

**Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee**  
**Meeting #11**  
**Zoom**  
**June 24, 2021**

**Members in attendance:** Karen Rousseau, Jeanette Rivera, Cassandra Whitehouse, Anne Gancarz-Vito, and Catherine Ratté

**City Staff in attendance:** Patrick McKenna, Nathan Moreau

**Consultants in attendance:** Jeff Davis, Nate Kelly

**Item #1: Introductions for New Members / Any fun news since we last met?**

- Introduced Cassandra Whitehouse who lives in Fairview and works at ISO New England
- Patrick went over the structure (agenda) of the meeting

**Item #2: Recap of Efforts Completed Since the Last Steering Committee Meeting**

- Patrick reviewed the efforts that have been conducted since the Steering Committee last convened.
- Horsley Witten has been writing extensively, weaving together all the data that's been collected into document chapters.

**Item #3: Review the Plan's Draft Chapters**

- Karen Rousseau
  - o On Page 2 of the Introduction: How are we going about doing it?
  - o Have we educated the elected officials on our current progress?
  - o **PATRICK** – Planning Department NEEDS to give the Electeds an update of the Plan's progress
  - o **PATRICK** – Perhaps adding an 'Interested in Getting Involved/Volunteering' page on the City's website to channel interested participants to our planning process and other city ventures
- Jeanette Rivera
  - o Would like to see transparency mentioned earlier
  - o Feels as though when you're on the City of Springfield's website you are able to get a lot more details on current happenings and processes from permitting to volunteering. We should make it easier to volunteer and get permits. This could be achieved through better transparency and communication.
- Jeff Davis
  - o This information is really part of Chapter 8 'Governing Well' that is currently in production.
- Nate Kelly
  - o Gave a general overview of the items included in Chapter 8 'Governing Well'
  - o Reviewed, generally, the status of the chapter's development
- Jeanette Rivera
  - o Need more City employees to ensure the City is able to effectively and efficiently conduct business, i.e. need more full-time lawyers in the law department
- Nate Kelly
  - o We know we're going to get resistance to requests like that – “We don't have the money”. For that reason, we know we need to get significant community engagement to get this done. It's breathtaking what currently gets done, but this doesn't mean that things can't be improved, more staff hired, and technology updates called for.
- Anne Gancarz-Vito
  - o Felt like the library was missing from this introduction. The library is far more expansive than a traditional library with a wide range of programming.
- Jeff Davis
  - o In our head we normally would put the Public Library in the City services chapter.

- After hearing Anne's comments, though, he thinks library services could fit nicely in Learning Together chapter as well as throughout the document.
- Anne Gancarz-Vito
  - Went over some of the many program offerings provided by the library and how under her and her colleague's new leadership the goal is to make the library more outward facing and welcoming. Trying to make the library the PEOPLES' library and a living resource!
    - History and cultural preservation – we have a local history room, archivists that work with the Bellamy House and the Historical Society
    - The library would like to be a community resource and mentioned earlier on this chapter
    - The library has lots of entertainment offerings, winter programs, concerts, teen groups, baby groups, very active in a way that's so much more than books
  - PATRICK / PLANNING TEAM – Talk with Anne to download her brain
  - PATRICK / PLANNING TEAM – Talk with Karen / Senior Center to download the program offerings that have expanded due to the pandemic
- Jeff Davis
  - Feel free to email us with any additional information, too
- Catherine Ratté
  - Mentioned the Chicopee Rapid Recovery Program that she and PVPC are working on with the City, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Transformative Development Initiative (TDI) Partnership for the Chicopee Center neighborhood.
  - One of the top recommendations from this project is for the city to move to electronic government so that there is one system that everyone knows, and that communication is focused on for improvement.
  - CATHERINE – will send a draft to the Horsely Witten team
- Jeanette Rivera
  - Thinking of housing costs and being proactive preparing for the future - would like to see this plan advocating for Community Land Trusts (CLT).
  - East West Rail - will impact housing for residents here - frame it as Chicopee residents deserve to stay in their homes if they choose - support land trusts and public private partnerships
- Cassandra Whitehouse
  - Chicopee needs a 'Welcome Packet' that reviews City services (great library, dynamic council on aging, municipal electricity and garbage, etc.) – it would be a great marketing tool and could help strengthen current groups and organizations in the City
- Nathan Moreau
  - Mentioned that the City used to have a "Good Neighbor Handbook" that would be given out to new residents – it would inform new residents about who they needed to interact with for specific reasons
  - NEEDS MORE INFO ON THIS
- Karen Rousseau
  - Is there a specific chapter that will focus on diversity, or is it the goal to have it woven throughout?
- Jeff Davis
  - Great effort to weave it throughout – it will also show up particularly strong in the 'Governing Well' chapter
- Nate Kelly
  - The 'Governing Well' chapter is turning into the most important chapter, and it will likely need to be reorganized to better capture the themes of diversity, transparency, and communication
  - We may move out of this chapter some of the discussion about core services (wastewater, water department, etc.) to keep it better focused on the themes that are immersing

