



**Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting Minutes
Meeting #6**

**Tuesday, September 14, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.
Meeting Held at the Bristol Town Office**

Committee Members Present: Alfred Ajami, Alex Beaudet, Thomas Bishop, Rebecca Cooper, Robert Davidson, Paul DiMauro, Jamie Doherty, Richard Francis, Brittany Gill, Pat Jennings, Kenneth Kortemeier, Leon MacCorkle, Jason Sewall, and Jess Yates

Committee Members Absent: James Barnes (officially resigned), RoseAnne Holladay, and Dan Sullivan

Also present: Kristine Poland (Select Board), Chris Hall (Town Administrator), Jessica Westhaver (Treasurer), Lara Decker (Parks Director), Chuck Hansen, Mary Piasecki, and John Lappen

This meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by and followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Francis made a motion to approve the minutes from August 10th, 2021. The motion was seconded by Yates and passed, 14-0.

Recap on Survey and Involvement of Consultants

The survey development is underway with the process of putting all questions in one place and cleaning up contradictory questions and questions that appear to be leading. Lincoln Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC) will review our initial survey for continuity and flow, and once complete will help determine if a trial survey is necessary. The executive committee (Alfred, Jessica, and Richard) will then determine if additional consultants are needed. Ajami has requested a meeting with 5 groups about consulting services, noting these organizations have offered services to communities around us. Maine Design Workshop, Rhumbline Maps, Midcoast Economic Development, Northstar Planning, and LCRPC will help write the transportation section. He also reminded the board Robert Faunce, Land Use Planning Consultant, could be used at the end process of finalizing the plan.

The next step is to create an outline for the data collection. Reviewing other plans to use information that pertains to Bristol and cull out the items that are not useful. Drafting chapters is a crucial next process and subcommittees should now focus here.

Chris Hall: Significant Challenges Facing Bristol

Chris Hall, Town Administrator, was present to discuss his perspective, a broad view of areas of focus he believes are important, prefacing that his position is not to drive policy as he is a steward for the Board of Select Board. (*Please see discussion notes attached on the final page.*)

Hall shared the Town is fortunate to have a very high property value, which allows Bristol to have a very low tax rate as well as very generous people in Town who donate towards large infrastructure improvements.

Questions from the board:

MacCorkle asked about law enforcement and emergency services as this was not a topic addressed. Hall states if the Town had a year round population of 9000 people, we would be within the threshold of needing a police force. Hall shared we currently rely on county level shared resource organizations. It would be a substantial cost for an in Town force. Additionally, the county as well as CLC Ambulance service are dealing with substantial staffing issues and competing with them would be detrimental to all areas who rely on their services. Currently CLC Ambulance is under real strain as traditionally 6 paramedics are required and currently there are only 3. Additionally their salaries are less than many other local organizations and people are leaving for better pay. Lincoln County Sheriff's Department currently have 5 vacancies. These are topics which should be discussed in the comp plan. The topic of law enforcement also includes a full time Harbor Master position. Currently each of the three Harbor Masters are paid via stipend and have a hard time covering all bases.

Yates thanked Hall for his perspective and feedback, but reminded the board this is just one perspective, and it is important to collect information like this from multiple sources.

Group Discussion: Major Challenges of the Comprehensive Plan Process

1. How to go forward – When subcommittees look at other plans, it states the plan is a route chart to get you from point A to point B and is not intended to be a final destination document.
2. Understanding what other Towns did – it is important to review what other Towns did correctly and areas that missed the mark.
3. Parameters of the plan - What can we do? What are the big issues for Bristol? It can start discussions, but it cannot set parameters for finance and ordinance.
4. What categories will we have in the plan? - Some of our subcommittees have overlapping information and function. We need to bring together a coherent story for the plan.
5. How we discover what people want in the plan - This will happen through discussions with the community and through surveys.
6. We need to have a way to explain ourselves - We need to connect to everyone. We need to present ourselves as a cohesive group and find our similarities.

Yates invited the board to break into small groups to discuss what obstacles were presenting themselves in the process.

