

The Town of Sykesville – Advisory Committee Meeting Summary



The Town of Sykesville Comprehensive Plan

Advisory Committee Meeting

Meeting #1 Summary

Thursday, June 18, 2020 | 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM | Zoom Meeting

Attendees

1	✓	Al Mcevoy (Board of Zoning Appeals)	10	✓	Norman Fogg (Historic District Commission)
2	✓	Brandon Smith (Resident)	11	✓	Rachel Becks (Downtown Sykesville Commission)
3	✓	Debbie Scheller (Resident & Business Owner)	12	✓	Roger Lerner (Resident)
4		Ed Cinkole (Planning Commission)	13	✓	Troy Truax (Michael Baker International)
5	✓	Eric Valenstein (Parks & Rec Committee)	14	✓	Vanessa Brubaker (Michael Baker International)
6	✓	Jana Antrobus (Executive Assistant)	15	✓	Peter Quintanilla (Michael Baker International)
7	✓	Joe Cosentini (Town Manager)	16	✓	Kirsten Compitello (Michael Baker International)
8	✓	Julia Betz (Planning Commission)	17	✓	Cameron Weiser (Michael Baker International)
9	✓	Laura Scheiner (Ethics Commission)			

Attendance Count: 16

Meeting Materials

- CAC June 18, 2020 Meeting Agenda
- CAC June 18, 2020 PowerPoint Presentation

Meeting Discussion Summary

Welcome and Introductions

- Joe Cosentini thanked everyone for attending and Troy Truax emphasized the importance of advisory committees in the comprehensive planning process. Troy asked for the Sykesville Advisory Committee members to introduce themselves.
- Troy introduced each of the Michael Baker International (Michael Baker) planning team members: Vanessa Shamberg, Peter Quintanilla, Kirsten Compitello, and Cameron Weiser. After introductions, Peter Quintanilla introduced his role with the Urban Design Studio. The Urban Design Studio is a component of Michael Baker's planning and architecture practices that focuses on the design of sustainable communities.

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The Town of Sykesville Comprehensive Plan

- Troy provided an overview of the evening's meeting agenda and project scope of work. The Comprehensive Plan will include the following tasks:
 - Task 1 – Project Management & Coordination
 - Task 2 – Advisory Committee
 - Task 3 – Community Profile & Evaluation of Existing Plans
 - Task 4 – Public Involvement
 - Task 5 – Issue Prioritization & Vision Statement
 - Task 6 – Master Plan Development
 - Task 7 – Final Plan and Adoption
- Troy introduced the significance of comprehensive plans in Maryland and established that the term 'master plan' and 'comprehensive plan' are synonymous in the state and that, per the Maryland Land Use Code (MLUC), a comprehensive plan must be revised every ten years. He then reviewed the benefits of comprehensive planning, including to promote and ensure the sustainable growth and long-term vitality of a community.
- Troy outlined the required elements of a comprehensive plan per MLUC § 3-102:
 - Community facilities
 - Areas of critical State concern
 - Goals and objectives
 - Housing
 - Land use
 - Development regulations
 - Sensitive areas
 - Transportation
 - Water resources
 - Municipal growth
- The seven permissive elements of a comprehensive plan per MLUC § 3-102 include:
 - Community renewal
 - Conservation
 - Flood control
 - Natural resources
 - Pollution control
 - Public utilities
 - Prior preservation areas
- Finally, Troy shared the twelve visions for a comprehensive plan which are included in MLUC § 1-201.

Comprehensive Planning Approach

- Vanessa Shamberg introduced the Promotion Plan and the methods by which Michael Baker will engage the public at large to support issue identification. The process will include the following methods of outreach:
 - Advisory Committee Meetings – The Advisory Committee will meet approximately five additional times throughout 2020 and 2021.
 - Stakeholder Focus Groups – The stakeholder focus group meetings will be held in early August of 2020 via phone and in person if possible. There will be approximately four focus group meetings and up to six one-on-one interviews as needed.
 - Online Survey – The online public opinion survey will be open through the month of September and will help expand upon the findings from the Advisory Committee and focus groups.
 - Public Workshops – In October 2020, there will be a two-day urban design public workshop with targeted stakeholders and the public.
 - Public Open House – A public open house will be hosted to present the draft plan and to gather feedback in the spring of 2021.

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Stakeholders

- To prepare for the focus groups in August, Michael Baker is asking the Advisory Committee to recommend key stakeholders that should be invited to participate in a focus group. Vanessa explained that Michael Baker will post an initial Excel file in the Sykesville Comprehensive Plan Microsoft Teams page (that Troy introduced and discussed later in the meeting). Advisory Committee members are encouraged to update the file with names and contact information.
- During the discussion, committee members recommended the following stakeholders:
 - Maryland Department of Transportation, State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA)
 - Individuals regarding the potential for broadband
 - Churches and schools

Advisory Committee Perspectives: Treasures, Challenges, and Vision Exercise

- Vanessa thanked the Advisory Committee for taking the input survey in advance of the meeting, which had asked members to describe:
 - Treasures: What makes Sykesville a great place to live, work, play, shop and dine?
 - Challenges: What are Sykesville's biggest challenges and needs?
 - Vision: What will Sykesville be in 10 years (2031)?
- Vanessa reviewed the results and asked members to elaborate on the findings.

