
Taxes, business development and greener buildings top Dartmouth residents' concerns for Master Plan

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DARTMOUTH — Residents want to prioritize in a new town Master Plan creating greener structures, a healthier tax base, a better plan for the harbor and a better business plan for the town.

These were the items townspeople cast the most votes for as they met Thursday night, June 13 for a Master Plan Discovery Workshop that began the process of updating the town's 2007 plan.

Helen Zincavage, representing the regional transportation agency, SRPEDD, said this meeting would be the first in a series of workshops that between now and June 2020 that will create a new road map from where the town is now to a vision for its future.

Attendees included a mix of town board members, long-time town residents and recent Dartmouth transplants and they were asked to introduce themselves and express what they like most about the town. Then they were divided into three groups to discuss their personal priorities for Dartmouth under the necessary elements of any town's master plan: Lands Use, Housing, Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Services and Facilities, Transportation, and the final and most important element, Implementation.

As the three large groups discussed their concerns and suggestions, SRPEDD representatives jotted their ideas in black marker on large paper pad on tall artist easels. These sheets eventually encircled the room with each group's list of priority items. Attendees were then asked to vote for their own top master plan priority by affixing blue dot stickers to that item. "Healthy Tax Base" and "Harbor Plan" received nine blue 'votes'; 'Greener Structures' eight votes.

Planning Board member Stephen Taylor said he was surprised by the variety of people who came to the workshop. “I really expected it would be 40 percent developers,” he said. “But that didn’t happen. It really struck me that there was a lot of diversity of people.”

SRPEDD William Napolitano said what he heard most from the attendees Thursday night was that they love the town’s rural character and want to protect it. Town administrator Shawn MacInnes said he learned that residents want a balance of protecting natural resources and business development.

SRPEDD representatives explained as the meeting concluded that the large sheets of priorities will now be tabulated, combined and sifted down to the common themes into one large excel sheet of results. This sheet will be brought to the next workshop. That meeting will be in October 2019 and focus on Land Use, Housing, and Economic Development.