

Master Plan Committee

Meeting Minutes

August 20, 2025

Begin at 5:02pm.

1. Attendance: John Charbonneau Community Development Director, Rich Preston, Linda Brown, Bob Minarik, Bob Moran, Mike Zwicker, Meg Schlesman, Ross Smith, Carol Gogolinski, Gordon Larrivee, Rebecca Lavallee, and Margaret Bacon. On Zoom is Dan Mascroft. Excused is Rob Leonardi.
2. Minutes from July 17, 2025 are reviewed. Ross Smith motions to approve as amended. Rebecca Lavallee seconds the motion. Gordon Larrivee and Bob Moran abstain. The motion passes.
3. Quarterly Reporting & Monthly Reimbursement Request: We received an updated Excel sheet from Bob Minarik. Bob states that payments from the grant are coming every 30 days. Right now we are under spending. Next quarterly report is due October 15, 2025.
4. Review of previous meetings discussion on Transportation & Circulation. John Charbonneau will ask CMRPC to start doing yearly traffic counts on RT. 16 and other highly used streets. This CMRPC service will be at no cost to the town. He will also ask CMRPC what counts they have done in the past and provide us with the information. Margaret Bacon will look into MASSDOT and see if they have any traffic counts for us. At the last meeting we had discussed better signage at various dangerous intersections. To study this we would need input from the Police Department. Bob Minarik will contact Police Chief Miglionico tomorrow and ask for a list of traffic accidents in Douglas and their locations.

(Brief recess at 5:27pm due to Zoom Bombers. We reconvene at 5:36pm)

5. Presentation and Discussion on Key Findings & Action Items for Town Services and Facilities Chapter.

Key Findings

- Adequate facility office and storage space is a priority for all Town Hall departments, Adult Social Center, Fire, Police, Highway, High School and Public Library. Space needs include Document storage, office space, meeting space, parking, vehicle storage and kitchen space. Other needs are HVAC, indoor sprinklers and the reuse of vacant town buildings.

- Douglas is challenged with meeting its staffing needs and retraining municipal workers and volunteers. The workload is exceeding available resources and staffing strategies for the long term needs to be considered. Staffing volunteers are compensated through the town tax work off program.
- Communication by local government could be enhanced, particularly to improve transparency and open communication. The town consistently achieves Open Meeting Law requirements. Without a local newspaper the town faces challenges with posting summarized notifications that will have a wide spread reach. There are ways to watch all public meetings on YouTube and our town website. There is difficulty accessing the videos on our town website. Douglas High school students want to be more informed about town processes. We need to address the lack of electronic or temporary portable signs, in strategic locations, to address the lack of town government voting and important town events. We need to add to key findings the need to identify and implement best practices for municipal engagement in a small town.
- Simon Fairfield Public Library is in need of accessibility upgrades.
- Declining student enrollment plus competition from Blackstone Valley Tech and the agricultural school threatens town finances and school performance. The cost to educate students at BV Tech and the agricultural school are twice the amount of our own high school. Our high school does have a work study program but it is only two hours a week. The original BV Tech agreement with Douglas has not been updated since 1960. This agreement may limit our own high school curriculum. Rebecca Lavallee will try to find and email Emily at CMRPC this BV Tech agreement.

Suggested Action Items

- The town should hire a Municipal Facilities Manager. This position was passed at the last Town Meeting but due to budget constraints the position has not been filled.

We decide to continue this discussion for the Suggested Action Items at our next meeting.

6. Bob Moran motions to adjourn at 7:01pm. Ross Smith seconds the motion. The motion passes.

Linda Brown
Master Plan Committee
Secretary