

Walsh Property Community Planning Committee (WPCPC)
Summary for Meeting #1

February 24, 2021 | 6:00 – 8:30 PM
Zoom Webinar

Meeting in Brief

The Walsh Property Community Planning Committee (WPCPC) met virtually on February 24, 2021, from 6:00 to 8:30 PM on the Zoom webinar platform. This first meeting of the WPCPC included a round of introductions of WPCPC members, liaisons, and project team; a presentation and discussion to review and refine the WPCPC process and operating protocols; a virtual overview of the Walsh Property site and existing site information; a brainstorm discussion to identify the information needs of the WPCPC to guide its decision-making and planning; and an overview of next steps.

Action Items

Who	What
WPCPC Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send comments / corrections for this (Feb 2021) meeting summary to Maggie Osthues, CBI• Send a short paragraph bio to Maggie Osthues, CBI
Town Staff & Facilitation Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once approved in the March 2021 WPCPC Meeting, post this meeting summary on the Town of Truro website along with the recording of this meeting (available to watch here)• Develop a primer on Open Meeting Law for WPCPC Members• Consolidate existing reports and Town resources that may help inform future WPCPC deliberations

Find details on upcoming WPCPC meetings, as well as prior agendas and materials at <https://www.truro-ma.gov/walsh-property-community-planning-committee-0>

WPCPC Members in Attendance

Russ Braun	Hannah King	Ryan Schmidt
Eileen Breslin	Jane Lea	Todd Schwebel
Morgan Clark	Christine Markowski	Paul Wisotzky
Fred Gaechter	Craig Milan	Steve Wynne
Kevin Grunwald	Kenneth Oxtoby	
Susan Howe	Janice Parky	

Town of Truro Select Board Liaison Stephanie Rein; Town of Truro staff Darrin Tangeman, Kelly Clark, and Jarrod Cabral; and Consensus Building Institute (CBI) facilitation team Stacie Smith and Maggie Osthues were also in attendance, as were many members of the public.

I. Welcome and Introductions

Following a brief review of how to engage effectively on the Zoom webinar platform, Stacie Smith, CBI facilitator, opened the first meeting of the WPCPC, welcoming attendees and facilitating a round of introductions for WPCPC members, project team members, and liaisons. The facilitation team will be compiling a list of short biographies for each of the WPCPC members as a tool to build greater familiarity and connection within the group.

II. Process Overview

Due to impacts from COVID-19, Governor Charlie Baker issued an executive order on March 10, 2020, suspending certain provisions of Massachusetts's Open Meeting Law, allowing for online meetings open to the public in lieu of in-person gatherings. Meeting #1 of the WPCPC took place on the Zoom online webinar platform, with access information shared in the agenda posted with the public meeting notice on the Town of Truro's website.

Stacie Smith, CBI facilitator, provided an overview of the WPCPC's objectives; roles of members, liaisons, and technical experts; and decision-making and operating protocols. She then framed up a discussion about formalizing liaisons and determining a leadership structure for the WPCPC.

Ms. Smith began her overview presentation by sharing the purpose of the WPCPC:

To guide the development of plans for the use of the Walsh property. The WPCPC's mandate is:

- a) to embody, engage and include the full range of perspectives (interests and concerns, as well as geographic and demographic groups) of the town of Truro.*
- b) to undertake, analyze and synthesize public input and widespread outreach to maximize involvement, understanding and support for the resulting plan and its implementation.*
- c) drawing on active public input and engagement, to develop broad criteria for success, develop and evaluate a range of options and approaches, and ultimately seek consensus for plans based on these criteria for the use of the property to be presented to town meeting.*

Ms. Smith defined the roles of: the community members serving on the WPCPC, the neutral facilitation team, liaisons to the WPCPC from other Town boards, and technical experts, noting that community members will serve as individuals rather than official liaisons to any particular group in the Truro community. She clarified that liaisons from other Town boards, if and when they are approved by the committee, will serve as conduits of information and a point of contact to and from their respective boards but will not have a role in WPCPC deliberations.

