



**Date:** 13 May 2015  
**To:** Board of Selectmen  
**From:** Green Acton  
**Subject:** Comments on Town of Acton's proposed job description  
for Land Use and Economic Development Director

Green Acton has reviewed the April 2015 draft job description for the Land Use/Economic Development Director; we'd like to offer our perspectives on the position and the draft.

It is clear that this position is one of significant responsibility, skill, and influence on the nature of how change will occur in our community. The draft cites a number of expected benefits to the Town, including staff efficiencies, improved communication across land-use departments, and a more user-friendly process for the public. We support the goals that underlie these potential benefits; that said, we believe there are some "missing pieces" in the conceit and description of the position.

#### **General Comments**

1. We note that, although these two areas of function — land use planning and economic development — have significant overlap, conflation of them into one position does carry with it some potential for what we'd call "conflict of mission" (rather than "conflict of interest"). This underscores the importance of hiring parameters that weight significantly the interests of the public and of Acton's natural resources.
2. Green Acton recommends that one of the overarching responsibilities of this position be to support and advance the goals of Acton's Master Plan (currently the Acton 2020 MP), which seeks to balance sound growth with appropriate protections for valued aspects of the community's assets, heritage, and function.
3. We endorse and recommend the recognition that the land-use "bailiwick" includes not only administration of "who can build what where," but also, attention to the preservation and protection of natural resources, safeguarding of public health, and maintenance and development of valued Town assets. Those tasks could include: conservation of land and natural resources (open space, aquifers, arable land, wetlands, wildlife habitat and corridors, et al.); protecting environmental and public health (e.g., clean air, water, and soils; solid waste, sewerage, and stormwater issues; toxicity safeguards, etc.); and planning and support for assets and amenities that create connection, cohesion, and coherency, as per the Master Plan (e.g., transportation infrastructure, recreation facilities, "Complete Streets" enactment, arts and culture opportunities, etc.). We further recommend that the occupant of the position have some understanding of the clean energy sector, and of the economic value of environmental services (e.g., [www.ecosystemvaluation.org/essentials.htm](http://www.ecosystemvaluation.org/essentials.htm)).
4. Analogously, we recommend that efforts to develop new economic activity in Town respect the principles and goals of the Town's Master Plan, and look with especial interest on entities whose environmental (including carbon) footprints are light and represent robust, local/regional enterprises. These are fitting for our Green Community.

**(continued next page)**

Green Acton is a group of volunteers working to conserve local resources and protect our environment for future generations. Through education and advocacy, we aim to: reduce, reuse, and recycle energy and materials; promote sustainable, environmentally sound practices; and support local food production and consumption.

[www.GreenActon.org](http://www.GreenActon.org)

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## Specific Recommendations

Green Acton recommends the following additions to the existing draft:

- in the Knowledge section of Knowledge, Skill, and Ability section (p. 2), amend sentence to read:

“Thorough knowledge of municipal principles, practices and procedures, preferably in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, including intergovernmental relations, municipal grant administration, budgeting and finance, personnel management, economic development, **environmental and land use laws and regulations**, and public involvement.”

- in the Skill section (p. 2), amend to read:

“Excellent oral and written communication skills, including writing reports and memos, completing applications, editing, preparation of technical reports, and the presentation of information to the Town Manager, staff, boards, and various government, public, and private entities. **Ability to work with diverse groups of stakeholders.**”

- in the Job Duties section (p.3):

- in third bullet item, amend to read: “Serve as liaison between the Town and **various public and private groups, such as the Acton Water District, the Middlesex West Chamber of Commerce, the West Acton Business Association, the Acton Conservation Commission, the Economic Development Committee, the Open Space Committee, the Community Preservation Committee, the Green Advisory Board, and others, as relevant.**”
- add additional bullet item: “• **Work to advance the goals and recommendations of Acton’s Master Plan and its Open Space and Recreation Plan.**”
- Add additional bullet item: “• **Work to establish the sustainable use of water resources as Acton develops, including coordination with the Acton Water District, and all committee/board/group stakeholders working on issues related to drinking water, stormwater, wastewater, sewers, and comprehensive water resources planning.**”

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.