Town of Brookline Planning Commission
Minutes

Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at 6:00 PM
At Town Office and via Zoom

Committee Members Present:

In Person: Mike DeSocio (MD); Stanley Noga, Jr., (SN), Chair of the Commission

Via Zoom: Jon Harris (JH), Leah Daly (LD)

Members of the Public: None

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Note: video recording unavailable at the beginning of the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 PM by Stanley Noga who noted a quorum was present.

The Commission reviewed discussion from the previous meeting and key points on the planning process provided by Matt Bachler of Windham Regional Commission.

MD and SN discussed the Commission's role in the process, which will be largely to review work completed by the Windham Regional Commission (WRC). The Commission noted the Select Board has approved up to $5,000 to be paid to WRC to support development of the Brookline Town Plan (Plan).

Leah Daly joined the meeting at 6:16pm.

MD recapped the Commission's role and previous meeting discussion for the benefit of LD..

The Commission reviewed planning timelines, noting major work will run through mid-December. The Select Board will need to review and approve the Plan on March 18, 2026.

The Commission discussed the proposal from WRC to complete planning work and the contract that had been shared via email for consideration. The Commission reviewed who would sign the contract and where there was the potential for overage. SN noted the proposal differs from past contracts with WRC in its form.

The Commission discussed its focus on reviewing areas of the past plan where town sentiment or other facts have changed materially.

In discussing hazard mitigation, SN noted that he could confirm with MB whether and how we would be incorporating that detail into the draft 2026 Plan. MD said that MB had specifically noted he should make edits to the Plan to avoid version control issues. MD also noted that MB could schedule a session with Majorie Ray to gather much of the tactical updates that are needed.

JH asked for clarification on whether we would seek to revise the plan again in the near future given this will be a minimal update. Specifically, would we seek to use the grant writer the Town has engaged to look for grant funding for an updated, or more fully updated, plan in the future?

MD confirmed he believed more material updates would require grant funding. He did not believe the current Commission had an appetite for that.

The Commission re-reviewed the agenda and discussed whether they would like to provide feedback on the 2018 Plan and areas that would require additional updating.The Commission agreed to share updates that individual members have identified.

The Commission briefly discussed whether recording and transcription services were activated to best capture specific edits. SN was able to activate the recording.

The recording of the meeting began at 6:55pm.

SN provided the following suggested edits.

- Page 3, item E, Summary of Accomplishments since 2018 Town Plan
    - Update to reflect 2018 Plan
    - Delete purchase of Brookline Meeting House in the school building.
    - Add a large volume of road and culvert infrastructure improvements (Putney Mountain Road, Grassy Brook Road, Parker Road, HIll Road and Whitney Hill Road).
    - Condition and structural improvements to the meeting house and elementary school.
        - Meeting house improvements include windows, foundation, stone foundation to the annex portion of the meeting house, in-ground roof under north and south eaves
        - Elementary school improvements include heat pumps, tree removal and maintenance and other condition improvements.
        - Town of Brookline:

- Under Section F, the new Commission should be added, including former Chair, Donald Woodford. Further, the Plan could designate a month for the required reporting to the Select Board.
- Update survey date
- Section G: needs to be updated to reflect current survey results.Town of Brookline: MB will make these changes.

SN noted that the last plan included all comments received and that the Commission should discuss whether to include all comments again.I think we're now down to 540 instead of… 450 instead of 540, if I'm not mistaken.

SN noted that town demographic and population details needed to be updated.

On Page 23, SN noted that CSAs are no longer present.

The Town has upgraded the heating system at the Town Office.

Section V pertaining to education will need to be adjusted in light of the closure of the day care center in the former Elementary School.

With respect to transportation there are questions about the Stone Arch Bridge as well as whether we should have more budget for the highway department.

SN noted that the Town provides some support for fire services that may not be covered in the plan as drafted.

All links in the report should be checked.

We participate in the Municipal Roads General Permit, number 30-9040, program. The Town did adopt state codes and standards in 2019 and there is an inventory of roads. MD and SN discussed submission of form and payment for this inventory.

For solid waste disposal, the Town no longer used Triple T. Windham Solid Waste Management District picks up the materials, and then they are… those that are recycled are delivered to Casella.

On Page 40, SN noted he believes there are only two directors and would need to be updated. MD asked about the function of the school directors. MD asked whether those directors provide information back to the Town and SN confirmed they generally do not. SN provided the names of the directors.

Page 45, the flood maps are scheduled to expire and new maps will be in force in 2026. This will materially affect parts of town with many properties along Grassy Brook now considered in a floodplain. SN identified areas of town that may be affected.

LD asked when maps will be available and public. SN asked if new maps should be mentioned. This can be clarified with MB. MD noted it is an important piece of information and should be considered as it is closer to reality. MB likely has a response as this is an issue for several towns.

As part of the map review we were told they were confidential. This has come up as a topic in possible real estate acquisition and this material is confidential.

