

6. Community Vision

A. Description of Process

Mashpee has gone through a number of public visioning, opinion survey and goal-setting rounds over the years. During 1985 and 1986 the Committee on Mashpee's Goals and Priorities, with 54 members representing all of the major Town boards and committees, homeowners associations and interest groups developed and adopted goals and policies regarding open space, agriculture, parks & recreation, fish & wildlife, water and waterways, along with other land use planning issues. Their work followed up on a public opinion survey of 260 Town Meeting voters done in December, 1984.

The next survey of Mashpee residents which sought their opinions on open space and recreation issues was done by Clark University in 1990 as part of the development of the Cape Cod Commission's first Regional Policy plan (RPP). The findings of the survey indicated strong support for protection of the Cape's water supply and surface waters and preservation of historic areas and open space. Those opinions were translated, after additional public workshops and hearings, into adopted Goals, Minimum Performance Standards and Policies regarding a variety of issue areas including Open Space and Recreation, Water Resources, Coastal Resources, Wetlands, Wildlife / Plant Habitat and Historic Preservation / Community Character. All large developments in Mashpee, as well as the Town's own planning and regulatory activities, are required to be consistent with those adopted goals, standards and policies, as subsequently amended through revisions of the Regional Policy Plan.

In undertaking the development of this plan and of a "local comprehensive plan" (LCP) under the terms of the Cape Cod Commission Act, the Town's first step was to undertake a large scale public opinion survey of Mashpee residents. 633 completed a 16 page survey which was distributed at the May 1992 Town Meeting, at the Town elections the following Saturday, through an insert in the Mashpee Messenger, a weekly newspaper, in late May and through the Town's beach sticker sales office and school system in June. Returned surveys, coded by distribution method, were accepted through early July at a number of locations to allow full participation by summer residents.

Of the survey respondents, 83% were year-round residents, 6% summer-only, 4% weekends-only and 7% "other". 7% had lived in Mashpee less than 2 years, 54% lived here 2-12 years, 31% 12-30 years and 7% over 30 years. 29% were over 65 years old, 34% were 45-64, 31% were 25-45, less than 1% were under 25 and the remainder did not list their age.

Survey issues of relevance to this plan included sections on quality of life, land use / community character, municipal facilities and services, environment and recreation / leisure activities. Some of the more interesting findings were:

- 61% felt quality of life was very good in the summer, 62% during the rest of the year;

- When asked why they came to Mashpee, respondents stated that the following were “important” or “very important”: rural character 85%, small town lifestyle 86%, open space 86%, air and water quality 89%, beaches and ponds 85%, recreational opportunities 72%, tranquility 89%, golf courses 29%, boating opportunities 44%, fishing and shellfishing 42% and Native American history 35%;
- They felt that the following were among the most serious problems facing the town: population growth 74% (the #1 concern), loss of open space 44%, pollution of groundwater 76%, pollution of bays and ponds 68% and loss of small-town character 43%;
- 74% felt Mashpee is growing too fast;
- 61% said they would support Town land purchases to reduce the town’s potential population; 76% would support zoning changes to do the same;
- 50% favored clustering development in certain high density areas as a tradeoff for leaving other environmentally sensitive areas undeveloped, 17% were opposed;
- When asked if they would support spending more, the same or less tax money on certain municipal facilities and services, the breakdown for recreation programs was 25/52/10%, public water supply was 40/41/9%, conservation was 35/46/9%, lifeguards at Town beaches was 21/52/15% and shellfish / herring wardens was 9/58/16%; the top vote getters for more spending were public water supply 40%, schools 37%, conservation 35%, recycling 35%, sewage treatment 34%, police protection 32% and fire protection 30%.
- When asked what priority the town should give to funding a list of recreation facilities, “more” funding was favored for bicycle trails 58%, walking / hiking trails 55%, nature study / conservation areas 45%, ocean beaches and parks 43%, neighborhood playgrounds 41%, pond beaches and parks 33%, outdoor basketball courts 29%, indoor swimming pool 29%, baseball / softball fields 28%, tennis courts 27%, picnic and roadside rest areas 25%, Town golf courses 21%, soccer fields 19%, track and field facilities 19%, indoor basketball courts 18%, Town marina 17%, outdoor swimming pool 16%, indoor ice skating arena 16%, Town boat landings 15%, Town campground 15% and rifle / archery range 8%;
- 50% favored, 33% opposed spending tax money on improving public access to the waterfront (both fresh and salt water);
- 79% favored, 8% opposed purchase of open space for water supply protection;
- 66% favored, 19% opposed purchase of open space for environmental protection and passive outdoor recreation;
- 21% favored and 67% opposed purchase of land for a municipal golf course;
- 43% supported, 34% opposed purchase of land for active recreation facilities (ball fields, playgrounds etc.);

