

Memorandum

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From the Office of the Mayor of Winooski

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To: Winooski City Council

At our September 21 Council meeting, we agreed to ask our policy advisory commissions to participate in a [Master Plan](#) progress check. As the Master Plan (adopted in 2019) is our shared roadmap for the next seven years, it is important to regularly revisit this plan and check in our progress, to keep our priorities aligned to and grounded in the community vision.

With our commissions being aligned to the priority areas in the Plan, and their annual workplans drafted to align to Plan priorities, commissions were well positioned to have a discussion about progress to date and future priorities. These discussions were framed in a series of questions:

- Have past and current initiatives been aligned to the policy goals in the Master Plan?
- Are current efforts supporting multiple goals?
- Given that we are only a year into this Master Plan, are there goals we are not currently moving forward on at all? Are these still priorities for the next seven years?
- Do we feel like we're on track towards meeting these goals over time?
- What priorities should future policy focus on in the next year or two? 5 years out?
- Do we as a commission have what we need to succeed? Are we able to make policy advisory decisions that keep us on track towards our master plan and community vision?

The Council should review each commission's report and have a discussion to check in on our big picture of progress. Keep in mind that we are 1.5 years into this 7 year plan and so should not expect to tackle every priority at all times. A summary of findings is included on the following page.

Signed,

Kristine Lott, Mayor



Summary of Commission Master Plan Progress Reports

Have past and current initiatives been aligned to the policy goals in the Master Plan?

All commissions responded positively to this question and outlined some specific efforts in their individual reports.

Are current efforts supporting multiple goals?

All commissions answered yes to this question.

Given that we are only a year into this Master Plan, are there goals we are not currently moving forward on at all? Are these still priorities for the next seven years?

Planning and Finance identified goals that haven't been acted on yet, but they felt these goals should be low priority at this time. Municipal Infrastructure and Housing both noted that we haven't focused much work on energy efficiency and weatherization and would be interested in exploring those further should it make sense with City workplans. Safe, healthy, Connected People flagged three goals we could be making more progress on: Expanding access to health care and access to mental health services, Fostering the development of neighborhood identities, and Increasing gender and racial diversity on Staff and Boards to more accurately match the gender and racial make-up of Winooski residents. They did not some effort has been made on these fronts.

Do we feel like we're on track towards meeting these goals over time?

All commissions reported feeling on track except for the Housing Commission, which flagged 3 areas of concern: We don't yet have a steady funding source for the Housing Trust Fund, we haven't made changes to zoning changes to effectively incentivize affordable housing, and we seem to lack any tools to support the creation of affordable 2+ bedroom housing.

What priorities should future policy focus on in the next year or two? 5 years out?

Finance

- Looking ahead, we are focused on Winooski being financially sustainable and affordable. We should continue focusing on attracting employers for our residents, supporting relationships with organizations that can support them, fostering steady planned growth and development, and planning for the TIF revenue.
- We should also re-visit our Opportunity Zone designation and try to capitalize on this as an avenue to keep growth and development steady as COVID has an impact.

Housing

- Looking ahead, the Commission sees a sustainable, long-term funding model for the Housing Trust Fund as a critical need.



- The Commission also identified responses to the impacts of COVID on housing stability and examining the issue of setting targets for bedroom counts alongside unit counts as issues of importance for the years ahead.
- In addition, the Commission stressed the importance of regular monitoring of the impacts of housing policies that have already been implemented, and wants to keep this in its work plan.

Municipal Infrastructure

- Main Street support
- Sidewalk repair maintenance prioritization scheme
- Road improvement
- Support additional tree plantings, improving urban canopy
- Implementation of Transportation Master Plan (Pedestrian/bike transportation improvements)
- Supporting fiberoptic telecom options in Winooski (Burlington Telecom, for example)

Planning

- Our highest priority in the near term is to continue reviewing and adjusting zoning to ensure that development of the corridors is complementary with surrounding neighborhoods and completing the historic preservation work.
- Further out, the commission would like to discuss the protection of our natural areas and open spaces through zoning and ensuring that development is producing neighborhood scale retain and commercial uses.

Safe, Healthy, Connected People

- In the next year, SHCP believes the focus should continue to be on areas that “keep the lights on” and assist our neighbors through the pandemic: providing fire and police services, meals, daycare/after school programming, mutual aid, etc.
- Post-COVID, priorities include:
 - Childcare (Goal 12). Several efforts have been made and Thrive is now in a great place, but more work can be done here.
 - Increasing gender and racial diversity (Goal 22).
 - Continuing to focus on volunteer recruitment so that representation on various commissions reflect the population (Goal 17/18).
 - Establishing opportunities for City officials to spend time developing and cultivating relationships with a diverse set of our community (Goal 16).

Do we as a commission have what we need to succeed? Are we able to make policy advisory decisions that keep us on track towards our master plan and community vision?

For the most part, commissions felt supported but some suggestions were shared to better support them:

- The Planning Commission didn't feel certain they have the information or tools to truly understand the long-term outcomes of current development to be sure policy is driving us towards our community vision. Similarly, the Finance Commission felt they needed more



- information to understand the city's broader financial landscape, such as workforce needs compared to employment opportunities compared to housing availability, for example. And Housing expressed needing more perspective from developers, and keeping a connection to the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission.
- Safe, Healthy, Connected People asked that the Council establish priorities for the TIF money (upcoming increase in general fund revenue when the debt for the Downtown redevelopment is paid off) and wondered if goal 4, implementing the Branding Study recommendations, would be better suited to the Finance Commission. They also question if the makeup of their commission (and perhaps other commissions) should be revisited to better reflect our community and the people we serve, for example including youth, parents from the school community, senior citizens and BIPOC members.
 - The Municipal Infrastructure Commission expressed a gap in follow up from Council to understand the results and outcomes of their work.

