

Development Pressures on Agricultural, Recreational, and Institutional Lands

Stakeholder Working Group
DRAFT Meeting 1 Summary

January 12, 2022
1:00-2:30 pm

Participating Stakeholders

Andrea Aldana	Lower Cape Community Development Partnership
Leo Cakounes	Cranberry Grower
Melissa Cryan	Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services
Fred Gaechter	Truro Conservation Trust
Andrew Gottlieb	Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Elizabeth Jenkins	Town of Barnstable
Paul Lagg	Town of Eastham
Evan Lehrer	Town of Mashpee
Alisa Magnotta	Housing Assistance Corporation
Janet Milkman	Barnstable Land Trust
Mark Robinson	Compact of Conservation Trusts
Will Rubenstein	Camp Wingate*Kirkland
Diana Ruiz	Native Land Conservancy
Steve Spear	Natural Resources Conservation Service
Susan Starkey	Faith Communities Environmental Network/Cape Cod Climate Change Collaborative
Jessica Whritenour	The 300 Committee Land Trust

Commission Staff

Kristy Senatori	Executive Director
Erin Perry	Deputy Director
Heather McElroy	Natural Resources Manager
Jessica Rempel	Natural Resources Analyst
Michele White	Special Projects Coordinator
David Still	Digital Communications Specialist

Welcome and Introductions

Kristy Senatori, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Commission, welcomed participants. Ms. Senatori noted that the Commission is engaging a variety of perspectives on development pressures on agricultural, recreational, and institutional lands, and potential strategies for ensuring that, as a region, we continue to protect natural resources and provide open space while addressing pressing development needs. She briefly reviewed the history of development on Cape Cod, the extent of open space preserved. In summary, she noted that 86% of the region's land is either protected or developed.

Erin Perry, Deputy Director, introduced participating stakeholders and reviewed the broad themes of the three scheduled stakeholder meetings. Meeting 1 will provide baseline information on the

planning and regulatory context; meeting 2 will include a discussion and review of existing best practices; and meeting 3 will focus on next steps. Ms. Perry introduced Jack Wiggin of UMass Boston as the contractor completing research on best practices. She said that his work will include a literature review of the existing local and regional planning and regulatory context, and best practices and strategies applied elsewhere, as well as recommendations for incorporating best practices and strategies into local and regional planning and regulatory processes.

Ms. Perry reviewed the agenda for meeting 1 and introduced Heather McElroy, Natural Resources Manager, to discuss regional planning and regulation.

Regional Planning and Regulation

Ms. McElroy provided an overview of the Commission's planning and regulatory responsibilities, and the role of local and regional open space planning. She began with an overview of the Cape Cod Commission, including that it was established by the Cape Cod Commission Act, which recognizes that the Cape possesses unique natural, coastal, historical, cultural, and other values that are threatened by uncoordinated or inappropriate uses of the region's land and other resources. She added that the Act requires balancing growth with environmental protection. Ms. McElroy reviewed the role of the Commission, the makeup of the Commission board and staff, and the purposes identified in the Act.

Ms. McElroy continued with a review of the Regional Policy Plan (RPP), noting that the Act requires the Commission review and update the RPP regularly. She added that the latest RPP came into effect in 2019. She reviewed the growth policy: Growth should be focused in centers of activity and areas supported by adequate infrastructure and guided away from areas that must be protected for ecological, historical or other reasons. She also reviewed the concept of placetypes as a way to acknowledge and incorporate the fact that the Cape has different characteristics and that development in different places may need to be treated differently in order to direct growth to appropriate areas and away from more sensitive areas. She continued by reviewing some of the pressing development needs in the region, including but not limited to housing, wastewater infrastructure, and transportation infrastructure.

Ms. McElroy reviewed the regional regulatory process, including the impact-based nature of regulatory review and the open space that has resulted from a variety of development projects.

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Jessica Rempel, Natural Resources Analyst, reviewed recent data relative to development trends on agricultural, recreational, and institutional lands on Cape Cod. She reviewed existing open space by level of protection, primary purpose, and ownership. She also reviewed changes to these types of lands over the last several years, based on MassGIS assessors' records and open space data. In summary, changes from 2010-2021 resulted in just less than 6,000 acres of open space added, just over 3,000 acres of open space converted, and a net gain of 2,874 acres of open space.

Facilitated Discussion

Ms. Perry asked if there were clarifying questions and confirmed that the slides and meeting notes would be made available. In response to questions, staff reviewed the regulatory review process and described the types of regulatory review; reviewed data related to housing demand and shared that a new housing needs assessment is forthcoming as the pandemic has exacerbated an already stressed housing market; and clarified the data used for the analysis of changes in open space.

Ms. Perry noted that Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) and the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) have been working in this field, looking at development pressures and needs, and the need for open space and resource protection, and asked Alisa Magnotta (HAC) and Andrew Gottlieb (APCC) to discuss their work and what they've learned to date.

Mr. Gottlieb and Ms. Magnotta described the project. APCC and HAC recognize there are certain areas that make sense for housing development and wastewater management given their location or current development status and that there are areas with important natural resource values where development should be discouraged. Their joint study seeks to identify both of those areas to encourage density in areas where it makes sense and open space protection elsewhere. They are mapping areas based on natural resource values, placetypes, and other data to identify those areas that are of highest value for the environmental community and areas that are high value for the housing community. They will be speaking to towns about their findings. It was noted that the housing pressures have increased with the pandemic and it's important to focus on advancing the economy and year-round community. They noted that the process has been hard, but there are significant areas where both concerns can be addressed.

A participant asked for clarification on the areas of the Cape that have yet to be developed or protected and whether the intent was to develop it. Staff and several participants noted the importance of redevelopment.

Ms. Perry acknowledged several town staff participating in the meeting and asked if they could discuss municipal priorities for land conservation and development.

Town staff noted a long-held commitment to open space protection in their communities. They noted the severity of the housing crisis and the need to incentivize redevelopment in appropriate areas. They expressed the need for a balanced and strategic approach to land conservation and development and redevelopment to address housing, infrastructure, and other development needs.

One stakeholder noted the importance of communication around the HAC and APCC project so that towns know how to integrate maps into local planning. They noted the challenges in linking big picture and long-term goals to parcel-specific decisions.

Ms. Perry asked participants if the development pressures presented are consistent with the development pressures they've observed.

A representative of the land trust community said they've been looking at development pressures since the 1980s. They noted development pressures aside from housing, such as solar development, and that there are significant acres of agricultural and recreational lands that are at risk. Another participant noted that perceived open spaces are part of the Cape's green infrastructure and that recreation lands play an important role in the community, in addition to protected open space, even though they do not have the same legal protection. Another participant noted an interest in recognizing recreation lands as having natural and cultural resource value.

Public Comment

Ms. Perry opened the meeting to public comment.

Felicia Penn stated that Covid has stressed housing and people's mental and emotional states, and during this time people have connected a lot to the outside. She suggested specifying the types of density being discussed – vertical density versus horizontal density – and suggested that vertical density should be desired when considering housing.

Kris Clark requested the presentation be made available on the Commission website.

Closing Remarks/Next Steps

Ms. Perry thanked stakeholders for participating and noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at 1:00 pm.