- Karen Rousseau
  - We need to recognize and embrace diversity and pull it forward throughout this plan
- Patrick McKenna
  - PATRICK – should we get the plan translated into Spanish?
  - PATRICK – should we pull the Governing Well chapter to the lead chapter to capture the most readers?
- Nate Kelly
  - Thinks it a worthy discussion, thinking of rearranging where the Governing Well chapter sits in the plan
  - People won't read it front to back
  - Might be value in starting off big
  - The rearranging of draft chapters and subchapters is very normal in a plan development process
- Patrick McKenna
  - PATRICK – send out the chapter's layouts / themes along with the meeting minutes
- Cassandra Whitehouse
  - Would like to see concrete ways in which the school system could be improved – if we spend X amount of funds the system will improve in this way...
  - Trying to find ways for the City to partner with local universities to get 'free student labor' on projects, an example could be to have UMass students design a green infrastructure park...
  - Catherine mentioned that the Planning Department already partners with Universities, but other departments should look into ways they could use student partners to help propel them further
  - Patrick discussed how the green infrastructure project died at the Senior Center due to lack of in-house knowledge
- Anne Gancarz-Vito
  - Likes the layout of the chapters
  - It's easy to read – likes the bullet points
- Karen Rousseau
  - Agrees, thinks it would be understandable by most that read it
  - Likes the layout and it keeps the reader moving forward
- Catherine Ratté
  - Make sure people that live in Chicopee can stay in Chicopee – explore opportunities to buy distressed buildings and convert to housing (as well as open space, gathering spaces, etc.)
- Patrick McKenna
  - Issues that zoning needs to address – needs to be flexible, needs to evolve, avoid common pitfalls, make sure the principals are baked into this piece of it and then in the implementation piece (form based code)

**Item #4: Preview of the next chapters that are coming for next meeting!**

- TBD for the next meeting
- The remaining chapters for the Steering Committee's review are:
  - Chapter 3. Thriving Together
  - Chapter 4. Making a Home
  - Chapter 5. Promoting Health and Wellness
  - Chapter 6. Planning for a Sustainable Future
  - Chapter 7. Learning Together
  - Chapter 8. Governing Well

**Item #5: New Business/Discussion**

- How can we get more of the Steering Committee involved again for July / August?

- Dinner in-person?
- Outside at the Senior Center?
- **PATRICK** – get in touch with the Senior Center about availability
- Plan on reviewing 2-3 chapters (30 pages) at the max for the following meetings

**Item #6: Adjournment – Next Meeting – July 22, 2021**

- Tentatively at the Senior Center's outdoor patio – perhaps start a little earlier (closer to 6pm)
- Make sure that the meeting calendar invites have automated reminders
- Make sure the new members are included on the calendar invites