

**BEDFORD PLANNING BOARD
MINUTES
Town Hall—Selectmen’s Meeting Room
October 16, 2012**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jonathan Silver, Chair; Jeffrey Cohen, Clerk;
Sandra Hackman; Shawn Hanegan; and Lisa Mustapich

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Glenn Garber, Planning Director; Catherine Perry, Assistant Planner

STAFF ABSENT: Cathy Silvestrone, Admin Assistant

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AD HOC COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: David Cormier, Amy Hamilton,
Jaci Edwards, Sam Petrecca, Stephen Carluccio, Terry Gleason, Tom Kinzer, Suzanne Koller, Brian O’Donnell,
Carla Olsen

CONSULTANTS PRESENT: Kathryn Madden, Roberta Cameron

Jonathan Silver, Chair, convened the meeting at 7:30 PM

Emergency Evacuation Announcement read by Jeffrey Cohen, Clerk

Note: All submittals are available for review in the Planning Office

7:35 PM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SESSION: Joint meeting with Ad Hoc Advisory Committee

Glenn Garber introduced a discussion session on the Transportation element of the Plan. The staff and consultant team has prepared a draft plan chapter on this topic, following a similar structure to the previous Natural and Cultural Resources element. Copies were distributed. Director Garber commented that the transportation topic has involved significant data analysis, some of which has been placed in an appendix.

Kathryn Madden of the Madden Group thanked the Bedford Planning staff for its effort in preparing the Transportation element and then, acting as facilitator, presented a set of PowerPoint slides, first briefly reviewing the structure of the plan and then outlining the components of the draft transportation element: a snapshot page with key facts and graphics; a set of issues; a vision; a set of goals; three maps (focusing on the road network, transit services and pedestrian facilities); and strategies. The Ad Hoc Committee and Planning Board members discussed each of these components. Points raised in discussion are summarized below.

Snapshot

Board members asked about the calculation of the figure of 41% of roads having at least one sidewalk. Catherine Perry explained that it is a percentage of total road length, excluding Route 3.

Issues

Jaci Edwards mentioned that she has already had a discussion with Glenn Garber. Some of her suggestions have been incorporated in the latest version of the document. Ms. Edwards stressed that she considers the impact of traffic on the quality of life to be the prime issue.

Difficulties experienced by bicyclists and pedestrians: Several people wanted this chapter to focus on these more fully. Lisa Mustapich commented that sidewalks may not be needed on tertiary roads; also that it would be beneficial to give more consideration to the needs of bicyclists in road/ roadside design.

Relationship of in-town, commuter and pass-through traffic: Discussion of the sources of traffic, whether it is helpful to consider them separately, and the advantages and disadvantages of a being a big employment area. Some consensus on needing to maintain job strength but also quality of life; support for approaching employers about Transportation Demand Management (TDM); suggestions of traffic calming measures including design elements such as speed platforms and “neck-downs,” and police ticketing of bad drivers.

Discussion of personal choice and social/ cultural aspects of car use including experience with Safe Routes to Schools (slow shift in behavior, variety of reasons): Suggestion to identify prevalence of low occupancy vehicle trips as an issue to be addressed. Some support for trying to change attitudes; general agreement on offering choices and creating conditions that make publicly beneficial choices easier.

Discussion of history and physical infrastructure that have favored car dependence including neighborhood layouts, rural roots, gradual progression from easy driving to congestion, and gaps in safe pedestrian/ bike routes.

Vision

Planning Board members expressed support for the draft vision.

Terry Gleason suggested incorporating the phrase ‘mode shift’ as it has currency in state planning and funding circles, particularly looking ahead to 2030.

Jaci Edwards suggested adding a chart of village centers, job centers and corridors to help people identify what these concepts mean.

Goals

The nature of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process and Bedford’s role in the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) were discussed. It was noted that a continuing seat on the MPO cannot be guaranteed. The region relies on this process and this organization to divide federal highway funds.

Expansion of transit services was considered to be difficult, although Brian O’Donnell said that in past discussions, the MBTA has been open to accommodating more transit vehicles at Alewife as a hub.

Shawn Hanegan asked how the goals in the chapter can better express balancing the needs of different users. One way may be to revise the goal that relates to optimizing the operation of the road network.

Glenn Garber said he thought there was potential and a great need for more coordination of TDM in Bedford. David Carluccio mentioned that the Chamber of Commerce is looking into a shared shuttle service from Alewife to transport interns and employees to Bedford companies. This could be the start of a public/private partnership. Another suggestion was a shuttle to the train station in Concord, although it was acknowledged that the infrequent train service would make two-stage trips difficult.

At the regional level, Director Garber mentioned that a circumferential transit system around the west of Boston has been floated from time to time. Terry Gleason recommended linking in with groups formed around Route 128, and also mentioned a shuttle bus from Nashua to Hanscom that comes through Bedford. There was agreement that regional work on TDM/transit is worth pursuing.

