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## East Longmeaodw Town Center Steering Committee pushes forward with community input by Bill Zito | May 30, 2024 | East Longmeadow, Hampden County, Local News



residents at a May 20 meeting of the Town Steering Committee meeting. Reminder Publishing photo by Bill Zito EAST LONGMEADOW — Continuing efforts for maximum community input, the May 20 meeting of the Center Town Steering Committee saw a wellattended session of more than 85 residents who came ready with questions

and fitted with input compiled since the committee's first gathering in April.

At that earlier meeting, initial objectives for development and progression in

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission directs East Longmeadow town

the center of town were conferred upon those then in attendance. Considerations focused on economic development, diversity in housing and overall walkability were discussed with representation from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission who have been enlisted to aid with the project.

The May 20 meeting sought to advance those earlier objectives via additional

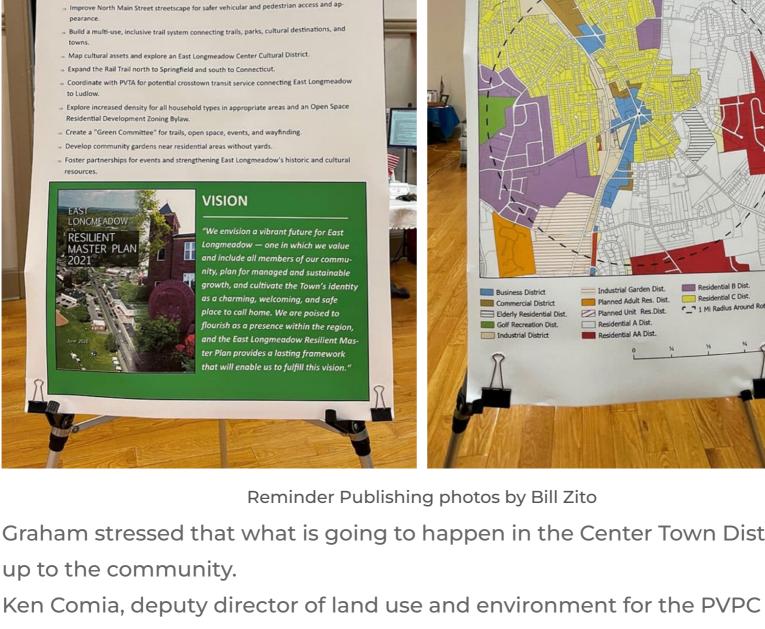
addressed those in attendance to go over the basic goals of the meeting and the committee's meetings overall.

Prior to the presentation by the PVPC, committee member Steve Graham

listen to all of you in the audience to find out what your concerns are, what your desires are, what your wants are and then put that together in as neat a package as we can get and bring it back to the town."

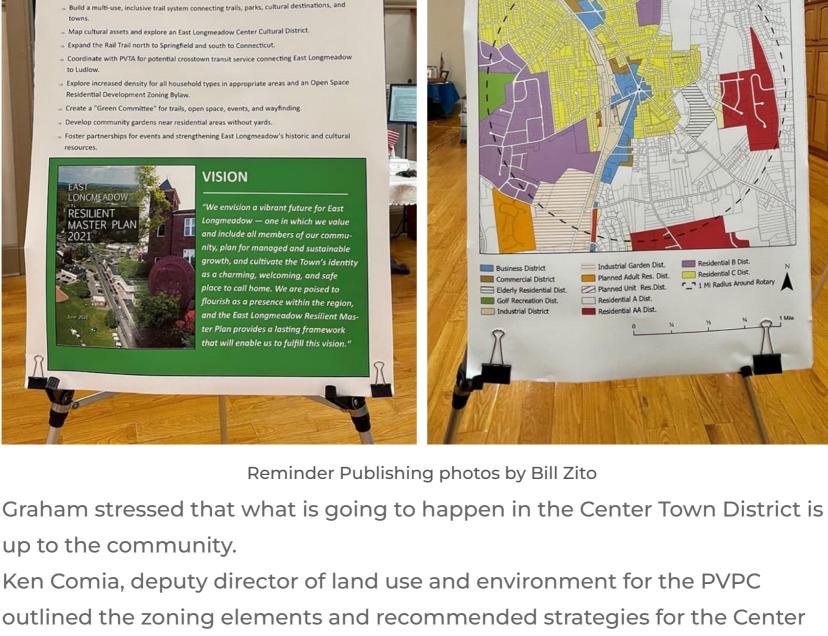
"Nothing has been decided yet," Graham said. "What we're here to do is to