Ms. Smith then reviewed WPCPC decision-making and ground rules, highlighting that it will operate by consensus to the extent possible. She described the WPCPC's meeting structure, noting that all meetings will be held in compliance with Open Meeting Law, and shared how WPCPC will position itself for public outreach and engagement.

Below are member clarifying questions and comments that followed Ms. Smith's presentation. WPCPC member questions are **bolded**, answers from Truro staff and/or CBI are *italicized*, and any further comments or questions made by members are in regular text.

- **Are all WPCPC full members and will there be alternates? What is the quorum number of WPCPC members?**

- *All WPCPC members are full members and will not have alternates. That said, if later in the process WPCPC members would like to revisit that question, it will be possible to do so. Quorum is a simple majority of WPCPC members unless otherwise defined in the authorization document for this committee. The facilitation team can send around a primer on Open Meeting Law to ensure that WPCPC members are well-versed in how to comply.*
- **Will the WPCPC's final plan be submitted to the Truro Select Board prior to submission to Town Meeting?**
 - *The WPCPC's final plan will be considered a warrant article for Town Meeting and, as such, will be submitted to the Select Board to be added to the Town Meeting warrant. The Select Board will vote to recommend the WPCPC warrant article be included. However, the Select Board could ask for a status update from WPCPC prior to Town Meeting.*
- **Should there be such a time later on when it is safe to meet in person, how will WPCPC approach meetings?**
 - *This is a conversation that is still underway and being explored. If it is determined to be safe and is of interest to the committee, WPCPC could consider meeting in-person later this summer or fall, but would explore how to hold hybrid meetings to ensure that part-time residents are able to participate.*

Following Ms. Smith's presentation and an opportunity for clarifying questions, WPCPC members engaged in a full-group discussion of two outstanding questions relevant to WPCPC operations: group leadership structure and invitations to liaisons. Below is a brief synthesis of the results of this conversation, organized by topic.

WPCPC Leadership: Ms. Smith noted that the operating protocols allow for the creation of chairs, co-chairs, or some other structure for committee member leadership.

- Multiple WPCPC members suggested that the facilitation team is fulfilling many of the responsibilities that may traditionally rest with committee chairs or co-chairs, such that those roles might not be needed
- Asked about what function they might play, Ms. Smith noted that, in other processes, chairs can play a key role in planning committee meetings in collaboration with the facilitation team and Town staff. Committee leadership in meeting planning can help ensure that community interests are well-represented and appropriately nuanced. With a facilitator in place, the roles might be less hierarchical and more of a community guidance position.
- A member highlighted the importance of having internal committee leadership, including for actions such as calling roll.
- Some members raised concerns that chairing a committee the size of the WPCPC (16 members) could be a daunting commitment. A member suggested that a steering body of 3-4 WPCPC members that represent the demographics of the group could help steer the committee's planning effectively.
- Members suggested that the WPCPC wait to make a final decision on leadership structure until it was more established and better versed in its role.

WPCPC Liaisons

- A member suggested considering potential liaisons that exist outside the structure of Town committees and represent important constituencies, such as the Chamber of Commerce.
- A member noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals is strictly adjudicatory and that any input offered might be prejudicial. They noted that Town Council could advise on that issue.
- Members raised concerns about bringing in more formal liaisons to an already large group, suggesting that representatives from the suggested groups could be brought in as needed for consultation rather than serve as permanent liaisons.
 - Ms. Smith clarified that representatives from the noted bodies (Select Board, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Health, Zoning Board of Appeals, and Finance Committee) were not invited to be members of the WPCPC while representatives of the key interests involved in determining the end use of the Walsh Property were invited to serve as WPCPC members.
- Committee members generally agreed with a proposal to postpone any decisions about liaisons until they better understood the group's needs.

III. Overview of the Walsh Property

Jarrold Cabral, Director of the Department of Public Works, presented a virtual overview of the Walsh Property Site, reviewing the process that resulted in the formation of the WPCPC and highlighting existing data and in-process studies on the site. Mr. Cabral walked through previous Town engagement on the Walsh Property, highlighting the April 2019 Town Meeting article that approved the acquisition of the property, the three uses prescribed by the Select Board (open space, recreation, and housing), and the "Wishes and Worries" community forum held in June 2019 that helped lead to the creation of the WPCPC process.