Maps

Catherine Perry explained that the road network map shows a functional classification of roads within Bedford and US/state designations outside Bedford [The 11”x17” map is a little clearer than the inset map].The Route 3/ Route 62 intersection ramps and Network Drive/ Middlesex Turnpike Mitre Extension need to be shown.

The question of ‘cut through’ traffic was discussed; there was interest in how much traffic has neither its origin nor its destination in Bedford. Staff and consultants advised that complete data is not available but that many trips are coming to destinations in Bedford, especially jobs. Amy Hamilton said she thought the DPW did a study on the subject a while ago. Some people pointed out that traffic is at its heaviest on the local roads when there are back-ups on Route 3. Kathryn Madden suggested there may be some potential for traffic calming measures to influence drivers’ choice of routes.

The pedestrian facilities map prompted discussion of how to identify priorities or concepts to guide improvements to walkability. Some suggestions were: areas near the town center; near schools; and connections to major destinations. Brian O’Donnell mentioned that sidewalk projects currently being pursued by the Town are North Road, Concord Road from Hartwell to Hardy, and a small project at Hemlock. The North Road design was criticized for requiring pedestrians to cross from one side to the other, but it was noted that there were complications with utilities.

The Bay Circuit Trail was asked about; it is shown on the pedestrian facilities map, and in the municipal campus area there are markers on trees.

Terry Gleason talked about a green circuit/ greenways concept for Bedford that has been put forward with a vision map and has received some discussion. It was noted that caution needs to be exercised in publicizing existing informal links or potential links across private land, where the owner’s cooperation will be important.

Strategies

Sandra Hackman suggested strengthening the wording on the need for Bedford to participate in regional work on transit and transportation planning.

Carla Olsen described some of the activities undertaken in connection with the Safe Routes to Schools program: parent surveys, bike safety training (beginning at the elementary schools), and work for a grant application tied in with health issues. The roles of education and incentives in encouraging walking, biking, use of school buses and carpooling were discussed, as well as the reasons some parents prefer to transport their children in the family car. Amy Hamilton stressed that there are still many places where walking and biking routes are not safe, and crossing guards are sometimes removed.

Kathryn Madden reminded people that resources such as staffing will have to be weighed in refining strategies for the implementation plan/ action items.

Ms Madden asked if there was a need for any new road connectors. The potential extension of Wiggins Avenue was raised, with the comment that it has been discussed for a long time and one question is whether it would encourage cut through traffic. Terry Gleason spoke in favor of a greenway/ bikepath link from Wiggins Avenue to the Great Road.

The potential for more pedestrian friendly development along Middlesex Turnpike was raised for discussion. Sandra Hackman asked about the legal tools available to achieve pedestrian/ bike links. Easements cannot be required as conditions of regular development permits, but perhaps can be tied to bonuses such as increased density. Similarly TDM measures can be tied to levels of development. Participants felt that it could be constructive to set a vision for an area to benefit all users, and hold discussions with landowners to try to develop consensus and cooperation.

Data

The following additions to data were suggested:

Comparison data for other towns or wider areas, if feasible within staff capacity;

School enrolment numbers, and car passes at the high school;
Add Hanscom to traffic generators.

Next Steps

Advisory Committee members were thanked for their participation. Committee and Board members were invited to send any further thoughts to Glenn Garber or Catherine Perry by phone or email.

Economic Development and Housing will be the next topic elements to develop. After that, there will be Facilities/ Services/ Energy, and Land Use. The Board may wish to make time for a further discussion of Natural and Cultural Resources with the Ad Hoc Committee. A synthesis stage will be needed once all the topics have been through a first draft and discussion.

The next meeting has tentatively been set for November 27.

9:05 PM STAFF REPORT

Director Garber gave a brief verbal update on the following items:

- 1) 36 Middlesex Turnpike – a site plan review is likely to be scheduled in November.
- 2) Freedom Estates – there is an ongoing issue over an easement and a fence.
- 3) 285 Great Road restaurant – an application has not yet been filed with the ZBA.
- 4) 54 Loomis Street – the developer has not confirmed if he intends to pursue the current proposal at the scheduled continuation date of October 26 or withdraw the application. Director Garber will inquire.

OTHER BUSINESS

Board of Selectmen/ Chamber of Commerce discussion

Jeff Cohen reported from a recent meeting of the Board of Selectmen at which the Chamber of Commerce presented ideas for economic development goals. The Chamber representatives were encouraged to have an input to the Comprehensive Plan and to continue to refine their goals.

HATS (Hanscom Area Towns Committee)

Lisa Mustapich reported that there is a meeting on Thursday October 18th at which the potential BRAC will continue to be discussed. Due to the current scheduling of HATS, Ms. Mustapich has frequent conflicts with the Sign Bylaw Committee meetings; however, Selectman Michael Rosenberg attends. Ms. Mustapich will suggest that he talk with the Planning staff to keep them updated and discuss issues.

Next Meeting

The next Planning Board meeting will be on October 30th. Jeff Cohen reported that he is unable to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Lisa Mustapich, seconded by Jeff Cohen, the committee voted to adjourn at 9:50 PM.

Minutes submitted by Catherine Perry