

South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee

January 22, 2024

MINUTES

Raegan Young	SMPDC	ryoung@smpdc.org
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Jessica Cyr	Town Council	jcyr@sbmaine.us
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Elita Galvin	Committee Member	elita.galvin@gmail.com
Deb Ganster	Committee Member	djganster@yahoo.com
Chris Harris	Committee Member	chrisbharris@gmail.com
Virginia Wilson	Resident	--

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

- Minutes
 - Edit: November 2023 Minutes—Remove Jack from list, add Jeff as ‘not attending’
 - Following edits, Jess moved to approve minutes, seconded by Elita with all in favor
- Public Engagement:
 - Goal is to have organized public engagement event for April
 - Originally planned for February to coordinate with Revitalization Committee, but they need mainly the Goals, Policies, and Strategies, which they have.
 - Town recommended April and to organize an in-person event (potentially with online component)
 - Will plan more at March meeting, especially taking care to coordinate with other committees
 - Eventually, Comprehensive Plan must be formally presented to the Town Council—potentially in May
 - Meeting with Planning Board to review Land Use is scheduled for 2/7
 - Committee members are welcome to join
- Land Use
 - Zoning matters need to be specific to be found consistent at state level
 - Cannot be too specific or too vague, as either could hinder implementation
 - Planning Board has noted it does not have enough directives from Comprehensive Plan, so more specificity would be helpful
 - Town-Wide Land Use Strategy
 - Code Enforcement Officer should be responsible for enforcing code already in existence, while Town Planner could assist Planning Board as it reviews future projects
 - Suggested language should be added around creating a strategy to hire a Town Planner
 - Focus group said that there is a need to administratively clarify and review ordinances to make sure they are consistent.
 - Raegan will add language that ordinances should be reviewed immediately, and then periodically—this may need to be contracted out.
 - “Contract Zoning” refers to industrial/commercial projects, and allows Planning Board to make additional conditions during negotiation process, but needs Council approval.

- Can be excluded in rural zoning, or make it specific to certain zones
 - Subdivision Phasing Requirements: Used to help keep rural areas less developed, and direct growth where desired
 - Capital investments should be mostly in growth areas
 - Protection of Natural Resources
 - To protect flood plain, it is suggested to have a 25-ft setback
 - To protect habitats, there must be priority mapping available to reference and the mapping must be kept current
 - It was noted that changing zoning from R3 to R5 would be more restrictive, and likely result in push back
 - Note: A large portion of this zone is already conserved
 - There are two separate shoreline ordinances currently, which need to be clarified
 - Cluster ordinances are used to preserve open space, they are not about increasing density (despite how they sound)
 - Similar to a 'conservation subdivision'
 - Density means there is less sprawl, less roads to maintain
 - Zoning for Residential Uses
 - High density areas are unlikely to have any buildable space left
 - If you want more housing, the town has to decide: Where?
 - What specific areas is housing advantageous?
 - Re: Short Term Rentals
 - Who oversees these short term rentals? Some towns require them to be registered
 - Commercial & Downtown Village Development
 - Heading should be changed: "Town Character and Development"
 - Plan must work in congruence with Revitalization Committee
- Planning Board Meeting
 - Future land use map and plan will be used to provide general vision for town
 - What specific sections does the committee want to bring to the Planning Board?
 - Housing & Land Use
 - Focus is on Goals, Policies, and Strategies
 - Maine Farmland Trust—prime agriculture land is left out of development (solar or all?)
 - Deb will send Raegan an email of details
 - Conservation Committee is putting together a checklist for Planning Board
 - A place of reference for every planned project
 - Deadline for materials is Tuesday 1/30
- Natural Resources
 - Review edits, and let Raegan know if you have any additional changes
 - Deb has edits she will send
- Future Land Use
 - State recommends that committee take some time to look at current map and other maps to start to identify areas of concern, mapping out where things are happening, and find out where they want to change zoning
 - Mapping will be done all hardcopy, with a screen for notes
 - SMPDC will have guidance, but suggestions should come from the Committee predominately
 - Idea: Just as trail networks have little nodes, different communities should have nodes of development
 - Multiple "centers" have disappeared over time—Emery's Bridge is one example

- Maps do not necessarily change significantly
 - Small things that could have big impacts
- Think about how historically communities were planned at people-scale (no cars)—humans like small, connected places
- South Berwick Reporter article
 - Reminder: Anyone can speak freely to reporters when asked for comment
 - Jess will draft a thoughtful response, and send to committee for approval
 - Committee agreed that SMPDC can act as spokesperson

NEXT MEETING
Monday, February 26th at 6 PM
Town Hall, 1st Floor Conference Room

Meeting adjourned at 7:48 by Raegan, second by Elita

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nora Gibson', written in a cursive style.

Nora Gibson, Recording Secretary