

## **Director of Planning & Community Development Department 2024 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, MAPC Strategic Plan & Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Assessment Committee
- Chair & Member, MetroCommon Inc. Board of Directors
- Member, Massachusetts Association of Professional Planners
- 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 \$170,000 from the Massachusetts Green Communities Division of the Department of Energy Resources, and \$82,768 in utility incentives. Projects include Robinhood Elementary heat recovery controls, South Elementary and Colonial Park Elementary LED replacement, Senior Center attic insulation, Stoneham Library steam pipe insulation, Police VFD (Variable Frequency Drives) on hot water pumps, Middle School refrigerator controls, and Police Station office wall insulation.
- Spot Pond Loop Conceptual Design – Thanks to an earmark from State Rep Day and State Senator Lewis, the Town prepared a conceptual plan for a circumferential trail/trail network around the Spot Pond Reservoir. The Plan represents feedback from numerous meetings with staff, land-owning agencies, trail advocates and stakeholders, and the general public. This Plan is available on the town website.
- Accelerating Climate Resilience Grant with Arlington and Winchester – Worked with Arlington and Winchester to provide three workshops, an individual community guidebook (in three languages – Portuguese, Chinese, and English), and complimentary videos. Award was for \$40,000 and was completed in December 2023. All items are available on the town website.
- Chapter 40A 3A legislation – The Town has held numerous public meetings and approved language to work toward legislative compliance. Additionally, the Town was awarded funding through Mass Housing Partnership to calculate unit capacity within its districts and the Executive Office for Administration and Finance to conduct an Economic Feasibility Analysis of our inclusionary zoning. The Town has received interim compliance until December 31, 2024 and submitted our compliance review paperwork in December 2023.
- 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 Redesign Project – After public engagement sessions with residents and the business community, the Town finalized and forwarded a 25% design of a complete downtown redesign on Main Street from Maple Street to Minot and including the adjacent Central Street area to MassDOT. 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. The Town has actively been seeking construction funding and will continue to do so until the project is fully funded.
- Housing Trust Assistance – Applied and awarded intensive technical assistance from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership to support the Stoneham Municipal Affordable Housing Trust (SMAHT). This project will help SMAHT shape its goals to be more specific and measurable as well as identify strategies, tasks, and necessary procedures to effectively move forward. Project will take place in 2024.
- 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. The project received 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 Robinhood Elementary 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. Solar is expected to be installed and turned on at the property in 2024.
- MOTT Grant with the Chamber of Commerce – Worked with the Chamber of Commerce via the MOTT (Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism) Grant on a branding project. Met regularly with the committee to finalize color, taglines, and design suite for future use. Branding was officially unveiled in spring 2023.
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant – The Town was awarded \$108,700 through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for a wetland restoration and trails enhancement on the conservation land adjacent to Stoneham High School. Work continues to be underway and will be completed by June 2024.
- Shared Streets Program – The Town received \$44,463.10 through MassDOT Shared Streets Program to update the pedestrian crossing in front of the Post Office to the Town Common. This project moved the former crosswalk to a safer location with bump outs and rapid flashing beacons. Construction was complete in spring 2023.
- 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.
- Stoneham Shuttle Pilot – Submitted and was awarded \$796,817 over the next three federal fiscal years through Boston MPO's Community Connections Program to pilot a local shuttle service that will connect Stoneham residents and employees of Stoneham businesses to transportation options. A RFP process will conclude in spring 2024 and the selected vendor will launch the project in summer 2024.
- Aggregation – Spearheaded both municipal and community electricity aggregation agreement work with partners Good Energy, Constellation, and Power Options. These two programs allowed residents and the municipality to have predictable, competitive supply rates during a volatile market. The Town went out to bid and successfully secured another two year community aggregation contract for its residents and municipal accounts.