

South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee

April 25, 2022

MINUTES

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- Began with discussion defining Comprehensive Plan
 - Briefly reviewed Growth Management Act (30A MRSA, Chapter 187)
 - Law defines various components expected to be included in a Comprehensive Plan (e.g. Transportation, Land Use, Fiscal, etc.)
 - Law had been changed many times since originating
 - Most significantly impacts zoning regulations for towns
 - Inventory is a significant part of the Plan
 - Provides a functionary, detailed overview of the resources in the form of data and context
 - Goal setting & recommendations will come in the second part: “Goals, Policies and Strategies”. This will be the focus of the second year of plan development.
 - SMPDC recommends, from their experience with other towns, to include inventory as an addendum to increase readability of the Plan
 - Readability can also be improved by using graphs and charts to summarize the major points of the inventory
 - Comprehensive Plan does not establish law, but does provide the perimeters for a town’s future development
 - Departure from an approved Plan may result in opening a town to lawsuits (although a very rare occurrence in the history of Maine)
 - The goal is for a Plan to be actionable by being specific in recommending goals, policies, and strategies for upholding those goals into the town’s future.
 - The timeline to develop a Comprehensive Plan varies widely
 - SMPDC’s goal is to complete the plan within 2 years
- Consistent vs. Not Consistent Comprehensive Plans
 - In the ‘90s, a State Planning Office was created to provide guidance, approval, and funding to towns regarding their Comprehensive Plans
 - The State Planning Office was eliminated in 2008, along with any funding associated with Comp Plans.

- Plans are now reviewed by Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF)
- According to the law, plans are either found:
 - ‘Consistent’ = the Plan addresses all necessary areas, and the town can move forward; or,
 - ‘Not Consistent’ = the Plan does not address the necessary areas, and need to be changed to move forward
- South Berwick’s most recent 2007 Comprehensive Plan was found to be ‘Consistent’
- SMPDC provided an attachment outlining upcoming Chapter reviews
 - Specific components may be added depending on the needs of the town (solar, aging related issues, affordable housing, energy/climate)
 - Certain chapters may require additional attention/time (e.g. local economy)
 - SMPDC suggested reviewing various plan formats to decide which will work best for the town
- Reoccurring monthly meetings were scheduled (4th Monday, 6 PM) and logistics of the committee were discussed
 - SMPDC asked the committee to consider appointing Officers, if helpful
 - Minutes will be kept and sent out a week in advance of upcoming meetings for review/approval
- Discussion on public input for the Plan
 - A survey will be distributed to inform the Plan
 - NOTE: For logistical reasons regarding the ballot, the Survey component would need to be completed with results in by September 2022
 - An initial draft of the survey will be shared for review
 - The survey will be done in tandem with reviewing each chapter of the Plan
 - Response time for the survey would be 3 weeks to 1 month
 - If distributed digitally, certain feedback metrics can inform if this response window is sufficient or needs to be extended
 - A Public Meeting on the Plan is recommended to generate additional support
 - Informal polling of neighbors/friends/families to inform the Plan is also encouraged
 - The Strawberry Festival may be a good opportunity to gather public input for the plan, such as through a booth or other outreach.
- Committee members have been added to SMPDC email list to stay informed on potential legislation/news that may affect the Plan
 - LD2003 concerns changes to affordable housing that would impact zoning by providing density bonuses
- FOLLOW-UP:
 - SMPDC will send out the following for review:
 - Survey draft
 - Example of Comprehensive Plan formats
 - Growth Management Act

NEXT MEETING
Monday, May 23 at 6 PM
Town Hall

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at approximately 7pm.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'NG' with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nora Gibson, Recording Secretary