



Town of Ashland , Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee Meeting (Hybrid)

Ashland Public Library
66 Front Street
Ashland, MA 01721
May 19, 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 (remote)
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 (remote)
Cultural Council Representative:	Stacey Grant Lewis
Historical Commission Representative:	Karen Coleman (remote)
Ashland Upper Charles Trail Committee Representative:	Tony Lewis
Conservation Commission Representative:	Carl Hakansson
Council on Aging Representative:	Steve Mitchell (remote)
Econ Dev Advisory Committee Representative:	Beth Reynolds
ZBA Representative:	(Open Seat)
School Committee Representative:	Mike Caira (remote)
Town Forest Committee Representative:	Cara Hulme (absent)
Design Review Committee:	Bill Novakowski (absent)
Precinct 1:	Jacob Coolberth
Precinct 2:	Leah Suarez
Precinct 3:	David Evancho
Precinct 4:	Aroon Manoharan (remote)

Precinct 5:
Precinct 6:
High School Representative:

Rajashree Ghosh
Lisa Churchill (absent)
Hasini Reddy (remote)

Others Present

Austin Smith, JM Goldson

Members of the public

Mark Dassoni

Call meeting to Order:

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

Facilitate discussion on remaining Strategies list

Yolanda Greaves continued facilitation of the discussion and review of the remaining Strategies, including Strategies that had been marked for removal by the Subcommittee which some Committee Members requested further discussion on.

- **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 this Strategy be deleted. At the prior meeting the Committee voted 9-6 to revise it. Austin Smith (JMG) explained that they can take parts of the existing zoning district, Ashland Downtown District, Sub-Area C, and can grow it out to the Summer Street, Union Street, Main Street triangle, so it would not be inventing a new zoning district. There could be some dimensional changes. The Committee agreed to delete.

- **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.**

Crowd map data will be reviewed by a subcommittee to make recommendations to the full Committee to find 10-15 places to include in a beautification list, to be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

- **2.B.1 Tree preservation bylaw. Expand the number and quantity of trees in Town. Tree by-law addressing Town projects clearing of land.**

The Subcommittee's notes were to expand the number and quantity of trees in Town. Create a tree bylaw addressing Town projects/clearing of land.

The Committee agreed: Develop an equitable Town-wide tree bylaw that applies to everyone; expand the number of trees; and, preserve existing trees.

- **Strategies for more senior housing, including town-built projects.**

The Committee agreed to keep in.

- **Create publically owned continuing care retirement community facilities.**

Committee agreed: Develop specific actions to keep Ashland seniors in the Ashland community, homes and institutions.

- **1.A.3. Explore the feasibility of closing streets to vehicular traffic during the weekend or Town events like the Farmers Markets, activities at The Corner Spot, and other annual events to allow for better pedestrian circulation and interaction with the community.**

Ms. Greaves noted that this is already happening and has been implemented before; the Committee agreed it can stay removed.

- **1.B.7. Update and expand the 2010 Historic Property Inventory, which documented approximately 171 historic resources. Not all noteworthy properties were surveyed which provides an opportunity to continue identifying additional significant structures throughout the town.**

Updated to: *Update and expand the 2010 Historic Property Inventory to be used for preserving historic property inventory.*

- **2.C.1. Prioritize the adoption of a tree bylaw in Ashland, ensuring effective enforcement and monitoring by evaluating resource needs, such as a hiring a certified arborist if necessary, expanding tree preservation criteria in the town's zoning to include private property, and securing the required staffing and funding to support its implementation and public compliance.**

Ms. Greaves noted a tree bylaw has been thoroughly discussed and is covered under the other strategy regarding tree bylaws that has been put in place; the Committee agreed to remove.

- **2.C.6. Set up a dedicated municipal budget for the planting, pruning, and maintenance of public trees, including street trees, park trees, and trees in public rights-of-way.**

Some tree maintenance is included in the DPW budget but not as a specific line item. The Committee agreed to keep this Strategy.

