

Town of Sharon  
Master Plan Steering Committee  
Minutes of 6/20/18  
Sharon Community Center

MPSC	
Pasqualino Pannone	Signe Peterson Flieger
Chuck Levine	Susan Rich
Susan Drisko	Susan Price Town Staff

**CivicMoxie**

Susan Silberberg (CivicMoxie)	Marshall DeGarmo (CivicMoxie)
<b>Others</b>	
Rob Maidman	Gordon Gladstone
Herbert Gould	

Discussion of June 14th launch event. All agreed it was a successful event with a good turnout. Silberberg was pleased with the number of young attendees and said the kids had a good time but perhaps the area for small children should have been further from the adults but still visible to the parents.

Discussion of participants' Post It note priorities, survey results, and end of event comment forms.

Ms. Silberberg said CivicMoxie is sifting through the comments and notes from the tables and looking for themes. There were many comments re housing affordability, property taxes, commercial vitality and tax base. In the next survey, CivicMoxie wants to find out specifics of what people mean by the character of Sharon. They don't yet have a good sense of what the major issues and passions are besides the fiscal concerns. The survey will have to help with better defining the vision and priorities.

Mr. Levine asked how Sharon compares with other towns. Silberberg said that Sharon has higher taxes. Sharon may want similar things as other towns but it may differ as to whether they are willing to change zoning to allow it or fear tax or traffic or other impacts.

Mr. Pannone said that he thinks many comments about character have to do with aesthetics. Also teens need a place to hang out so they don't feel like they have to go to other towns. Need to create a community where people want to be. People want retail diversity and places to shop at different economic levels. Flieger said people like the diversity in Sharon and the schools but want something fun and different like a microbrewery.

Ms. Silberberg asked why is it that many in Sharon don't want change. Is there an issue of mistrust, have projects fallen through, or are they afraid of lowering property values? Discussion of past projects such as Sharon Commons, Sharon Woods/Cannon Forge, Wilber School, Rattlesnake Hill, Cobbs Corner, and Sacred Heart.

Mr. Maidman said there are challenges because so much land is protected or unbuildable, so many properties in the center of town are tax exempt, and the water and sewer issues. Another barrier to change is that zoning needs 2/3 vote.

Ms. Rich noted that many shops have been converted to office space.

Mr. Gladstone said that many people say "they should do something" but pointed out that Town Meeting allows for all of us to do something rather than depending on others to act. Silberberg said some towns have a packet for new residents which describe their role in town meeting style of government. Gladstone said there used to be a booklet like that. He will provide it to Price.

Ms. Rich said the Historical Society would like to develop an app that could lead users on a walking tour around Town.

Mr. Levine spoke about the feeling of community in Town but how there are also separate communities based on religion, geography, ethnicity. People say Sharon is safe and comfortable but the fear is that as people move out and others move in, we will end up where everyone in Town is from somewhere else. Flieger said there is not a united vision for the Town because some don't see themselves staying for the long term.

Ms. Silberberg said this process is proactive rather than reactive (like failed past projects). Maidman said Post Office Square project was proactive but people reacted in fear of "canyons" of buildings. He said the Town's specialty is the deferred decision.

Mr. Gladstone said the problem in the center of Town is septic and that property owners don't want to pay betterments to solve the situation.

Ms. Silberberg asked how people are educated about fiscal issues. The response was it is fragmented. She said there may be benefit to a fiscal education process.

Mr. Maidman said a key force in Town has been to keep 40Bs at bay. He noted the topography around the train station makes it difficult to increase the density in the way smart growth would encourage. Lack of density leads to lack of affordability.

Ms. Drisko asked whether some of the small houses can be counted as affordable in Town. Discussion of potential for more teardowns and construction of larger houses. Rich noted that the historic designations have no teeth to prevent teardown. Pannone noted there are a variety of housing sizes in Sharon.

Mr. Gould said the Town should clearly show the tradeoffs for residents on what their options are when they allocate spending on infrastructure versus other expenses like salaries for teachers. Need to lay it out in a timeline so we can see at what point we need to fund which things and also to show where the funding comes from - whether borrowing or taxes.

Ms. Silberberg said some trends are the same in many communities - that local businesses are struggling, population is aging, "my children can't afford to move back here," families versus other generations' priorities, and that many don't want change or to increase density but they want the things that can come with an increase in density. Different groups need to look at what are their common interests and mutual benefits. Example: if you allow an increase in density, maybe the sewage issue can be funded, which could result in an increase of desired walkable shops for residents.

Ms. Peterson Flieger said we need to break the cycle of people moving here for schools and then voting for buildings and then moving away.

CivicMoxie will continue to summarize the launch meeting results and will start building out a more extensive survey for early Fall.

Ms. Price discussed upcoming tabling opportunities including July 3 and Square Jam (August 2). Will create Sign Up Genius to get volunteers. Need table, chairs, maps, big bowl of candy, markers, papers for coloring. CivicMoxie to provide handouts/packets/brief surveys. Can also use at back to school events. CivicMoxie to provide more photos from June 14th for Price to post on social media.

CivicMoxie to meet with Town staff and department heads on July 10th. Next meeting of MPSC is July 18th.

Meeting adjourned 8:45pm.