Treasures

- Main Street
 - Strong variety of services, retail, and dining
 - Quaint sense of place with historic architecture
 - Conveniently located for residents and visitors to access
- Sense of Community
 - The Downtown Sykesville Connection (DSC) organization has done a tremendous job of supporting and promoting Sykesville.
 - Sykesville has a variety of events with programming and activities throughout the year that not only attract local residents, but visitors from across Carroll and Howard Counties and the greater region. Some events attract thousands of people.
- Historic Fabric
 - The downtown has retained its historic architecture.
 - The Springfield State Hospital, now the Warfield development, is comprised of 7 buildings from the 1880s; the location has a “nostalgic feel” with the old architectural style.
- Parks and Recreation
 - Freedom Park has a 2.5-mile path, baseball fields, and soccer fields within walking distance of downtown and many neighborhoods. The Raincliffe neighborhood is located in the northwest of Town and has direct access to Freedom Park via Raincliffe Road, however a walking path to the park would be preferable.
 - Other parks include the Linear Trail and the Carrie Dorsey Trail (formerly Warfield Park).
 - The Patapsco River and Hugg-Thomas Wildlife Management Park are great natural resources which the Town benefits from. The river is stocked with trout, and Hugg-Thomas Park is popular for hiking. Both are accessible for residents and serve as a great location for diverse types of wildlife and plants.

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- Other
 - Sykesville residents are kind and welcoming to newcomers and visitors alike.
 - There is a “Sykesville Online” Facebook community where many residents regularly share information about the Town.
 - There is a tunnel under MD-32/Sykesville Road between Warfield and Millard Cooper Park.
 - The tunnel has a great utility in that it connects the two locations, providing a way for residents at Warfield to access the downtown area.
 - Since there is townhouse development in Warfield, the tunnel will be an asset going forward.
 - The riverfront could be used to a greater extent, possibly a multi-use residential development in the future.

Challenges

- Development
 - It's important to balance new development with open space and the small-town character
 - There's a desire for improved connections between the downtown, parks, and neighborhoods
- Parking and Walking
 - Parking is a challenge during downtown events.
 - There is a limited to no walking accessibility between the parking area located south of the South Branch of the Patapsco River along West Friendship Road and downtown. Previous discussions were had with MDOT SHA to improve the bridge structure and add sidewalks, but this project has not come to fruition.
- Infrastructure
 - There are limited sidewalk connections from the various parking lots/locations to downtown, requiring people to walk in the street. In addition, some areas of sidewalk are narrow and obstructed with utility poles.
 - MDOT SHA's plans/documents for the streetscape project should be reviewed. While the project hasn't moved forward, there was a substantial amount of work put into the project, which is still desired.
 - Sykesville's underground infrastructure is aging and will need to be replaced in certain locations. An underground spring is problematic for the downtown area and it needs to be addressed.
 - There was a project proposal in the past to bury the electric lines running along Main Street, but the project was abandoned due to its exorbitant cost.
 - The bridge which connects Spout Hill Road to Warfield will need replaced as traffic increases.
 - The Carroll County Parks and Recreation Plan anticipates using the right-of-way of an abandoned railroad to the southwest of downtown. The right-of-way extends to the overpass at Spout Hill Road and could evolve into a walking path which will connect Warfield to downtown more effectively.
- Use of Existing Parks
 - The Town has some parks that are not being used to their full capacity.
 - There is a new trail called the Carrie-Dorsey Trail at Warfield, but it needs more promotion to generate usage.
 - The Carrol County Bicycle-Pedestrian Master Plan (2019) provides additional details on Sykesville's proposed park and trail improvement needs/priorities.

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- Fear of Growth
 - Some residents are apprehensive about new development. Primary concerns include traffic and protecting the small-town nature of the community.

Activity Nodes

- Downtown
- Various Parks
- South Branch Patapsco River
 - Taking advantage of the riverfront with new development is a good opportunity for the Town.
 - The river is prone to flooding on the Howard County side.
 - Existing land uses by the river may not be the highest and best use for the location. However, challenges include long-term leases and active industrial uses. Currently, the location is used by Farm and Home as a storage and distribution center.
- Warfield Complex
 - Warfield has a substantial amount of space with a planned development that remains in the planning stages.

Discussion and Next Steps

- Troy indicated the Advisory Committee will be provided access to the project Microsoft Teams page. This online portal can be used by the Advisory Committee to share pertinent documents and communications.
- A Microsoft Excel file containing the names of identified stakeholders has been uploaded to the page; the Advisory Committee should update this file with key stakeholders and contact information.
- The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for 6 PM Thursday, July 16, 2020. The meeting will be conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Annotated Meeting Notes

See following pages.