



# *Town of Brookline*

## *Massachusetts*

**Department of Planning and  
Community Development**

Town Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
333 Washington Street  
Brookline, MA 02445  
(617) 730-2130

**Kara Brewton**  
Director

**To:** Heather Hamilton, Select Board Chair  
**From:** Kara Brewton, Director of Planning and Community Development  
**Date:** August 16, 2022  
**Re:** Planning Process Study Committee

---

At the Special Town Meeting held in the Fall of 2021, WA 26, a resolution calling on the Town of Brookline's Select Board to establish a Planning Process Study Committee (the Committee) as a first step towards a Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Reform effort, passed by a near unanimous vote. While the scope will be further defined by this Committee's work and Select Board decisions, I am currently estimating the entire Comprehensive Planning & Zoning Reform effort to go through FY2026, including temporarily hiring two additional planners and a consultant budget of \$500,000 to \$750,000.

### **Timing**

The Committee should recommend draft cost estimates to the Town Administrator and Select Board by the end of October 2022 in order to inform the FY2024, FY2025, and FY2026 budgets. The Committee should also prepare updates to Town Meeting in the Combined Reports in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023. I am recommending the Committee not meet in November and December, and then wrap up in January and February 2023 with final scope recommendations.

Following budget votes at the Spring 2023 Town Meeting, we could issue a Request for Proposals for the Comprehensive Planning effort over the Summer, with the first public phases of the Comprehensive Planning process commencing in Fall 2023.

### **Draft Charge for Planning Process Study Committee**

The Committee, in consultation with the Department of Planning and Community Development and the Town Administrator, is charged with developing a timeline, work program, budget and scope for an inclusive, community-driven planning and zoning reform process. Specifically, the Committee should:

- 1) Summarize why the Town needs to update their Comprehensive Plan now. In other words, what is the risk for Brookline if the Comprehensive Plan is not updated?
- 2) Review best practices for modern Comprehensive Plans, including but not limited to other community Comprehensive Plans and the regional Metropolitan Area Planning Council's regional plan to identify what would be appropriate for Brookline's Comprehensive Plan. For example, although state law defines elements (e.g., Land Use, Circulation, etc.) that should be included when a Master Plan is completed, many modern Comprehensive Plans are organized across these segmented elements so that a cohesive, prioritized Town policy directive is laid out.
- 3) Review prior planning studies and make a recommendation on which of these should be incorporated, rather than duplicated, during the overall planning process.
- 4) Outline a Comprehensive Planning process that includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. incorporates perspectives from a full spectrum of stakeholders;
  - b. develops a shared fact-base of existing conditions (local and regional), including qualitative and quantitative measurements of current and potential (i.e. build-out) land use, inequities, public services, infrastructure, and community assets compared to peer communities;
  - c. creates and analyzes a variety of demographic (local and regional) and land-use projections, including a "no zoning change" scenario;
  - d. inventories public infrastructure capacities and future needs;
  - e. identifies implementation priorities and other potential tasks across all Town Departments and the Public Schools of Brookline;
  - f. takes into account a set of Town goals and priorities developed by the Select Board and Town Administrator;
  - g. develops a statement of Town-wide values;
  - h. identifies benchmarks for the Town and Public Schools of Brookline that reflect Town-wide values and performance metrics for Town services and facilities;
  - i. explores a variety of planning and zoning tools and techniques including form-based zoning; and
  - j. results in a planning document that can be the basis for a Zoning Reform process, including regulations that: incentivize desired outcomes as defined in the Comprehensive Plan process, adjust regulatory processes towards more predictable outcomes for all participants, and make recommendations regarding enforcement related to use, development and construction (e.g., processes, staffing, enforcement fines).
- 5) Scope & Budget Development
  - a. Recommends to the Planning Board and Select Board a detailed scope and budget for the Comprehensive Planning process, including staff and volunteer time

- b. Recommends to the Select Board an estimated budget for the Zoning Reform process, including staff and volunteer time, which will need to be updated once the Comprehensive Planning process is complete

**Committee Member Recommendations**

The Committee should consist of 5-9 members focused on *recommending a process that can be successful* and not advocacy for potential planning outcomes. I also recommend that the Committee include at least one Select Board and Planning Board member – this multi-year process will not be successful without direct time investment and direction by these two Boards.

One of the most important pieces that DPCD needs from this Committee is a recommendation on the public participation process over the Comprehensive Planning and Zoning Reform effort, which will likely be the driver to the overall budget cost. Therefore, identifying Committee Members that have experience in successful community engagement projects, municipal long-term planning projects, and/or have demonstrated independent opinions will be important factors for the Select Board to consider.

**Volunteers that have expressed interest in serving as Committee Members to date**

- Carla Benka
- Danielle da Silva
- Elton Elperin
- Steve Heikin
- Abigail Hiller
- Jonathan Klein
- Linda Pehlke
- Steven Laduzinski
- Susan Podziba
- Al Raine
- Felina Silver Robison
- Jennifer Sullivan
- Carolyn Thall