

South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee

November 27, 2023

MINUTES

Raegan Young	SMPDC	ryoung@smpdc.org
Jessica Cyr	Town Council	jcyr@sbmaine.us
Nora Gibson	Recording Secretary	gibson.nora.p@gmail.com
Elita Galvin	Committee Member	elita.galvin@gmail.com
Deb Ganster	Committee Member	djganster@yahoo.com
Chris Harris	Committee Member	chrisbharris@gmail.com
Denise Clavette	Economic Developer	dclavette@sbmaine.us

Committee Members Not Present: Laura Leber, Jeff Minihan, Scott McPhedran, Jonathan Donahue

- Approval of minutes motioned by Elita, all in favor.
- Chris nominated Deb Ganster as Vice Chair, all in favor. Deb accepted the post.
- Goals, Policies, & Strategies Review – Natural Resources
 - New policy in Public Facility Chapter addressing communication.
 - Stars on draft indicate policies that need to comply with State recommended guidelines.
 - Deb attended Conservation Committee meeting to gather suggestions, as well as met with Patrick Carter from Maine Farm Trust to discuss agriculture.
 - Conservation Commission suggested stronger language—instead of “consider,” use a more directive term. The concern is that if Comprehensive Plan presents as “optional,” then it is unlikely changes will be made.
 - The Comprehensive Plan is often not easy to reference, and as a result it is difficult to resolve disputes.
 - Ordinances also do not always match the Comprehensive Plan, undermining the utility. This is a statewide struggle.
 - If too open to interpretation, the Comprehensive Plan might add to conflict.
 - Steering Committee must ultimately decide how directive language and strategies should be. Note: Certain strategies may be better suited by vague language.
 - Committee agreed the intention of the Comprehensive Plan is to set forth goals and policies—guided by public input and expert research—to establish a foundation for zoning ordinances.
 - Ultimately, this in practice may result in a legally complex case-by-case basis
 - Reminder: Comprehensive Plan is persuasive NOT binding.
 - To help direct the town, the planning board should be trained on the Comprehensive Plan as a reference point.
 - There is an implementation section that can go into this in detail.
 - Conservation Committee wants to be involved in Planning Board process in any matters involving Land Use. Additionally, maps should be crucial reference point.
 - Currently, Conservation Committee is not given a chance to review and check proposals against mapping data.
 - Property owners should have mapping data available to them, as well.
 - Conservation Committee requested to be on communications list moving forward

- Regarding Agriculture, proposal to develop a formal Agriculture Commission
 - Farm and Forest should also be included on maps
 - Climate change is currently not separate chapter.
 - Main Question: How detailed does the Steering Committee want to be on climate change?
 - Multiple questions regarding water resources: What mediation efforts are possible? What are the threats to water resources in the future?
 - Water resources are buffer to flooding, which benefits habitats as well as property value/insurance.
 - Suggested strategies include the town monitoring an evaluation process to collect data.
 - Information on well quality and ground water should be directed to John Leach, Superintendent.
 - More strategies are needed on climate change and water contamination issues, which might be addressed in Land Use.
 - Best practices for development and road construction is another area of concern (town is a part of MS4—Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System)
 - Conservation Commission recommends all wetlands be reviewed, and the filling of wetlands in flood plains should be eliminated.
 - Comprehensive Plan should include language to “develop a climate plan strategy.”
 - Community Action Grants can be used to help write a climate action plan, explore options and funding to mitigate climate change, and to move towards climate resiliency plan.
 - Steve Walker, Town Councilor in Brunswick, recommends Bridgeton Plan
 - Regarding conserving the scenic area and rural character of the town, Steering Committee agreed that this is difficult to regulate without zoning ordinances (perhaps best addressed in Land Use?)
 - Please suggest further edits via email.
- Goals, Policies, & Strategies Review – Land Use
 - First Policy: Overview of how planning will be conducted
 - Suggestion: Would be good to show how town grows by reporting trends.
 - Suggestion: Staff should be increased to include an official Planner—most communities our size have one.
 - Second Policy: “Promote growth where development already exists”
 - Growth areas should be considered a part of future land use
 - Next Meeting will discuss Future Land Use
- Public Outreach:
 - Recommendations: Public Engagement Session on Monday, February 12th
 - 2/12 Sessions could include the following: Presentation (highlights), small group discussions
 - Questions: Is there a way to combine efforts? Can we collect rolling feedback on Comprehensive Plan through various channels and not just in-person?
 - Example: Post draft publicly and invite residents to submit comments where we respond to that comment via online form
- Upcoming Meetings
 - Next meetings will be scheduled for January 22nd and 29th
 - Remaining topics include Future Land Use and Implementation

- To meet with the Planning Board, it is recommended that we are added to any agenda they choose. Potential date: Wednesday 2/7 at 7pm
 - Future Land Use Maps should be provided to see all data together at once
- Implementation draft will be provided the week before the January 22nd meeting.

NEXT MEETING
Monday, January 22nd at 6 PM
Town Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room

Meeting adjourned at 7:30pm.

Attest:



Nora Gibson, Recording Secretary