Goals from the Master Plan Select Goals from the Resilient Master Plan (2021) EAST LONGMEADOW ZONING Adopt a Town Center Overlay District to incentivize desired town center uses. port mixed-use housing development that aligns with neighborhood character. e sidewalks and crosswalks in the town center and streets leading to the rotary. Improve North Main Street streetscape for safer vehicular and pedestrian access and ap-Build a multi-use, inclusive trail system connecting trails, parks, cultural destinations, and Map cultural assets and explore an East Longmeadow Center Cultural District Expand the Rail Trail north to Springfield and south to Connecticut. Coordinate with PVTA for potential crosstown transit service connecting East Longmeadow Explore increased density for all household types in appropriate areas and an Open Space Create a "Green Committee" for trails, open space, events, and wayfinding



Square via a PowerPoint presentation.

community planning and input.



"The goal is to craft zoning regulations that meet the needs and values of the community and best guide the redevelopment of Town Center," he said.

Comia said PVPC will be working in a consulting role for the year-long process with the volunteer project team made up of Steering Committee members, a representative from the Planning Board and town officials to include the town manager and deputy town manager.

Residents participated in break out discussion sessions at 10 tables of eight

where those individual components synced and offered suggestions in how to meet standards and establish priorities. Suggestions by table consensus included the expansion of the Redstone Rail Trail, increased pedestrian safety and expanded greenspaces with the potential development of pocket parks within town.

Concerns that high density development might be too rapid a growth for the

area, residents put a premium on two-or three family housing structures with

an emphasis on traffic attention in regard to speed and congestion on the

accessibility. More housing for residents aged 55 and older was also

road leading to the Rotary, advocating for more speed bumps and sidewalk

mentioned as an increased priority as was appropriate dwellings for a younger population. Design standards for proposed housing and mixed-use buildings to keep appearance in line with existing structures and housing atop commercial or retail construction were offered as suggestions for ways to increase opportunities to keep people living in town.

Despite interest in maintaining and even increasing housing options for

could potentially tax the school system as well as traffic mitigation.

current and future residents, there was unease expressed that such moves

Balancing the concerns about new population options was discussion of economic growth in a center community where the tax structure was identified as more than 85% dependent on residential taxes. Comia spoke to the town's desire to expand the tax base to establish a stable tax environment by creating a Center Town District with more accessibility that in turn creates more opportunity for local customers and ultimately a stable local economy that could potentially weather economic storms. Desired business opportunities measured by growth with the Town Center

were also mitigated by discussion of online business challenges and the

viewpoint that East Longmeadow is already business friendly and traffic is

already robust in the center of town while some residents prefer the larger

Thoughts of shopping options in discussion gave way to suggestions of more

market type of shopping and community outlets for children to go for school

shopping options in other neighboring towns.

to town as were school events and town movie nights.

studies or activities to alleviate a burden on the libraries while other tables suggested more prominent options like a Trader's Joes or a Whole Foods or restaurants with outdoor dining. Visual appearance of any new entity was also mentioned as a priority as was the absence of any large chain store. The topic of community connectiveness focused on the value of social spaces and cultural resources in terms of a more vibrant and welcoming town center. Concerts with vendors, beer and wine festivals, food trucks and open

houses with small businesses were suggested as methods of bringing people

appreciation for the positivity in the night's meeting and the expression of interest and concern by those in attendance. The notes, suggestions and offerings by the groups in attendance were collected, to be synthesized for the members of the Steering Committee who will report back to the town and will be presented at the next meeting for

Town Manager Tom Christensen closed out the forum by offering his

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town residents.

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