

Pownal Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting

November 12, 2019

6:30 – 8:00pm @ Mallett Hall

Present: Kathy Hogue, Joan Mueller, Susan Peters, Marcia Bowen, Coren Wheeler, Will Johnston, Jon Morris. Excused: Heidi Curry, Christine Watson Absent: Adam Haynes, Russ Schmidt

AGENDA

1. The minutes of October 8 2019 were unanimously approved as written.
2. Finances / Susan: No expenditures this month. As was true last month, we have spent \$2,027.23 of our \$6,000 budget.
3. Will Johnston discussed his thoughts on our next steps. Will commended us on the survey and the fact that we had both printed and on line versions. It would be interesting to see how many of each were completed. Majority of those who filled out the survey were 55-70+ years old. In Will's mind, the hardest demographic to capture is the younger cohort. Some towns get burned out/overwhelmed by the survey and its data. He cautioned that the most important/hardest part is creating the Plan and future action items. He addressed the question of what is our responsibility. Most towns want things to stay the same, much like we do. The Plan needs to develop priorities based on the survey results and then steps/recommendations on how to achieve those results. Then it is up to the body charged to implement those steps (e.g. zoning board, ordinance committee, etc.). It is still a real possibility that any steps will be voted down. Use of terms like 'should', 'explore' and 'study' are a prescription for doing nothing. Also we need to be cautious about overloading the various committees/boards. Some towns have developed an 'implementation committee' to follow up on recommendations. He said it is also important to review previous Plan and what on the 'implementation list' has actually been accomplished. We have done this. A matrix of the implementation strategy items including actions, time frame, responsible party is useful along with a summary page summarizing these strategies.
4. Next steps he recommends: Durham and North Yarmouth have just finished their plans. Review and consider what might work for us. Most include a vision statement. Example: By 2030, we want our community to be like this....Will provided examples of these two plus Standish. Visioning can be a complicated process and there are a lot of resources out there. What works better is one person reviewing the survey results, review other plans, review focus group comments, and develop one for the committee to review. The draft may need to develop some alternative statements within the vision statement for consideration. Joan volunteered to do this. His second recommendation was to divide up the various sections and delegate writers, keeping in mind that some sections will take more time than others. Will advises us NOT to spend too much time on this. Demographics is the hardest section as the census is NEXT year, so we won't have the most recent information. GPCOG has lots of information by Town and comparison with 2010 census may be helpful. The average income in Pownal is higher than the Cumberland County average, due to a few wealthy folks. Those folks tend to hold onto

their land, a good thing for a rural community. Many others, old families, are land-rich but not necessarily wealthy, which could prompt selling off parcels. One strategy to retain rural character is to figure out how to retain these large parcels and avoid them being developed. The Town Center currently would not attract new residents but if, as indicated by survey, the Center is beautified then it could attract more residents. Will indicated that even 20 years ago, there was discussion of a creating a better town center. Will indicated that with only two staff in State Planning Assistance (formerly State Planning Office), the bar to get state approval is much lower. Formerly, the State was against any growth cap unless it was just in rural areas. Today, they are more likely to approve a growth cap. Pownal has a large growth area currently. According to Planning Assistance, a certain percent of the Town's new investment should be in the growth area in order to get State approval. There are some benefits to having the Plan approved, such as grant programs (CDBG for example although this is not appropriate for us). If the Town was legally challenged, for example creating a growth cap, then an approved plan offers better legal protection. In Will's opinion, Pownal does not embrace new development, especially new subdivisions/cluster developments, and smaller lots. But the excuse of poor soils is not valid, as he feels that our soils, etc. are really not any more detrimental to development than in other Cumberland County towns. Joan indicated her view of the survey results indicates that opinions haven't changed that much. Single lots get a lot of review (unlike other towns), a three month process, and 'once a subdivision always a subdivision'. Other Towns use ArcView or other mapping and locate new developments. Do we have ArcView? We also need to be mindful of fiscal aspects of recommendations. There isn't a lot of land left to support some of the items (light industrial for example). Coren mentioned an idea of cooperative, town-owned 'community store' in the Town Center that would meet all retail needs and revenue would go directly to the tax base. The other side of the development spectrum is the concept of landscape preservation, looking at large parcels and connection points.

5. The latest trends in Comprehensive Plan lay-out are to 'front load' the document with an executive summary, vision statement, recommendations/findings; the inventory and survey results would be appendices or at the end of the document. Will shared the North Yarmouth executive summary, which could be similar to ours except for the concentration of growth in town. We should consider relying on previous inventory sections (were originally done in MS word, so could be simply updated in theory) and simply updating them to save time. Beginning with Habitat has maps for natural resources. He has the large format maps and will bring them back to Town Hall. We should also consider developing a schedule for individual tasks.

Action items

Joan writes draft vision statement

All read example executive summary from other Towns and come to next meeting with ideas

All look at 2006 plan and see what we can salvage and what format we would like to use.

Kathy will find out if Town has MS word version of 2006 plan.

Respectively submitted,

Marcia Bowen

Committee Members:

*Marcia Bowen, Heidi Curry, Adam Haynes, Kathy Hogue (Chair), Jon Morris (Selectman),
Joan Mueller, Susan Peters, Russ Schmidt, Christine Watson, Coren Wheeler*