

TOWN OF NORWICH
VILLAGE MASTER PLAN PROJECT - STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING
Meeting Notes
Tuesday, June 9th, 2026

Members present: Jaan Laaspere, Christian Spalding, Brendan Classon, Andrew Torkelson, Jess Phelps, Alec Orenstein, Cole Flannery, Lucinda Walker

Members absent: Brian Loeb, Elena Kennedy, Sheridan Zimmer, Anne Sargent

Staff: Steven True, Jean Richardson

Public Present: Nancy Osborne, John Forshik, Gail Torkelson, Mary Gorman, Amy Stringer (Zoom)

Open house:

Sarah Rooker of the Norwich Historical Society gave a talk looking at the history of Norwich from its founding to the 90's. After the presentation, there was a brief Q&A. A link to the presentation can be found [here](#).

1. **6:30 PM** meeting opens

Jaan Laaspere thanked the members for participating and laid out the framework for the night's meeting: to get to know one another, answer any questions, and explore the nature of the master plan.

2. During introductions, members had been asked to prepare an answer to the question: 'What do you value most in the village today?' Members spoke to the vibrant level of activity in the center, the pleasure of meeting and talking with friends during school pick-up, the quality of people in Norwich, the beauty of the town and of having raised two children through Marion Cross, and having one moving back to Norwich to do the same, the pleasant rural scale of the town, the opportunity to strengthen the public planning process, the transformation of their neighborhood to a community of young families with many shared activities, the challenges of operating a small business, the town's walkability and of observing a generational shift in the town and a small town feeling that feels 'big' in activity and community.

3. Next, Steven True presented the initial project area map and described existing conditions, emphasizing the critical infrastructure underlying the planning area. Members discussed the size and the features of the area and determined at the next meeting to examine the project boundaries more closely.

4. Jaan Laaspere introduced Dr. Jean Richardson, who is facilitating the initial steering committee meetings as the group develops a Statement of Work (SOW) to accompany a request for proposals (RFP) for a consultant to work with the Planning Commission and Steering Committee to author the Master Plan.

5. Jean then led a discussion about the Master Plan process, noting that the Village is one of the planning areas described in the 2020 Town Plan, and the work that's being done now will inform the 2028 Town Plan. Purposes of Master Plan: Vision – long-term vision for the area. Public Process: builds on past studies, creates a forum for public input, produces a tangible public report that can function as a living document, and not just a plan that sits on the shelf. Capital Planning: organizes and prioritizes potential downtown projects in a single working document. This helps coordinate capital investments and makes the town more competitive for grants. Identifies Challenges and lack of data/information, and identifies opportunities, and ultimately, proposes goals, policies, and recommendations for implementation, but most importantly, it is the opportunity for capacity building, which is a process for building relationships between town government, property owners, businesses, non-profit organizations, schools, and the public, and people of all ages.

6. **Work Plan & Activities**

Jaan Laaspere then introduced the members to the three phases of the project: 1. Produce a SOW & RFP, 2. Work with consultants to develop a public engagement process, 3. Draft the Village Master Plan.

7. **Adjourn: 8:15 PM, Next meeting, June 23rd, 6:30 PM at Tracy Hall**