He then provided a high-level virtual "tour" of the property, sharing facts on the size and negotiated price, showing various maps detailing the property and its boundaries, and presenting photos of the existing cottages from an appraisal report. Mr. Cabral shared a top-line review of the 2019 appraisal report as well as limits and constraints on planning for the site, including allowable uses for Residential zone under existing Zoning and Use Regulations. He noted that there are no wetlands or flood zone constraints, but there are portions of land that fall under natural heritage and endangered species programs. Mr. Cabral reviewed the results of a 2019 limited environmental site assessment that was conducted to evaluate the land and the structures, commenting that no Recognized Environmental Conditions were found on site in the soil analysis and no releases of hazardous materials were found. He explained that a structural evaluation and topography survey were underway, which would be completed in mid-March and posted for WPCPC members and the public. Mr. Cabral closed his presentation with a review of funding, noting that, currently, there is short-term borrowing until the use(s) of the property is determined.

Below are member clarifying questions and comments that followed Mr. Cabral's presentation. WPCPC member questions are **bolded**, answers from Truro staff and/or CBI are *italicized*, and any further comments or questions made by members are in regular text.

- **Are there home inspection reports on the cottages and septic reports on the Title V property and the cesspools?**
 - *Existing data on cesspools is limited – the Town knows that the cottages are all on cesspools and have no history of pumping. There is a Title V certificate for 10 Walsh*

Way; there was no septic inspection done prior to the sale. The soon-to-be-released structural report will provide more information on the inspection of the cottages; the Town will post the report online and share it with WPCPC [available [here](#)].

IV. Information Needs and Methodology

Stacie Smith, CBI facilitator, framed a group brainstorm on the WPCPC's information needs, highlighting the importance of time, efficiency, and collectively gathering information to advance group decision-making. She outlined three criteria for joint fact finding to help guide the group's thinking: (1) the information collected is salient and pertinent, and will help guide the WPCPC in making good decisions; (2) the information is technically accurate and credible; and (3) the information is seen as legitimate to participants and the public.

Following Ms. Smith's framing, WPCPC members engaged in a full-group discussion of what information is needed to inform WPCPC deliberations, who can provide that information, and how could that information be used. Below is a brief synthesis of the results of this conversation, organized by topic.

- **Site hydrology:** There is a possibility that the property may require wells. It is likely too premature for a detailed study, but WPCPC should avail itself of existing available information to gain a clearer understanding of the hydrology of the site and immediate surroundings.
 - Mr. Cabral noted that the Town should be able to pull existing data from the Water Department to help answer questions about hydrology.
- **Site topography:** Seeing a topographical map of the property could help the WPCPC distinguish what areas would be appropriate for what kinds of uses.
 - Mr. Cabral noted that the structural evaluation and topography study that will be completed mid-March should help provide topographical information.
- **Land use and development:** Mass Audubon Society has a presentation on how to approach land use and development in less impactful ways that could be relevant and helpful to the WPCPC.
 - Ms. Smith noted that an overview on land use planning could be helpful for the group.
- **Viability of existing structures:** One question is the condition of the current buildings – both their structural viability and any other aspects that may not make them usable. Whether or not the buildings are viable can help frame thinking around how they are dealt with in the planning process.
 - Mr. Cabral clarified that, currently, Truro does not have active maintenance of the buildings but there are patrols through the area; “no trespassing” signs; sealed doors, windows, and roofs; and regular walk rounds by building maintenance.
- **Existing planning reports:** Other committees have completed many relevant planning documents and reports that could help inform the deliberations of the WPCPC. Those that may be outdated could still provide relevant background data. Suggested reports included: Truro's Needs Assessment and Housing Plan, Truro's Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Cape Cod Commission's Regional Comprehensive Plan, the Council on Aging's survey on the needs of seniors, etc.
- **Demography:** It would be helpful to know the demography of the community that the site should be serving and the breakdown of interests on the WPCPC.

