



TOWN OF GRAFTON
GRAFTON MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER
30 PROVIDENCE ROAD
GRAFTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01519
(508) 839-5335 ext. 1120 • FAX (508) 839-4602
planningdept@grafton-ma.gov
www.grafton-ma.gov

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Town of Grafton Planning Board
FROM: Fiona Coughlan, Town Planner
CC: Natalia Alward, Planning Assistant (via email)
DATE: January 3, 2023
SUBJECT: District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Funding and Master Plan Update

This memorandum has been prepared as part of the meeting materials for the January 9, 2023, Planning Board meeting. It serves as a status update for the Board regarding progress on the Master Plan update and the DLTA funding. The Planning Department is coordinating both activities with the assistance of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC).

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – DLTA

The Town Planner received an email about DLTA funding availability and potential project options from CMRPC on December 22, 2022. She forwarded said email to the Town Administrator that same day for feedback on advantageous opportunities. This feedback would be in addition to the Planning Board discussion on January 9, 2023. She also reached out to Dominique Dutremble (CMRPC) on December 29, 2022, to discuss application submission requirements. In the email, she listed recommendations based on her research:

- Assistance with MBTA Communities;
- 43D/Priority Development Assistance;
- Becoming a Housing Choice Community;
- Becoming an Age and Dementia-Friendly Community;
- Brownfield Remediation and Planning;
- Right to Farm Designation/Bylaw Development;
- An Economic Development Plan;
- A Fair Housing Assessment;
- An ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan;
- Geo-Coding Public Works Assets;
- A Pavement Conditions Index; and
- A Bridge and Culvert Maintenance Plan.

The Town Administrator responded to the December 22, 2022 email expressing interest in *Energy and Environment Best Practices/Greenhouse Gas Reduction* projects. The best practices for this activity, as listed in the Solicitation package, are:



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- Plan to mitigate climate change by establishing goals, creating an action plan, assigning responsibility, and tracking progress.
- Use renewable energy instead of fossil fuels by generating or purchasing clean power and by zoning for renewable power generation.
- Increase energy efficiency to reduce power consumption, fuel costs, and GHG emissions.
- Promote zero or low-carbon transportation to reduce municipal transportation emissions & those from people living/working in the community.
- Encourage sustainable development to reduce, through higher density & mixed-use, the number distance of car trips & resulting GHG emissions.
- Protect and manage natural resources to reduce carbon emissions from loss of natural land cover and to encourage carbon sequestration.
- Reduce municipal solid waste and increase recycling to reduce GHG emissions associated with solid waste disposal.

Upon meeting with Dominique (CMRPC) on January 3, 2023, the Town Planner was notified that Grafton's requirements for *Assistance with MBTA Communities* are fulfilled. There is a rolling Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) application that is forthcoming and will assist with MBTA Communities funding and technical assistance. Therefore, the Board should focus its attention elsewhere. DLTA funding is for short-term projects that must be completed within one calendar year (limited in scope and budget). Typically, a community is awarded one project per year, so it is critical the Board prioritize the one that is considered the highest priority. There is no cost associated with DLTA projects and no match requirement. However, an application is favorable if the applicant contributes in-kind staff hours. CMRPC will assist the Town Planner with crafting and submitting the application, and they will assemble the budget. CMRPC will also work with the Town Planner to "pitch" the project to the Physical Development Committee on January 19, 2023.

The Planning Board and the Town Administrator (possibly the Town Planner) must each write a letter of commitment once a DLTA project is chosen. The Town Planner will consult the Planning Board's CMRPC delegate throughout this process and before a final project is chosen. It is strongly recommended that the Board pursue projects that forward the short-term recommendations in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), as this also forwards best practices under the *Energy and Environment Best Practices/Greenhouse Gas Reduction* category. The three short-term OSRP goals are:

- Reconcile town stormwater regulations with the Grafton Subdivision Rules and Regulations to ensure consistency and enhance the protection of land and water resources.
- Amend Grafton Subdivision Rules and Regulations so that they require the retention of open space for wildlife corridors on all parcels located between or adjacent to open space.



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- Amend flexible development rules in Grafton Subdivision Rules and Regulations to require developers to mark open spaces clearly and permanently in subdivisions through the installation of signage or another permanent method.

Other suggestions offered by CMRPC staff and the Town Planner during the January 3, 2023, meeting were:

- Electric vehicle planning;
- Preliminary work toward net-zero emissions;
An education campaign(s)/ capacity building for the Grafton Sustainability Commission;
and
- Waste reduction and recycling.

The Town Planner signed up for the DLTAs information session via Zoom on January 5, 2023; she will report any updates from that meeting. In the interim, it is recommended the Board review the Solicitation package and information in this memorandum to support an eligible project(s) that would benefit the Town of Grafton, particularly those related to *Energy and Environment Best Practices/Greenhouse Gas Reduction*. Requests are due on January 12, 2023, for the January 19, 2023, deadline. The Solicitation package recommends working with CMRPC staff on the scope of services and the application(s) before presenting to the Physical Development Committee on January 19, 2023. Should the Board decide it would like to continue this conversation in future meetings, there is another DLTA deadline of March 2, 2023, for consideration at the March 9, 2023, Physical Development Committee.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS – MASTER PLAN

Following consultation with the Town Administrator, the Town Planner sent an email on December 29, 2022, to Dominique Dutremble (CMRPC) that the Town is moving forward with CMRPC for all project phases. She confirmed CMRPC's comfort level with future funding appropriations after Town Meeting. CMRPC is aware Phase III funding will be released in July 2023. Dominique sent a contract to the Town Administrator for Phase II of the Master Plan, which is currently pending signatures from the necessary parties.

Several other Master Plan conversations have taken place since the Town Planner's start date, including an introductory call with CMRPC on December 19, 2022, and a meeting with David Robbins on Friday, December 30, 2022. Conversations have focused on the Planning Board's role in Phase II and using the next phase as an opportunity to elicit input on the relevance of unmet implementation items from the 2001 Master Plan. The scope includes two public meetings, a "Kickoff Community Engagement Campaign," a community survey, approximately ten stakeholder interviews, two workshops, a vision statement update, goals and objectives development, and chapter development. Please note, Phase III consists of two more public meetings before the project closeout.



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Before Phase II discussions can begin, the Town Planner recommends finalizing any outstanding Phase I items. CMRPC reviewed the Phase I Master Plan deliverables sent by David Robbins and the former Town Planner and addressed outstanding edits. If there are no additional requests for information, the Town should confirm its ability to begin Phase II upon contract signing. It is important to note that the data gleaned in Phase I will be instrumental in framing outreach for Phase II. The outreach methodology will also be designed to solicit input on coterminous initiatives in Grafton, including MBTA Communities and the Housing Production Plan update. David Robbins and the Town Planner discussed the possibility of establishing a Master Plan Committee to help navigate the steps involved with Phase II.

Thank you.

Fiona Coughlan