

Meeting Notes
Newton Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
Formal Meeting
October 18, 2021

Members present: Showalter, Michener, Yeager, Messinger, Triplett, Kahn, Otto, Moran, Jenkins

Members absent: Robinson, Illingworth, Lundberg, Kolsrud

Others present: Evelyn George, Shannon Gapp, Chris Janson, Brian Dunkelberger, Erin Chambers

Meeting began at 12:08 PM.

Committee members introduced themselves and described their connection(s) to the community.

Review of the selected planning consultant team, MSA Professional Services. Shannon Gapp introduced MSA's team and reviewed the meeting agenda. She also described MSA's 3-step approach to completing the project: Community engagement; community profile, vision, and framework; and creation of the Newton Comprehensive Plan. Gapp went on to define the roles of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. Those roles include: serve as informal project ambassadors, promote engagement, communicate with community members, attend meetings, and set aside time to read and review materials. The goal is to focus on and strive for consensus. She concluded by reviewing objectives and expectations for the project and describing how the comprehensive plan project will work in conjunction with a housing assessment for the community.

After the initial presentation, Gapp showed a list of ongoing and/or future projects, developments, activities, etc. in Newton and then asked the group to share other important information they should know about moving forward. Ideas offered by the group included wayfinding, creative economic development to make Newton a compelling destination, enhancements to community gateways, all types of housing, leveraging broadband and technology for community development, and tourism-oriented projects such as the softball complex and the Westwood Clubhouse.

Discussion about community input survey and project website. Committee members, staff, and MSA team discussed strategies to share with citizens and spread the word. Discussion about duration of survey availability. Review of project activities and upcoming engagement opportunities including community input workshop(s) held before the end of the year. Discussion about venue options around the community and being conscious of timing and location. Discussion about transferability of workshop activities for other groups such as youth involvement at all school levels.

The Committee spent the latter half of the meeting participating in an open discussion considering the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis) for three specific focus areas: Beautification, Development, and Mobility. An involved and thoughtful discussion produced a list of subjects for each focus area. Committee members also discussed strategies to address threats and weaknesses as well as ideas to embolden strengths and opportunities.

Meeting ended at 1:21 PM.