- Ms. Smith noted that the WPCPC contains a subset of community members that represent interests across the identified range of uses: housing, open space, and recreation. Uncovering more about what the community desires for the site will be realized through ongoing engagement and joint fact finding on the implications of different uses on things like the environment, hydrology, etc.
- **Community outreach and engagement:** A key consideration for the WPCPC moving forward is how to transfer information to and from the community and engage community members early and often in this process. This would be a good topic for a future WPCPC meeting. Virtual engagements have made it possible to hear from many voices that had not always been engaged in previous processes (e.g., low-wage worker community, school community, young people, people living at the hotel, etc.). WPCPC wants to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the broader community.

V. Public Comment

- We have lived on Great Hills Road for 20 years and spend half the year in Truro. We have been coming to Truro for over 50 years. This has been an excellent meeting. I would like to point out 3 things we heard as major topics: housing, open space, and recreation. One of the things that Truro lacks is a real community center. In my experience, people live in their neighborhoods and maybe see each other in certain clubs or spaces. We don't have a magnet to drag the community together. We have this big, blank space. We should be trying to build something that people want to come to and gather at.
- I am thrilled with this committee and grateful for all of you doing this work. Of the three uses we are talking about, it's very important that we understand the ecosystem in which we live. On this committee, you have numerous perspectives, but I'm not sure of the balance of them. I think that's what Hannah was getting at in her comments about makeup of the group. In listening to introductions, there are at least three people with professional experience in housing, but I am not hearing those with professional experience in environmental conservation. I am interested in how you form a balance on the group. In Truro, because of our need for housing, people often feel guilty and are castigated for putting environmental health over housing. Because of that, a lot of voices have been silenced for caring about the environment – not because it's beautiful, but because it's supporting us. Recently, if people hadn't come forward with strenuous advocacy, water pollution that would have occurred from the housing development would have been extreme. Those people were called a lot of names when they were just looking after the environment that we all care about for our clean water, clean air, and continuation of our tourism, which is one of the biggest parts of our economy. I want to make sure that the environment is not an opinion or perspective but is a grounding foundation for all of the work this committee does. I have said this twice before related to this group, and remember Stacie commenting that she couldn't imagine that the people in Truro wouldn't have an environmental perspective. I want to tell you that there are many voices in Truro for whom the environmental perspective is a low priority. It needs to be a major priority of this committee, above everything. Everything on that property needs to be done in a way that is profoundly protective way to the environment and delicate ecosystem.
- I would like to go back to the liaison issue and put in a pitch. I think there are two committees and boards on the proposed list that it would be helpful for all committees involved – Planning Board and Conservation Commission– to have liaisons from the

beginning. Both of those entities have a lot of information and resources that would be helpful. I think there is a lot of two-way informing that would be helpful. Morgan was talking about environmentally sensible and creative planning for housing and the environment. It would be helpful for both the Planning Board and Conservation Commission to have liaisons from the beginning. In terms of Truro, we have been going through planners like nobody's business. Our current interim planner is fabulous, and it is the Planning Board that is the consistency.

- This is a daunting task, and I have respect for it and am glad to help. The 800lb gorilla that nobody has addressed is whether the committee as a whole or the individuals have been advised on the permissible uses of the town by law. When you come up with plans, are you complying with existing zoning? I heard that zoning could get changed a bit – are you going to try to work with that in mind from that beginning? You will probably want to know what these 70 acres will allow you to and what constraints you have; constraints won't come from the Town Board, it will be Planning and Zoning. I wish this group the best of luck.

VI. Next Steps

Stacie Smith, CBI facilitator, closed the meeting, describing the next steps for the group. WPCPC members will complete a scheduling poll to determine a standing monthly meeting, which will aim to be two hours long. Suggested topics for future WPCPC meetings include Land Use 101, WPCPC public outreach and engagement, and a discussion on a preliminary workplan and the final product of the WPCPC. The group will also need to revisit the questions of liaisons and leadership structure that were discussed in this meeting. Town staff and the facilitation team will compile guidance on Open Meeting Law and consolidate existing relevant reports about the Walsh site for WPCPC members. Ms. Smith ended by thanking the WPCPC members for their time and engagement and adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

