

Town of Pembroke

Stakeholder Interview Notes

DRAFT 8/15/2023



Stakeholder Engagement

1. Schools and Youth

Luke Mitchell, VHB

Christa McGaha, VHB

Susan Bollinger, School Committee

Erin Obey, Pembroke Schools

Michael Cogburn, Youth Drug Committee

- › Schools are underfunded, affecting facility usage and programming.
- › The school buildings are old. Planning and consideration are needed regarding how to update school facilities, how school buildings are used, and if there is potential for consolidation.
- › The Youth Drug Prevention Committee, including the Town Committee, the Pembroke Drug Coalition, and Pembroke Titans Against Drugs, was formed due to lack of resources for children to make decisions on drug use and a lack of in-school resources
- › School enrollment has declined steadily over time. Some students are going to private schools for athletics opportunities and due to Pembroke's old facilities. However, Pembroke's schools are a reason people move to the Town. Pembroke's schools offer advanced placement courses, one of the only certified robotics teachers in the state, three languages taught in the high school, and two languages taught in the middle school.
- › Parents and school administrators note tech-burnout concerns. CARES funding was used to purchase chrome books for students (younger students use iPads, elementary through high school students use chrome books). The district is confident in its security and firewall. Hardwired devices work well, but wireless connection is hindered.
- › The high school's Pathways program was formed to prepare children for the job market. Current pathways include Digital Arts, Business, and Science. A Biomedical/Engineering pathway will be added next year.
- › There is opportunity to expand after school enrichment programming (e.g., chess, archery, active recreation, etc.)

Stakeholder Engagement

2. Housing and Economic Development

Luke Mitchell, VHB

Julia Mintz, VHB

Sharon McNamara, AHC

Judy Parks, AHC

Frederick Casavant, ZBA

- › Housing has healthy demand in Pembroke but is limited relative to housing needs.
- › Zoning and land use regulations limit what can be built and where.
- › There is a need for a more diverse continuum of housing types, including rental housing.
- › There are constraints for new construction, including the lack of a sewer system, the cost of land and lack of developable land, wetland constraints, etc
- › Affordability issues impact seniors and people who grew up in Pembroke but can't afford to stay, as well as first-time homebuyers.
- › There are several residential developments in the pipeline (200 55+ units and 66 55+ units).
- › Employment is limited locally. There are retail employers present in the Town (e.g., Lowes, shopping plazas, food service, Stop & Shop) as well as three industrial parks and some small manufacturing facilities.
- › Structural issues for employers in Pembroke include a lack of public transportation for people to commute to Pembroke and a lack of a local workforce to support certain industries.
- › Pembroke has a strong network of small businesses. There is opportunity to revise the Town's zoning bylaws to make it easier to establish a new business (e.g., parking requirements).

Stakeholder Engagement

3. Community Health and Wellness

Luke Mitchell, VHB

Julia Mintz, VHB

Erin Obey, Schools

Stephan Roundtree, PB

- › There is a Town-wide water quality problem, and a lack of Town management of surface water and water quality. Water has been tainted from cranberry growing and chemical use.
- › There are needs for more structured recreational offerings for youth, a stronger relationship between the Town's youth and seniors, the schools do not have a traditional recreation program and have limited after-school activities.
- › There is opportunity for future programming with the new community center, particularly with having programming for youth and seniors in the same building.
- › There is a lack of community spirit and destinations for social gathering, and underutilization of existing recreational facilities.
- › There are a couple of medical clinics in the Town's commercial district, far from the Town's residential areas. The nearest major hospitals are in Plymouth (approximately 14 miles away) and South Shore (approximately 18 miles away).
- › The high school is a mass-dispensing site in emergency scenarios and has plans for public health emergencies.
- › Safe Routes to School is a DOT program offering resources to communities to support sidewalk installation (bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure is limited in the Town).
- › There is a gym in the Town's business district. A fair number of people utilize school facilities (e.g., track, gym, tennis courts). There are several playgrounds in the Town, some in need of maintenance.