- **2.E.2. Reevaluate parking requirements within the town's bylaws to incentivize minimal impervious surfaces for parking uses, such as gravel or permeable paver parking areas, increased green infrastructure requirements, etc.**

Mr. Smith suggested this may be combined with 2.E.1. so that it covers all within one Strategy; Committee Members agreed.

- **2.E.3. Promote Low Impact Development (LID) by incorporating natural systems like rain gardens, permeable pavements, and bioswales into zoning codes to manage stormwater, reduce runoff, and improve water quality. Establish a stormwater utility fee based on the amount of impervious surfaces on a property, offering credits for implementing green infrastructure. Align these efforts with updates to the Town's Stormwater Bylaw, ensuring compliance with MS4 permit goals and MassDEP standards, while using generated funds to maintain and expand municipal stormwater systems and green infrastructure projects, improving long-term water management and sustainability.**

This Strategy, based on the public ranking, was removed. JMG will review to see if it is covered under 2.E.1.

- **3.A.1. Acquire parcels or conservation easements for open space land directly adjacent to the Town Forest as parcels become available.**

Ms. Greaves noted that although the Open Space and Recreation Plan is not yet complete, there is language that addresses this; the Committee agreed to remove this Strategy.

- **3.B.5. Explore programming options for the former Girl Scout Camp site to fill any gaps in existing recreation programming.**

Committee Members agreed this property, as well as the Valentine Barn, need to be addressed. Revise to include: *make the former Girl Scout Camp available for public use.*

- **3.B.8. Evaluate tax delinquent parcels or those that are unsuitable for other uses as potential pocket park sites.**

The Committee agreed to keep in and revise to include: *for potential future uses; i.e.: parks, playgrounds, community-supported housing, to benefit the Town of Ashland.*

- **4.B.11. Establish a dedicated Athletics and Fields Committee to oversee the maintenance and equitable rental management of Ashland's town athletic fields, ensuring fair access for all community groups and sustainable upkeep.**

Mr. Herbert suggested Doug Small come in to discuss this. This will be left in for now, with further discussion to review the language at the Committee's next meeting in June.

- **4.D.6. Conduct a Community Vision Plan for the Aggregate Quarry site in advance of the Town taking ownership in 2027, focusing on public access and recreational connectivity with Ashland State Park and the YMCA outdoor center on East Street.**

Same as above; review the language and discuss at the Committee's next meeting in June.

The Committee discussed 4.A.1. regarding creating a subcommittee to work on the Town beautification plan. Mr. Smith offered alternatively that they (JMG) can take suggestions from the Committee via email and consolidate; Ms. Greaves polled the Committee as to whether they want to go through the data of the places that residents want to see beautified, and select 5-10 areas for beautification and submit those to Goldson to consolidate the information, or, create a subcommittee. Committee Members agreed to send responses to Goldson by June 1st; a subcommittee will simultaneously work on choosing 5-10 areas.

Mr. Smith reviewed next steps: Finalizing the Strategies and integrate into the draft Comprehensive Plan; they will work with Town Staff on the implementation matrix details. Tonight's meeting is the final meeting of Phase III. Phase IV will include review of the draft Future Land Use Map, and a presentation of the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan to a joint meeting of the Planning Board and Select Board. Ms. Tesmenitsky suggested a public forum to share the draft Comprehensive Plan with the public. The Committee discussed finding the number of contract hours remaining with JM Goldson.

Meeting Minutes – March 20, 2025

The March 20, 2025 meeting minutes were approved unanimously with a revision suggested by Ms. Ghosh.

Meeting Minutes – April 17, 2025

The April 17, 2025 meeting minutes were approved unanimously with revision suggested by Ms. Tesmenitsky.

Committee Comments

Ms. Jurczyk noted that tonight is her last meeting, as she is a Planning Board Representative and did not seek reelection to the Planning Board. Committee Members thanked Ms. Jurczyk for all of her hard work and input.

Conclude and Adjourn

The Committee adjourned at 9:42 PM.

Documents Referenced During 5/19/2025 Meeting

Meeting Agenda, 5/19/2025

Draft Meeting Minutes, March 20, 2025 and April 17, 2025

Updated Strategies – PPT Slides