



Town of Ashland , Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting (Hybrid)

Ashland Public Library
66 Front Street
Ashland, MA 01721
May 15, 2025, 7:00 PM
Meeting Minutes (*Draft*)

Present:

Town Manager:	Michael Herbert
Sustainability Project Manager:	Samantha Riley (absent)
Select Board Representative:	Brandi Kinsman
Select Board Representative:	Yolanda Greaves
Planning Board Representative:	Catherine Jurczyk
Planning Board Representative:	Anna Tesmenitsky
Library Trustee's Representative:	Claire Goss
Open Space and Recreation Representative:	Roberta Soolman
Sustainability Committee Representative:	Chuck Lidz (absent)
Affordable Housing Trust Representative:	Alan Galiwango (absent)
Board of Health Representative:	Ed Burman
Cultural Council Representative:	Stacey Grant Lewis
Historical Commission Representative:	Karen Coleman
Ashland Upper Charles Trail Committee Representative:	Tony Lewis
Conservation Commission Representative:	Carl Hakansson (absent)
Council on Aging Representative:	Steve Mitchell (remote)
Econ Dev Advisory Committee Representative:	Beth Reynolds
ZBA Representative:	(Open Seat)
School Committee Representative:	Mike Caira (absent)
Town Forest Committee Representative:	Cara Hulme
Design Review Committee:	Bill Novakowski (absent)
Precinct 1:	Jacob Coolberth
Precinct 2:	Leah Suarez
Precinct 3:	David Evancho

Precinct 4:
Precinct 5:
Precinct 6:
High School Representative:

Aroon Manoharan
Rajashree Ghosh
Lisa Churchill (absent)
Hasini Reddy (absent)

Members of the public

Mark Dassoni

Call meeting to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM.

Facilitate discussion on Strategies list

Committee Member Yolanda Greaves served as facilitator for this meeting. Ms. Greaves explained that the Committee will be reviewing the updated Strategies List as amended by the Subcommittee.

- **3.D.6. Amend the Zoning Bylaw to extend the Ashland Downtown District sub-area C to include the Summer Street-Union Street-Main Street triangle and the existing Neighborhood Commerce district along Union Street, to promote an extension of mixed-use vibrancy downtown at a limited density.**

The Subcommittee had recommended deleting this strategy. A majority of the Committee Members voted to refine this strategy to expand the area.

- **3.D.7. Create a Smart Growth and Land Conservation Plan with goals and metrics to balance development with conservation, financial considerations for acquisitions, and long-term maintenance plans for open space properties.**

The Subcommittee recommended that this Strategy have a defined public participation and input component. The Committee discussed the Open Space and Recreation Plan partially covering this. Committee agreed to delete this Strategy.

- **4.A.1. Create and implement a town beautification plan with 10-15 places aligned with community crowd map data. (Goldson to add list from crowd map and public feedback- to be reviewed by the Committee) Combine both public and private investment in publicly accessible spaces. Work with groups such as but not limited to: Ashland Business Association, the Design Review Committee, the Garden Club, and downtown business and property owners.**

The Subcommittee had recommended choosing 10-15 locations around Town based on the community crowd map data. The Committee revised the language and agreed that Goldson and the Committee will review the list of locations.

- **4.A.5. Explore and adopt Tax Increment Financing per MGL c.40 s.59 and develop a TIF Plan to direct a portion of the tax increment funds to support beautification, community events, and infrastructure improvements Downtown.**

The Committee agreed with the Subcommittee's recommendation to create a fund toward Town beautification, community events, and infrastructure improvements.

- **4.A.9. Conduct periodic business needs assessments to ensure the Town's regulations and policies enable a diverse and sustainable local economy. Use surveys and focus groups, and consider contracting with a consultant to conduct market analyses to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities.**

The Committee agreed with the Subcommittee's recommendation to delete this Strategy.

- **4.B.1. Maintain an updated Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and regularly assess staffing and succession planning to ensure implementation capacity.**

The Subcommittee recommended developing a Capital Improvement Plan in accordance with the Town Charter having a resident committee. Ms. Greaves noted that, in the past, there was a Capital Improvement Committee which dissolved for various reasons; currently there is no Capital Improvement Committee in place. The Committee agreed with the recommendation.

