suggestions on the proposed list of entities for NPEDC representation. She expressed a willingness to open the discussion to public input, considering it valuable for best representing the community. She clarifies that it's not a vote or a popularity contest but an opportunity for nominations and suggestions. Additionally, she mentioned that the planning department will issue a public call for nominations, making the process more inclusive and gathering diverse perspectives from the community.

Wendy Hudson emphasized the importance of balancing different sides of the community in the regional planning process. She suggests that the airport's perspective is valuable, particularly in discussions related to transportation. Hudson also reiterates the significance of considering the historical component, noting the tension between expanding the airport and preserving the island's history. Additionally, she expresses a desire to incorporate joint meetings with other groups, such as the Select Board, into the structure. Hudson proposes a more formalized calendar for these interactions, ensuring that various voices are heard, even if they are not formal members of the NPEDC.

Dave Iverson expressed his comfort with the current list of potential roles and organizations for NPEDC representation. While acknowledging that there might be additional considerations or roles to include, he notes that, for the moment, he is satisfied with the list. Dave suggested the possibility of having a representative from the Steamship Authority, although the current representation through Nat Lowell fulfills that aspect.

Seth Engelbourg suggested considering an alternative approach to the structure of the NPEDC by focusing on at-large members rather than strictly delineating designated positions tied to specific boards or organizations. He proposed having reserve positions for individuals with diverse backgrounds, such as business, transportation, historic preservation, and elder services. Seth emphasizes that this approach could allow for greater flexibility and broader democratic input from regular citizens in the commission.

Chair Mary Longacre expressed appreciation for Seth Engelbourg's suggestions and notes the possibility of identifying informal groups or minority designations that may not have a formal organizational structure. This could be considered as a way to ensure representation for parts of the population without specific formal organizations.

John Trudel expressed a concern about having too many people on the board, emphasizing the challenge of reaching a quorum with multiple members. He suggests streamlining the representation to avoid dilution and potential inefficiencies, using examples such as overlapping goals between different commissions and boards. Trudel proposes condensing the representation by selecting qualified individuals with diverse backgrounds and interests.

Barry Rector expressed a desire to finalize the discussion on the composition of the commission by the next month. He acknowledged the upcoming holidays and the potential distraction they might bring but emphasizes the importance of addressing this matter sooner rather than later. Rector suggests aiming for closure on this topic in the upcoming month to avoid carrying it into the next year.

Submitted by: Nickesha Sheriff

Chair Longacre suggested the idea of having a representative, possibly not a member but in some other capacity, from off the island, using the Martha's Vineyard Commission as an example. Longacre emphasized that this is an extreme example and not an endorsement, but rather a way to illustrate the concept. She sought the thoughts of the commission on whether there could be an appropriate role for an off-island representative to provide a perspective on what's happening in other regions.

Nat Lowell expressed appreciation for the idea of having some representation or connection with Barnstable, recognizing its significance as a transit point for many goods and services for Nantucket. He suggested considering a representative from Barnstable in some capacity, perhaps through the Town Manager or another role, though he emphasizes that it doesn't necessarily need to be directly related to the Planning Commission.

Seth Engelbourg pointed out that there might be a legal issue with having non-residents as voting representatives on the Commission. He suggests submitting a request for legal services to clarify this issue before engaging in a policy discussion on the matter.

Barry Rector suggested re-engaging with the Martha's Vineyard Commission and possibly the Barnstable Commission. He highlighted the benefits of setting up separate meetings, utilizing Zoom for convenience, and working with staff to create an agenda for discussions between the different commissions.

Wendy Hudson suggested considering public-private partnerships and incorporating a local voice, possibly from organizations like the Nantucket Community Foundation or individuals like Carlisle "Chip" Gillespie, who are experienced in envisioning funding from different sources and accelerating certain projects through donations. She emphasizes the value of such partnerships in moving projects forward.

Joe Topham agreed with the suggestion to reach out to the Martha's Vineyard and Barnstable Commissions, expressing interest in coordinating and discussing shared goals. He acknowledged the need for further consideration of the list of potential members but aims to make progress and potentially finalize decisions in the next month or two.

VII. Other Business

A. Next Meeting Monday, November 20, 2023 at 5pm, via Zoom

VIII. Adjournment

John Trudel made a motion to adjourn the meeting and the motion was duly seconded by Joe Topham and the motion was carried unanimously.

<u>Vote taken by Roll Call:</u>

Wendy Hudson *Aye*
Dave Iverson *Aye*

Submitted by: Nickesha Sheriff

Nat Lowell *Aye*
Joe Topham *Aye*
Seth Engelbourg *Aye*
Kristie Ferrantella *Aye*
Vice-Chair Barry Rector *Aye*
Chair Mary Longacre *Aye*
Dawn Hill Holdgate *Aye*
John Trudel *Aye*

Links to the documents included in the Meeting Packet:

1. 10.23.23 NPEDC MEETING POSTING.PDF
2. 08-21-2023 NPEDC DRAFT MINUTES - NS.PDF
3. TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM MANAGER UPDATE.PDF
4. AREA PLAN GUIDELINES DRAFT.PDF
5. NPEDC MEMBERSHIP SUGGESTIONS.PDF

Submitted by: Nickesha Sheriff