

## **Director of Planning & Community Development Department 2022 Annual Report**

### **Mission Statement:**

The mission of the Director of Planning & Community Development Department is to collaborate with residents, town officials and business owners by following best practices of urban planning and development to progress short- and long-range plans that identify and prioritize the needs of the municipality while promoting a well-designed, livable and thriving community.

### **Department Overview:**

The Director of Planning and Community Development Department consists of one employee who provides technical support and leadership regarding land use and development to all Town Departments, Committees and Boards as requested. She contributes guidance and expertise with civic-minded volunteers on the Stoneham Square Strategic Action Plan, advocacy through the Transportation Advisory Subcommittee, and leads regionally with conversations about first and last mile mobility solutions for Stoneham residents and employers. Professional involvement, noteworthy department emphasis, and financial awards over the last year are detailed below.

### **Professional Leadership & Affiliations:**

- President, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- Stoneham Representative, MAPC
- Delegate, North Suburban Planning Council
- Member, Stoneham Transportation Advocacy Committee
- Member, MAPC Executive Committee
- Member, Metro Common 2050 External Advisory Committee
- Chair & Member, MetroFuture Inc. Board of Directors
- Member, Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors
- Member, American Planning Association: Massachusetts Chapter

### **Department Highlights:**

- Professional Planning Review – Oversight and assessment of all proposed special permit requests, zoning language, and site plan applications to the Town of Stoneham.
- Stoneham Commercial Improvement Program – Continued to facilitate the financial program for businesses in the Central Business District to improve its signage, windows and storefront esthetic.
- Green Communities Program – Received and spent \$200,000 from the Massachusetts Green Communities Division of the Department of Energy Resources, and \$55,800 in utility incentives. Projects include Town Hall Auditorium air handler, Police Department AHU-2 Demand Control Ventilation, and LED lighting upgrades at Town Hall exterior, South Elementary School exterior, and inside the Fire Department. Projected annual operating savings is over \$40,000.
- CDBG Microenterprise Program – The Town received \$85,000 through a regional program administered through the Department of Housing and Community Development to help stabilize microbusinesses (5 or fewer employees) that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19 crisis. Thanks to the pooling of funds from other communities, Stoneham was able to grant an additional \$125,000 to eligible organizations.
- PARC Project – The Town received \$100,000 in competitive PARC (Parkland Acquisition Renovation for Communities) funding to update its Clara Steele Playground. This project is the first inclusive playground in town with ADA compliance and new sensory components. Ribbon cutting and celebration occurred in 2021.
- Municipal Energy Technical Assistance – The Town received \$12,500 from the Department of Energy Resources for assistance with soliciting and evaluating bids for a third-party owned solar photovoltaic project on the campus of its new High School at 149 Franklin Street.
- Community Compact IT Grant – The Town was awarded \$25,000 from the Division of Local Services to migrate its existing planimetric geospatial data to an ArcGIS Online driven environment. Work will be completed in early 2022.
- Housing Choice Status – The Town retained its Housing Choice status with the Department of Housing & Community Development. The Housing Choice Initiative provides incentives, rewards, technical assistance, and targeted legislative reform to encourage and empower municipalities to plan and build diverse housing stock.

- Outdoor seating dining review – Worked with department heads to create an outdoor seating permitting process for restaurants during COVID-19.
- Census Precinct Project – Collaborated with the Town Clerk and Director of Public Works to district precincts based on the 2020 Census numbers within the State guidance.
- Stoneham Traffic Commission – Participates in monthly meetings to address traffic and safety issues throughout the municipality. Topics include requests from residents, infrastructure complaints, and larger municipal-wide policy changes and project proposals.
- Stoneham High School Project Sustainability Subcommittee – Participates in bi-weekly standing meeting to discuss green initiatives including but not limited to: rooftop solar, parking lot canopy solar, and on-site battery storage at the proposed, new high school site.
- Downtown Parking Study – The Town, in collaboration with Stantec, began and completed their Downtown Parking Study. The 77-page report included current parking conditions, land use and zoning analysis, extensive public outreach, and recommended actions for a future parking management plan. This project was funded through the Community Compact.
- Downtown Redesign Project – This project continues to progress to design and future implementation of a complete downtown redesign on Main Street from Maple Street to Minot and including the adjacent Central Street area. The project goals are to improve safety at the intersection and surrounding areas of Franklin Street, Main Street/Route 28, and Central Street in Stoneham Square as well as improve pedestrian accessibility.
- Mobility improvements – In conjunction with the Downtown Redesign Project, the Town has submitted a project need form to MassDOT for the intersection at Marble/Summer/Main Street including the stretch of Main Street to Maple Street. If approved, the project will receive a project number and the Town is able to move forward with the intersection redesign and multi-modal improvements in the scope area.
- Rooftop Solar at Central Middle School – Finalized with Solect and received approval at Town Meeting to execute agreements including PILOT, install solar panels, and submit all necessary paperwork to achieve a high performing PPA for the next twenty years.
- Arts & Culture Regional Trail Project – Awarded funding with the towns of Wakefield and Lynnfield to create a regional arts trail project. Project will be conducted in 2022.
- Winchester Hospital Senior Center Grant for Technology – Collaborated with the Senior Center to gain funding to develop a program called Easy Connections with Technology that seeks to help seniors how to use technology to connect with others and reduce social isolation.
- Hazard Mitigation and Municipal Vulnerability Planning Process – Teamed up with Weston & Sampson along with various department heads to facilitate a Hazard Mitigation and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan. Process included extensive preparation, critical facility inventory, community building workshop, listening sessions, online survey, and recommendation for adoption.
- Mystic Highland Greenway – Meets bimonthly with Senator Lewis' office, Representative Donato, Representative Lipper-Garabedian, MassDOT, MAPC, and the communities of Melrose, Malden, and Wakefield on the development of a new regional greenway.
- Spot Pond Loop Scoping & Request for Proposals – Received funding for assistance to develop the Request for Proposals on the Spot Pond Continuous Loop Design Project. Successfully worked with the land use, legal, and procurement departments at MAPC, Town Administrator and Town Procurement Agent to finalize packet for advertisement which will be out to advertisement in early 2022.
- Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP) – Stoneham became one of 125 Massachusetts communities to become a RRP municipality. Through this planning process, the town developed actionable, project-based recovery plans to tailor unique economic challenges and COVID-19 impacts to the downtown and adjacent commercial areas.
- LRRP Subject Matter Expertise – Worked with four subject matter experts as phase 2 of the LRRP planning process. These experts gave tangible actions for the town to implement with regard to branding, organizing, infrastructure, and events. Additionally, the Director worked with DHCD on a Funding Assistance Summary Report on a path to implement recommendations from the report.
- EV Stations at Stoneham Arena – Collaborated with Eversource and Voltrek to install electric vehicle charging stations at Stoneham Arena. At this time, charging is free for users as we collect data and build capacity.