

Approved
October 9, 2018

Pownal Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting
September 11, 2018

6:30 – 8:00pm ~ Dewitt Room / Mallett Hall

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:35.

1. **Approve minutes of July 10, 2018.** Joan moved to accept as written. Susan had a change and clarification. Kathy moved to accept as amended. Russ seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.
2. **Finances / Susan.** Susan sent out a financial report. No one had additions. Susan was thanked for taking on this responsibility.
3. **Focus Groups / assessing data** There was discussion of the focus group process, which was viewed as generally successful. Many similar threads were noted across meetings. There was also discussion of the fact that some people will never be engaged. Joan brought up the comment that young people- especially high school- haven't been engaged and perhaps we need to seek them out. Heidi thought that perhaps we could do a presentation at an impact meeting. There was further discussion of how to engage high schoolers, perhaps granting community service credit for Plan work.

The committee reviewed Kathy's synopsis and thanked her for her summation. Marcia said that she felt the most compelling issue is maintaining the rural character, so structuring the survey to determine how folks want this to be done will be a challenge. Heidi brought up the fact that there is also a desire to have a village center, encourage local business, etc. but also have no increases in taxes. Joan felt there was a misconception that businesses will generate revenue to offset property taxes, something brought up at most meetings. Russ said we need to know why- is it because of the thought new businesses could offset taxes or some other reason. Plus it needs to be understood these businesses could **create** potentially cause impacts that were brought up as undesirable in the focus groups (noise, light pollution, traffic). Many focus groups gave the caveat that any new businesses should be consistent with rural character such as leasing land to farmers. Heidi clarified that the Town does not get revenue from businesses other than property tax payment. However, a business doesn't necessarily use town resources (schools for examples) so that is a non-monetary benefit. Jon clarified that a business does not add any revenue to the Town other than property tax. In addition, there isn't really a tax on equipment and inventory. Kathy indicated that this type of tax is a lot of work and doesn't add much revenue. Jon said that involvement in Town meeting and the budget process is the key to lowering taxes. Russ thought that there aren't roadblocks to businesses, but clarification of home occupancy business (and regular business) rules and other aspects (signage, noise, light- all of which have been done in the past 5 years) should be looked at so that they are

consistent with our desired character. Another point was that in 2006, when the last Plan was completed, Bradbury Mountain Park was not the recreational destination that it is today. In terms of recreation, focus groups also mentioned bike lanes as important. The Town could build on Bradbury's recreational asset with other businesses (b and b's, restaurant) and infrastructure (new trails, etc.) that complement it. A true village center was also brought up as a need voiced by many and we have much of the infrastructure we need already.

4. **Next steps / town-wide survey.** Will had brought up another survey format (Topsham). There was discussion of the format of the last survey and how to make sure that the wording is not biased. Heidi felt that the recent educational survey was too open ended and discouraged participation because of the length of time needed to complete it. Susan asked if we should include 'would you pay additional taxes' in the questions. Russ felt the original survey was well written and we should build on it. Jon said the value of the survey is it initiates the conversation and the results give a sense of the direction the townspeople wish to head. Heidi also recommended that we not limit the questions and allow for comments and thoughts. Kathy suggested that for homework should be to review the questions along with the focus group and Town committees reports with a goal of finalizing the survey at the next meeting. We might need additional time at that meeting. We should try to obtain the comments from the previous plan – Jon will find them and leave them at the Town office. There should be an opportunity to provide comments in the survey but to make clear that they might not be reflected in the final plan or implemented. Joan asked if we should have a question about withdrawing from the RSU? Jon said some background information such as the fact that 79% of the Town's budget is for education. Is that sustainable? But Heidi pointed out that it would be important to include the flip side of costs involved with school choice/PES. Jon felt that withdrawing from the RSU would definitely lower our taxes. The fire department is also a major part of taxes, so the survey should include a question regarding that. In another example of how the plan is used, Jon said that in his meeting with MDOT on the Route 9 reconfiguration, he suggested a bike path plus lower speed limits around Bradbury. He was able to show the 2006 Plan to support his suggestion. Our next meeting October 9 will be a survey workshop. Marcia won't be able to attend but will send suggestions. There was further discussion of cluster housing.

5. Other Action Items:

- a. **All review 2006 survey questions and provide suggestions.**
- b. **Jon to find 2006 survey comments and leave them at the Town office.**

Committee Members:

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