

Hamilton Planning Board
Tuesday, 6:30 PM
May 16, 2023

Meeting called to order at 6:31 p.m.

Present: Pat Norton, Jonathan Poore, Emil Dahlquist, Beth Herr, Rick Mitchell, Matt Hamel, Marnie Crouch, William Wheaton.

Handouts:

Frequently asked questions.

Questionnaire soliciting public feedback on the process and presentation

1. Discussion of Town pursuit of strategic plan for rezoning Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

- a. Synopsis of Reuse Evaluation and Strategy Report prepared by Abramson Associates and Gamble Associates.

This process included a meeting with consultants and approximately 25 of the abutters to introduce the consultants and seek input on concerns and issues and preferences for reuse. There was also a meeting with the general public in November seeking input on potential reuses and preferences. In January of 2023, the consultants hosted a second public meeting to present the draft and market-based options and cost benefits analysis. In April the consultants issued their final report on potential market-based scenarios with projections of economic costs and benefits. At its inception, the process sought to achieve the following:

- i. Create open lines of communication with the seminary on the use of the campus in the future and this was nonexistent prior to this process.
- ii. Secure agreement from the Seminary to financially support the independent assessment of reuse options.
Engage voters in public forums on issues of concern and reuse preferences.
- iii. Provide an objective analysis of potential reuse options and their costs and benefits.
- iv. Lay the foundation for the Planning Board's consideration of reuse options and future rezoning.

This final Consultants report is on the town website.

- b. Presentation of Planning Board proposed uses and mapping responding to existing conditions and Planning Board preferences identified in January 2023. The presentation outlined the guiding principles that the Planning Board developed to direct their consideration of proposed uses for the property. The Planning Board also created a map of the Gordon Conwell site to indicate the assets or elements of the site that make it unique. This map helped the Planning Board propose, for example, what should be protected on the site, what should be improved, and what the town might like to see evolve over time. Also shown was a sample "use table" which is available to the public for comment. The public is invited to rank each of the uses on the site in terms of preference.

The presentation is a progress report of what the Planning Board has been doing in creating a menu of options for the public to review and discuss. The term Heritage Landscape comes from the Essex County Heritage Commission, which is an organization that both inventories and funds the preservation and development of historic resources. This is an opportunity for the town to come up with a different method of zoning and coding for the town to preserve the character of the site and other such sites. Options were presented that ranged from low- to medium- to high-capacity design and included different types and sizes of housing, different options for meaningful common spaces, and a variety of mixed-use spaces. It's unclear how much of the property the seminary is going to retain. Currently the property is zoned for single family houses. If the town decides to rezone to allow for more capacity on the site, this will impact how much of the property will be retained by the seminary. The seminary is hoping for flexibility in terms of future zoning to enable future owner's economically feasible uses of the property to ostensibly benefit both the seminary and the town.

The Planning Board acknowledged that this process is not just about facts and figures but it's also about people and maintaining quality of life in Hamilton. This is why the planning board scheduled this meeting to present the work to date and engage the public proactively. The Board again reiterated the importance of getting as much feedback as possible before a proposed zoning bylaw and development agreement is brought to town meeting.

All of the materials associated with the consultant's report and the Planning Board proposed uses and mapping can be found on the town website.

2. Discuss next steps and upcoming public comment meeting

The planning board noted that the following night, May 17, 2023, is an all zoom meeting to consider information that has been generated as part of the Hamilton Master Plan effort. Members of the public can register to attend this meeting on the Town of Hamilton web page.

The board thanked everybody for coming and asked them to complete their questionnaires which would be collected and tabulated.

The next public comment meeting is June 6, 2023, again in the Hamilton Wenham Public Library. At that meeting, there will be significantly more time for comments and questions.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted as approved at the 07-25-2023 meeting.

Marnie Crouch