- **4.B.2. Explore options for providing early childhood education and all-day pre-K at the Pittaway School.**

The Committee agreed with Subcommittee's recommendation to explore options for providing early childhood education at Ashland Public Schools with limited municipal budget impacts.

- **4.B.6. Continue to make necessary accessibility upgrades to public facilities based on the Town's 2021 ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan, and utilize funding from the MA Office on Disability.**

No changes to strategy.

- **4.C.2. Balance mitigation requirements of individual development projects with proactive town planning for infrastructure, ensuring that the Town and developers work together to maintain infrastructure capacity and foster sustainable growth.**

The Subcommittee recommended that water, sewer, and stormwater systems be evaluated to ensure they can accommodate for the projected growth. The Committee agreed for this Strategy to be removed.

- **4.C.7. Develop a viable plan to increase town sewer capacity.**

The Subcommittee recommended revising zoning so private development pays the cost of sewer impacts, and the Town build a wastewater facility. The Committee discussed increasing sewer connection fees and agreed to keep this Strategy as is.

- **4.D.1. Create a Water Access and Protection Plan that identifies priority actions and areas to sustainably expand public access to water bodies, promote sustainability and conservation, and project staffing needs for maintenance.**

The Subcommittee recommended coordinating with OSRP and assure water access in OSRP. The Committee agreed to leave this Strategy as is.

- **4.D.9. Continue to work with local environmental groups, universities, and citizen science initiatives to regularly monitor water quality at relevant locations and ensure safety for swimming and boating. Post regular water quality updates and advisories at public access points and on municipal websites.**

The Subcommittee recommended making local waterbodies safe for swimming, and advocating for other agencies to improve other bodies of water in Ashland. Mr. Herbert discussed Waushakum Pond and the strides being made as they start the

treatment process. The Committee agreed to add language regarding advocating to other agencies to improve other bodies of water in Ashland.

- **5.A.1. Prioritize Town funding and seek state and other grant funding for the Ashland Upper Charles Trail and Bay Circuit Trail projects, exploring opportunities to expand to additional trail sections.**

The Committee agreed with the Subcommittee's recommendation to complete the Ashland Upper Charles Trail and Bay Circuit Trail projects.

- **5.B.5. Contract with a consultant to update the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and maintain eligibility for grant funding on priority projects.**

The Subcommittee recommended deletion of this Strategy; the Subcommittee commented that the implementation of sidewalks does not need to be in the Comp plan. Ms. Greaves discussed the road work that has been completed through the Complete Streets Plan and funding from the State; there should not need to use a consultant again. The Committee agreed to revise the language to remove contract with consultant.

- **5.B.6. Use non-infrastructure strategies like transit training, particularly for seniors and youth, to reduce the barriers to using public transit and increase familiarity.**

The Committee agreed with the Subcommittee's recommendation to delete this Strategy.

- **5.D.2. Create corridor improvement plans for key corridors like Route 135 to build on ongoing and previous projects, as well as invite community input on new projects. This could include corridor branding and identity projects, public art projects and installations, and green infrastructure projects.**

By a majority vote, the Committee agreed to keep this Strategy for now and revise the language to 'Create corridor improvement plans for Route 135 to build on ongoing and previous projects, as well as invite community input on new projects.'

- **5.D.3. Expand the deployment of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) such as adaptive traffic signals, real-time traffic monitoring, and smart parking systems to optimize traffic flow and reduce congestion. Work to understand ongoing feasibility and appropriate long-term department responsibility for management.**

The Committee agreed with the Subcommittee's recommendation to delete this Strategy.

Ms. Greaves explained there are another set of Strategies that were removed by the Subcommittee, a Committee Member has asked that they be reviewed by the full Committee. The Committee agreed to continue the discussion at next Monday's meeting with Goldson.

Approve MoM from prior meeting

Ms. Soolman will send her amendments to the minutes; the Committee will vote on the minutes on Monday.

Public Comments

None.

Committee Comments

Ms. Grant-Lewis stated that tonight's meeting was collaborative and action-based; Committee Members agreed it was productive. Committee Members thanked the Subcommittee for their work, and Ms. Greaves for facilitating tonight's meeting.

Adjourn

The Committee adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Documents Referenced During 5/15/2025 Meeting

Meeting Agenda, 5/15/2025

Meeting 5.15.25 Updated Strategies List by Subcommittee