

# South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee

## November 28, 2022

### MINUTES

Paul Schumacher	SMPDC	pschumacher@smpdc.org
Raegan Young	SMPDC	ryoung@smpdc.org
Jessica Cyr	Town Council	jcyr@sbmaine.us
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Chris Harris	Committee Member	chrisbharris@gmail.com

Committee Members Not Present: Jack Kareckas, Laura Leber, Scott McPhedran, Jonathan Donahue

- Jessica moved to approve minutes from October meeting, seconded by Chris and other committee members.
- Public Facilities
  - Currently some sections are longer than others and needs for more information are highlighted red.
  - Considered making space for a separate chapter on Arts & Recreation, which could include elements outside of municipality offerings. Jessica can share some language that may be helpful for this section. Section could include components of community life otherwise not mentioned (i.e. local trails, arts organizations, events like the Strawberry Festival, etc.). Barbara Hopkins with SoBo Arts may be a helpful person to speak to on this topic.
    - Regarding recreations related matters, there is a need to list parcels of land not addressed. Would also be helpful to compare recreation facilities to other towns/standards. Questions regarding how to include school recreations facilities, as well.
  - Community Center, Fire/Rescue, and Parks & Rec are all located in the same building, which may mean we can consolidate some information related to all departments to avoid repetition.
  - The Red Barn may need more planning conversations, particularly regarding issues with parking capacity. Currently, the Red Barn is in poor condition, but per deed requirements must remain recreational.
  - Raegan will be looking for details on the Sewer Plant assessment (When are results going to come in? Proximity to river and concerns with regards to climate change?)
  - Regarding schools, need to confirm numbers on current enrollment are accurate (pg. 9)-- Great Works appears to drop in numbers, despite combining two elementary schools (likely error?).
  - Recommendation to reach out to Dave Sandfield or Kara Plank at SoBo Central to include more information about the Food Pantry.
  - Regarding Town Hall (pg. 6), there should be greater detail on its current condition and a note that it no longer houses the Police Station.
  - Update "York Ambulance" to "South Berwick Ambulance" (pg. 3)
- Local Economy

- There is a lot of great information regarding the local workforce. Denise recommended that it would be helpful to add even more localized information for a more balanced picture around economic policy. Some starting points on strategies are as follows:
  - What businesses do we want to attract?
  - How would we want to develop Rt 236 or the downtown area?
  - Do we want to do a market analysis?
  - Currently, South Berwick is a “bedroom community” (workforce lives here to commute to companies like the Shipyard, Pratt & Whitney, etc.)—would we want more of a balance between residential workforce and businesses?
  - What does South Berwick want to look like in 5-10 years?
- Currently the town does not offer a lot of industrial or commercial development, so most people commute out of town for work or need to go other places as consumers.
- COVID also appears to have impacted the workforce, as there is a higher number of remote workers than ever before.
- South Berwick is considered better off comparatively, as it has low poverty and a low unemployment rate in relation to nearby towns.
- Questions regarding workforce include: What will workforce look like in the future, especially with regards to telecommuting? How does the reliance on Portsmouth Naval Shipyard impact the town if it were to close (not a current threat, but has been a major concern as recently as ‘05)? How does workforce traffic (many Shipyard workers commute from Sanford due to high housing costs) effect town life?
- Note: There will be a separate Downtown Chapter coming in January, which will likely have some crossover.
- Business elements to the town need greater detail, particularly with regards to land use for industrial/commercial development
- Denise shared that a goal for FY '24 is to provide a market analysis for the town. This means it may be better to leave the details to that analysis, and simply mention in this Plan one will be conducted. Benefits of market analysis include:
  - Planning for development can help with zoning information. For example, residential zoning on Rt 236 could potentially hamper certain development.
  - A market analysis prevents attracting businesses that do not understand needs of the community.
  - May also include helpful regional analysis, as well.
  - Helpful in demonstrating how traffic could potentially prevent new business development.
- Survey Results
  - Charts are very readable and helpful in interpreting information.
  - Marijuana results are somewhat difficult to understand, would be helpful to remove totals.
  - Notable preferences from the community:
    - Open spaces are highly desirable.
    - A strong interest in arts and agriculture, may prompt establishing a specific commission.
    - Most people want services and recreation to remain in town.
    - Strong desire for ADUs.
  - Demographically respondents typically were older, and majority were homeowners.
  - Questions for further analysis:
    - Age vs. Home Type (Do older people that own larger homes tend to want ADUs? How do younger residents feel about affordability of housing?)
    - How does commuting status effect opinions?

- Note: Home type (instead of income) may provide a sharper picture (although many people did not provide their mortgage/rent)
  - In future surveys, may be helpful to breakdown incomes that are 100k+
- Charts will be included in addition to the narrative to help readability
- Survey results that lack detail or are unclear may be good starting points for topics for further discussion in forums

#### Forums

- Raegan will send more in-depth information on how to model discussion forums, but as quick overview:
  - Public Information Sessions: Focus on sharing information with public to engage residents and provide transparency.
    - Jeff noted that this might be a good way to help present work and uncover any missing pieces.
  - Focus Groups: A series of several short sessions typically held with local leaders and/or topic experts.
  - Community Workshops: A longer session with specific objective(s) (survey responses, chapters, goals, etc.) that is intended for large public group. Can include break-out groups to cover multiple topics at once.
    - Denise asked if community events like this might duplicate survey results? What would be the added value of this/how would it move the Plan forward?
      - Paul shared that by gathering the community in person real communication on where specific strategies can begin (whereas the survey results just provide a broad overview). It also provides much-needed engagement before presenting final strategies.

**NEXT MEETING**  
**Monday, January 9 at 6 PM**  
**Police Department, Training Room**

*Meeting adjourned at 7:37pm.*

Attest:



Nora Gibson, Recording Secretary