- When asked how important to them is protection of Mashpee's remaining natural resources and open space areas, 77% responded "very important", 18% "somewhat important" and 2% "unimportant";
- When asked to prioritize certain natural resources for protection, "high" priority was given as follows: groundwater for water supply 89%, fresh water ponds 80%, beaches 76%, rivers 74%, coastal bays 72%, shellfish beds 70%, fresh water wetlands 68%, salt marshes 63%, forests 63% and vernal (spring) pools 62%;
- 61% supported and 15% opposed local wetlands laws which are stricter than state law;
- 69% wanted local laws to allow less destruction of wildlife habitat than allowed by current laws, 15% disagreed;
- 80% supported the use of fines of \$300 per day to punish violations of wetlands laws and the same number supported higher fines where a violator refuses to comply with orders to correct illegal damage to wetlands;
- 64% "strongly supported" and an additional 17% "supported" requiring developers of all large projects to donate land to the town for open space or parks;
- 74% supported a policy of "no net increase" of nitrogen in Waquoit and Popponesset Bays as a basis for permit approvals for new development;
- 54% would like to see more bike paths in Mashpee, 39% more walking trails and 38% more sidewalks; Great Neck Road South was the top choice for bike paths with 45% in favor and 19% opposed, followed by Great Neck Road North, Great Oak Road and Route 151. When asked if they ever bicycled to a destination in Mashpee (other than recreational biking) 21% said yes, 77% no;
- Walking was the most frequent recreation activity, with 38% saying they did so on a fairly regular basis, followed by swimming 35%, nature walks 23%, boating 20%, bicycling 19%, golf 19%, fishing 18%, shellfishing 14% and tennis 13%;
- 4% cited physical disability as a problem that hindered their ability to utilize Mashpee's recreation facilities and / or programs; 14% each cited lack of money or the wrong hours and 3% cited lack of transportation;
- Recreational opportunities in Mashpee were rated "excellent" by 5%, "good" by 44%, "fair" by 36% and "poor" by 5%;
- The facilities most cited as "frequently" used were South Cape Beach (Town) 35%, Johns Pond 13%, South Cape Beach State Park 11%; Mashpee River Woodlands 10%, Mashpee Pond 10%, Town boat landings 7%, New Seabury golf courses 7%, Quashnet School playground 7%, Heritage Park Little League fields 6%, Quashnet School ballfields 6%, Quashnet School

gymnasium 6%, Santuit Pond 6%, Lowell Holly Reservation 5% and Quashnet Valley golf course 5%;

- 45% opposed the Town encouraging the development of additional private or public marina facilities, 8% supported a public facility and 20% supported encouraging both.

These survey results, along with the Goals & Priorities Committee goals, the Regional Policy Plan goals and input received at a series of planning issues forums held in August and September, 1992, were used by the Planning Department to develop a first draft of new open space, recreation and agriculture goals, objectives and policies. Goals, objectives and policies were subsequently developed for water resources, wetlands / wildlife and plant habitat and coastal resources which were reviewed and approved in 1995 by the Mashpee Conservation Commission, the Coastal Resource Management Committee and the Leisure Services Advisory Council. On February 1, 1995 the Planning Board held a public hearing to receive comments on the open space, recreation & agriculture and wetlands / wildlife & plant habitat goals, objectives and policies. After review of the public comment, their own input and the analysis done for the plan, the Planning Board adopted goals and objectives for open space, recreation and agriculture, as well as wetlands / wildlife & plant habitat, which were incorporated into the Conservation Commission's May 1998 Open Space Conservation and Recreation Plan Update, as well as into the Town's current Comprehensive Plan.

In preparing this 2008 Open Space Conservation and Recreation Plan Update, the Town's goals and objectives were reviewed, amended and approved by the Leisure Services Advisory Council, Planning Board (voted May 7, 2008) and Conservation Commission (voted May 15, 2008), serving in the role of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee for the project. The draft Open Space Conservation & Recreation Plan itself was reviewed and approved by the Conservation Commission for submittal to the Division of Conservation Services on July 10, 2008.

B. Statement of Open Space & Recreation Goals

In developing this plan update, the goals adopted as part of the Town's 1998 Plan Update, as well as the Town's comprehensive plan elements regarding open space, recreation and agriculture, wetlands, wildlife and plant habitat, water resources and coastal resources were reviewed. While a number of the objectives listed in Chapter 8 were revised, the goals adopted in 1998 were basically maintained, though rearranged, and are as follows:

GOAL A. TO PRESERVE AT LEAST 50% OF MASHPEE'S REMAINING OPEN SPACE IN ORDER TO PROTECT WILDLIFE HABITAT AND OUR OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES, PROVIDE A VARIETY OF OUTDOOR RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES AND MAINTAIN THE RURAL AND SCENIC CHARACTER OF THE TOWN.

GOAL B. TO PROTECT AND IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF MASHPEE'S GROUNDWATER TO ENSURE AN ADEQUATE AND SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY OF SAFE DRINKING WATER.

GOAL C. TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE ESTUARINE WATER QUALITY AND THE HEALTH OF OUR COASTAL ECOSYSTEMS.

GOAL D. TO MEET THE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS AND VISITORS OF VARIED AGES AND INTERESTS FOR PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES.

GOAL E. TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE PUBLIC ACCESS TO AND ENJOYMENT OF MASHPEE'S COASTAL RESOURCES WITHOUT DEGRADING THOSE RESOURCES.

GOAL F. TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE LOCAL AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES.

GOAL G. TO ENSURE THAT PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS AND OTHER POTENTIALLY VALUABLE AGRICULTURAL AREAS ARE PROTECTED FROM DEVELOPMENT OR DEGRADATION.

GOAL H. TO RESTORE AND PRESERVE THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF INLAND AND COASTAL WETLANDS IN MASHPEE.

GOAL I. TO PREVENT LOSS OR DEGRADATION OF CRITICAL WILDLIFE AND PLANT HABITAT OR MIGRATION ROUTES.

GOAL J. TO MAINTAIN EXISTING WILDLIFE POPULATIONS AND SPECIES DIVERSITY.

GOAL K. TO PRESERVE THE ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF MASHPEE'S GROUNDWATER, WETLANDS AND SURFACE WATER BODIES.