LD suggested tabling the discussion for the time being and getting advice from MB.

LD noted that the Commission will need to review the report closely to ensure all of the information we have about changes to the Town are adequately reflected.

LD noted the Commission could consider whether to include the “history of the town” section. While wanting to ensure it is not lost, that much detail is not required.

MD provided some additional observations related to whether the plan aligns with Town intent.

- Page 2, Goal 5 relates to expanding access to educational and vocational training opportunities, which may not be appropriate. SN noted he had the same thought. It both does not seem like a priority and would be very difficult to implement.
- Page 27, The town does not prioritize any interest in pursuing wind energy. We should consider removing that.
- Throughout, we should cut and paste anything related to the updated Disaster Hazard Mitigation plan.Town of Brookline: Probably it's very similar, but I would just, for ease of date, cut and paste it.

As we move through this plan there are a series of recommendations. The Commission discussed “policies” and “recommendations”. There was concern that we do not have tools to implement many of the statements from the last plan. A question for Matt would be are we supposed to include good ideas or only things we can act on.

- Page 41, telecommunication recommendations and review of new model ordinances does not seem appropriate for the Plan and it is not clear why it was included in the prior plan, unless it is required.

  LD noted that this relates to her greater confusion on the Plan as there are many things in the past plan that are ideas or action items without plans to execute sitting underneath. This also seems consistent with feedback on the last plan that noted limited direction on implementation.

JH: A lot of the work is land use and hazard mitigation, but there are also some themes related to services and some economic issues, such as the closing of the daycare. The question for the Commission may be whether we should note in the Plan how we plan to address that. What are the services we want? Should we find someone for the space? In other words, we don't have to only focus on land use but economic and service issues that may be more in our control.

We should identify concrete things that are going to happen and how we can address them, as best we can.

MD noted that the Town did not necessarily decide to obtain daycare, but that its location was more opportunistic. Therefore, it may not mean that we need to figure out how to replace it.

The Commission discussed the history of the location of the daycare following the school closure. The school initially rented the facility to the daycare and then wanted to sell the property. It was sold to the Town. Legislators were involved to work through some of the legal complexities involving the Department of Education and existing loans.

JH noted that it may have been opportunistic, but if it is an employer, the master plan may decide to address employment, services and town impact.

SN noted there is a state provision that notes towns should not compete with private providers and MD noted we do not provide services but own a building with a tenant.

The Commission noted it would be important to include something about the building in the Plan. It is a larger question of what the strategy for the building will be. There is a recommendation to relocate Town Hall to that building and repurposing on selling the current Town Hall.

JH noted that the Town Plan could envision building strategy but noted there may not be enough time now to do this. He asked whether this is the goal of the Town Plan. MD noted that ideally the Commission would spearhead an exercise to address Town facilities.

MD concluded his feedback.

LD noted she wanted to better understand what needed to be included so the COmmission doesn't make commitments it cannot keep or obligate other groups to actions they are not aware of. She used the example of a policy to "remove invasives" which seems difficult to action given it would be controlled by private landowners.

The Commission discussed invasives briefly.

LD noted it was important to be cautious on the recommendations since they are obligations and should be well socialized in advance.

MD noted that Matt specifically asked the Commission to specifically note areas the Commission no longer supports.

SN noted that there are certain parts of the planning that need to be included and this was a lesson in the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Matt should advise on this.

SN checked in with the Commission on the meeting agenda. We will meet on October 14th. October 28th may have conflicts with a Windham Regional County meeting. Matt will likely have a conflict.

SN noted that at the next meeting the background data and survey input would be added and updated. Matt will facilitate the next meeting and use it to obtain feedback.

MD also noted we can get his feedback on suggested removals.

SN noted that on June 26th of 2024, the State of Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development issued a memorandum to towns in the state of Vermont advising all towns of the 2024 legislative revisions affecting community planning and revitalization. SN offered to send it to everyone.

SN will be reaching out to Matt on some intermediate questions and setting the agenda for the next meetings. MD will be working on the contract with the Select Board. MD provided some additional detail on the contracting process. SN noted that his experience is that state entities require the Town to sign contracts first.

MD asked that the minutes be sent to Matt so he could see a record of the discussion. SN noted he had sent Matt the transcription from the last meeting.

LD asked if minutes were approved.

MOTION. MD made a motion to approve minutes from August 26th and September 9.

JH asked to approve separately since we did not participate in the September 9th meeting. The motion was withdrawn.

MOTION: SN made a motion to approve the minutes from the August 26th meeting. It was duly seconded by MD.

It was approved by SN, MD, JH with one abstention by LD who was not present at the meeting.

MOTION: SN made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 9th meeting.

SN noted it was not a formal meeting since quorum was not met as only SN and MD were able to participate. However, no decisions were made so minutes only reflect the nature of the discussion.

Motion withdrawn but will be posted as a record.

Hearing no other business, SN adjourned the meeting at 7:59pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Leah Daly, Secretary