Stakeholder Engagement

4. Environment and Sustainability

Luke Mitchell, VHB

Julia Mintz, VHB

Donny Goris-Kolb, VHB

Art Egerton, Conservation Commission

Tracy Marino, Open Space Commission

Stephan Roundtree, Planning Board

Kairyn Rainer, Recycling and Sustainability Committee

- › Pembroke's population cherishes and has a strong sense of pride for Town's rural character and natural resources.
- › Need for managing economic growth with natural resources.
- › No Town entity is currently responsible for maintaining trails.
- › Residents don't always know where natural resources are in the Town.
- › A large portion of the Town's population has expressed opposition to "sustainability" initiatives. There is support for prioritizing cost savings and reducing fees before environmental stewardship.
- › Pembroke uses single stream recycling and has improved contamination over time, resulting in cost savings. There is curbside pickup for both trash and recycling.
- › There are several water bodies in Town filling with sediment (e.g., Silver Lake).
- › Supplying water to Brockton is a major issue. The Town should review this agreement to identify potential improvements.
- › The Town has had a major problem with litter, especially with plastics and plastic bottles on country roads and on the baseball fields.

Stakeholder Engagement

5. Cultural and Historic Resources

Luke Mitchell, VHB

Julia Mintz, VHB

Nicole Benjamin Ma, VHB

Scott Chaharyn, PHC

Steve Hermann, PHC

Miles Prescott, Pembroke Historical Society

Shannon Wilson, Pembroke Historical Society

- › There is potential to expand community knowledge of the Town's historical resources, including residents and Town officials. When residents think of historic resources in the Town, they usually think about museum and historical society holdings.
- › Pembroke's historic resources (districts, buildings, structures, objects, sites) inventoried in the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS) include:
 - › 4 historic districts/areas have significance as a set of individual resources - Composed of 34 individual resources total, 6 are noted as demolished since the inventory (there may be more)
 - › 28 individually inventoried resources (not included in a district/area)
- › Potential improvements for the Historical Society include expanded social media presence, greater member engagement, hiring a part-time curator to work on exhibit changes and inventory management, informational programming for members, and buildings maintenance/upgrades.
- › Some of the Historical Commission's accomplishments in the last five years include preventing demolition of the Turner House, establishing a sign for the North Pembroke Historic District, upkeep of Bethel Chapel, and addition of new members. Accomplishments of the Historical Society include hosting a regular monthly open house, and posting town history on social media.

Stakeholder Engagement

6. Transportation

Eileen Botti, VHB

Daniel Sullivan, Water Division

Eugene Fulmine, DPW

James Eng, Citizen at Large

Steve Ciciotti, Select Board

- › The Town is facing significant infrastructure issues. Aging infrastructure needs to be updated while maintaining the Town's low-density, rural character.
- › Roads are generally in good condition, but some need repaving. The Town has recently allocated more funding toward roadway maintenance. Need for enforcement of the Town's roadway maintenance plan to track the condition of both main and side roads.
- › Need for a water master plan to evaluate and plan for water infrastructure, particularly with expanding development. The Town has allocated funding toward water infrastructure improvements. Areas experiencing brown water need to be properly diagnosed and addressed.
- › The Town's lack of sidewalks is a significant safety issue for pedestrians and restricts mobility for those without cars. There is potential to improve active transportation in the Town to support health, wellness, and mobility. Recommendation that an inventory be conducted of all sidewalks in the Town to make sure they all accessible (especially for accessing parks and schools).
- › Transportation options are limited. The Regional Transit Agency GATRA runs a bus service through the Town. There is a commuter rail station nearby in Kingston. Mobility in the Town is car oriented.
- › Potential walkability improvements and placemaking in the Town Center and throughout the Town.
- › Some maintenance is needed of parks and trails. Potential for Herring Run to be enhanced and leveraged as a site and for trail access. Potential for Luddams Ford to be enhanced.

Stakeholder Engagement

Planning Board

Christa McGaha, VHB
Andrew Wandell, PB

- › The general character and nature of the land uses in Pembroke is single-family homes on relatively large parcels
- › Newer self-storage businesses have been opening up in town
- › In recent years, the Town has acquired a significant amount of land to preserve as open space.
- › Most new development trends are residential subdivisions.
- › The town is running out of developable land.
- › The restrictions against long dead-end cul-de-sacs limits new growth. \
- › The town should streamling the review of as-builts before the inspector grants a CofO.
- › The code could potentially be improved in terms of allowing more solar panels.
- › Pembroke needs more rental housing and housing for working people.

Stakeholder Engagement

Town Manager

Luke Mitchell, VHB

Christa McGaha, VHB

Bill Chenard, Town Manager

- › The zoning in Pembroke Town Center should be closely examined.
- › Mixed-use development was allowed there previously, but no longer is
- › There is some level of miscommunication between different agencies in town
- › Conflict between boards can turn developers off
- › Permitting could be streamlined in town
- › Zoning by-laws are self-conflicting, and not clearly written. These should be improved.
- › The Town has had very little growth in the inventory of commercial or industrial inventory
- › Only 11% of tax revenues come from commercial properties.