

MAYOR
JEFFREY A. MACMILLEN

DEPUTY MAYOR
THOMAS ZAMPANO

TOWN MANAGER
MICHAEL P. DOWNES



COUNCIL MEMBERS
BRUCE ABELSON
ROSE MARIE ANGELONI
MARIE E. DIAMOND
WALTER GOAD
VINCENT J. MASE, SR.
NICHOLAS PALLADINO
RONALD PELLICCIA, JR.

TOWN OF NORTH BRANFORD

TOWN HALL, 909 FOXON ROAD, NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT 06471
TOWN MANAGER (203) 484-6000 TOWN HALL FAX (203) 484-6025

MINUTES BLUEPRINT COMMITTEE OF NORTH BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT

Thursday, October 26, 2023

**Smith Library – Northford
7:00 p.m.**

Vice Chairman Armin called the meeting to order at 7:03p.m.

- 1. Salute to the Flag**
- 2. Roll Call**

Present: Vice Chairman Armin, Member Jennifer Ash, Mayor Jeff Macmillen, Member Bonnie Symanski, Member Fleming, and Member Christopher Heon.

Not Present: Member Steve Torino, Chairman Zampano, Member Robert Nowak, Member Bruce Abelson and Member Melinda Fonda.

3. Approval of Minutes of September 28, 2023

Motion: Member Ash motioned to approve the minutes from September 28, 2023; seconded by Member Symanski

Discussion: None

With all in favor, the motion is passed.

Mayor Macmillen shared that this meeting is now a regular meeting vs a special meeting, so if we need to amend the agenda, we are able to do so.

Vice Chairman Armin wanted to amend the agenda to add the letter from Member Symanski.

Member Symanski shared her comments regarding the Blueprint meetings. Her feeling was that the purpose of the committee is to review studies done previously and recommendations and the studies were handed out and she had spent hours looking over them and they're not on the agenda.

Mayor Macmillen shared that the concern is going to be met. This is not a committee that is on the short term. There is a short-term goal to be reached, but not everything needs to be addressed all at once. The goal is to consistently be moving along and making recommendations. One of

the biggest problems in this town is that there doesn't seem to be enough unity. there should be someplace where we build that center type feel.

The first item to focus on is to make a main area of town to be constructed. If we are too wide, not enough will be done.

This town is at a crossroads where it will go in one direction or another. Right now, we are leaning towards the wrong direction, where there is no revenue, which can lead to higher mill rates, people don't want to buy in the town. We want to make this a town that will bring value to families.

Member Symanski asked if there are demographics of other shoreline towns. Mayor Macmillen said in the past there was a study done but this is a much older town vs some of the other shoreline towns. The economic basis of the town is very important. North Branford is a shoreline town but does not have any amenities. The purpose is to re-identify our town, safe, better school systems, more amenities, bring in more people who can pay taxes, and proper economic development. This town has not been very economically friendly. Member Symanski said there was a lot of talk about building a Technology Manufacturing Center. Mayor Macmillen said there were only 30 students who were interested in that being part of the school. Member Ash said there are many different paths within the high school, Auto shop, Industrial Arts, CAD CAM.

Member Symanski requested we should have more information on the demographics of the people who are moving here. Mayor Macmillen said there has been about 2% growth.

Vice Chairman Armin agrees that we should have a single goal in the short term and then be able to expand.

Member Ash and other members of the committee requested that Old Business be added to the next agenda.

4. New Business: Discussion & Action

a. Review & Approve Proposed Mission Statement

The committee discussed the proposed mission statement and collectively asked that Member Heon would make edits and abbreviate it and it can be voted on at the next meeting.

b. Discuss possible "Center Zone."

Mayor Macmillen said North Branford's Police station has always been near the Augur property. The initial builders of this town wanted there to be a center type zone. The old police station will be a home for something else, i.e., social services, the food pantry.

Member Symanski said her issue with the augur property is the Farm River watershed and the soil is shaky so building on it may not be the best idea. Mayor Macmillen suggested a riverwalk idea to be in that area.

Through much discussion between the members of the committee the goal should be to create specific zones.

c. Section of Forest Road where speed drops and there is a “StreetScape” section of the road

Member Heon stated that there is “low hanging fruit” available; land that can be built upon working around editing neighborhoods. This could increase the amount of people in town, more appealing to businesses. discussion regarding zones and districts. Mayor Macmillen shared that an outline could be made to include different areas that could be used for businesses, etc.

It would be helpful to have the committee get copies of a map of the town and try to figure out where the zones would be in the town and their usage.

Member Symanski shared that the low hanging fruit seem to be The Augur farm and 1599 Totoket Rd. The Town Council didn't want to lease or sell property.

Member Symanski shared that the RFP showed how the town does maintenance and that balance there. The Yale study that was done did address that.

Member Fleming stated that the first barrier in making a town center is there's no appetite by the community to pay more in taxes. How do we get to generate more revenue to be able to redeploy it to a broader vision. Vice Chairman Armin said while also accommodating the town's needs. One of the large needs in this town is housing.

If everyone agrees Yale study was well done this can be our launching point. and foundation and look at what study says and what can be done in the immediate future and where to go from there.

Member Symanski stated that one of the issues with transportation is there is no bus service in this town at all. Why would people want to move to this town with no amenities, etc.

Member Fleming stated that it seems there are many pockets of land that can be used for development and increase tax revenue and be able to use the revenue to create something. If we could shed 5-10 properties.

Member Fleming shared the best way to make a sale on a concept, is to give a solution to what is being proposed. increase tax base- for property and making revenue and what's the plan.

Mayor Macmillen shared that for the Yale study that was done 8 years ago, the students may no longer be there, but professors are still there. Someone could reach out and tell them it has been determined as a viable and workable study. Vice Chairman Armin asked them to revisit it as a class project and see if there's any revisions.

Member Symanski shared that it would be good to check in with Director of Public works Merola to see what spots would be best to sell. Member Fleming also researched some and checked some of the parcels as well.

Member Fleming shared that there are two lots on Totoket Road by Augur Ext. which were building lots.

Vice Chairman Armin shared that the committee's to-do list is to go through a list of properties and evaluate for recommendation.

Mayor Macmillen stated it is important for this committee to have a short-term goal with the Town Council as the report expected in March.

Member Ash shared; the committee could submit a proposal for the old Police Department building.

Member Symanski shared that a stretch goal would be for that government center. There is a very active Farm River group which is a spinoff group from Save the Sound.

Member Fleming said the conversation around the town center is not building on the river and having massive buildings. There was a photo of an idea, could we build around the old police station to make it a town service area, and add a sports field, and a multi-use field. Is there an opportunity to bring the Ambulance closer to the Police station?

Member Ash shared that there is town property on the river and most people don't know the trails are there. Member Fleming stated that this could be more accessible and for people to be knowledgeable about these trails.

Mayor Macmillen said we won't be able to build a town center like Guilford or Madison. It will be a town center like North Branford. The microcosms are great for families.

The more revenue that gets brought in, the more affordable everything can be.

Possible meeting was suggested in November with the committee and Director of Public Works Merola regarding land sites and planning.

5. Citizens Statement

6. Adjournment

Motion: Member Symanski motioned to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.; seconded by Member Ash.

Discussion: None

With all in favor, the motion is passed.