- Plans from other Towns have varying presentation layouts. We need to agree what Bristol's presentation is going to be and hit the ground running.
- The time commitment to not only the Comp Plan committee, but to each subcommittee everyone is assigned to. Most people have 3 subcommittees assigned to them and attending all meetings is time consuming. Conflict with personal lives makes it difficult to get all done.
- Topics are blending within the different subcommittees, and it would be helpful if some of these committees were combined.
- Rumblings from residents of apprehension that the Comp Plan Committee is compiled of too many people from away and not representing multi-generational families. Long time families are sometimes hesitant to change.
- Recommended we look at some of the other plans and do more cutting and pasting.
- The number of people that show up for Town meeting is very small. Written ballot would be more appropriate for a better turnout.
- Overlapping of the subcommittees. The sell and communication process. This needs to be more of an on-going process of communicating with information gathering starting now and not towards the end.
- Worried the plan wouldn't be realistic at the end. The cost of the process and the perception of the cost by residents.
- Concern there are challenges with the 2002 plan that seem to be carrying over to this plan.
- No current setup for Zoom access for those who are unable to attend in-person meetings.
- Expressed challenges of losing members and if we can bring on new members.
- Would like a more concrete timeline.

Open Group Discussion:

Ajami shared consultants can help in the area of the time commitment issue. Consultants would lessen the burden of having to conduct research as well as help in drafting sections of the plan. He also shared the executive committee (Alfred, Jessica, and Richard) are working hard to help lift the burden. Yates questioned current members see value in the subcommittee work and would it help with time commitments if some of the subcommittees were combined to make the process more sustainable? The committee could then prioritize which topics should be the first focus and go from there. Many members agreed that combining and staggering the meetings would make a difference, while others were concerned group sizes would be too large to effectively create valuable information and drafts, believing 5 to 8 people is the maximum size group. It was also shared the Transportation group should be held off as LCRPC is helping with a majority of this section.

Bishop asked if appropriate to have a template and start writing the draft sections. He wondered if there should be a full time person focused on being a tasks manager, following up with committees and setting deadlines. It was agreed the subcommittee should just start

writing and collecting information for their sections. Drafts should then start being manipulated, updated, and continue to grow as the process continues.

Davidson asked the expected cost of this project, which Ajami believed \$100k to \$150k for a finalized professional plan. The committee would need to develop a budget and proposal for the expected costs. It was also shared there are grant funding options available to help with the cost, easing the taxpayer burden. There would need to be a warrant article at the next Town Meeting for the funding request.

Items for Next Meeting

Each member should read a few plans and come back with which plans they like. Use this information to start drafting a chapter for each section based on each subcommittee.

Think about how do we bridge the divide between those from away but have been here for a long time and multi-generational families? This may be a topic which is delayed until the results of the survey come in as it may help answer this question. Once the survey is ready to be distributed, it will be important to do a tremendous amount of promotion for the survey.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:35 p.m.

The next meeting will be Tuesday October 12, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. at the Bristol Town Office.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Westhaver

Talking Points: Significant Challenges Facing Bristol – Town Administrator Chris Hall

1. Population growth. Are we a town of 2,800 (in winter) or circa 9,000 (summer)?
 - What is our real winter population under Covid?
 - New home permits: 50+ per year. How many add'l. becoming year-round?
 - Demand for broadband from people working from home; is this permanent?
 - When will we reach the magic (legal trigger) number of 4,000 (in winter)?
 - Which services should be sized for the summer peak (emergency services) and which for the winter trough (school)?
 - School population hit bottom in 2010 (117 at BCS); now 197 and steady growth.
2. We are on the edge of the Portland/Southern Maine outer suburban growth zone.
 - Do we want to be a suburb (think: Harpswell; Boothbay Peninsula)? It has pros and cons. But it's happening. What will Bristol look like in 10, 20 years?
 - In-migration is driven by retirement, working from home, and to a lesser extent younger family commuting to jobs in Damariscotta, Bath, Brunswick....
 - Housing price boom makes it hard to buy existing houses, but Bristol still has inexpensive land (away from water) and low taxes
 - Danger of unchecked growth along main roads – slower traffic, congestion in villages, ribbon development reduces appeal of town and overall property values
3. What are the big challenges if we continue to grow?
 - Water (in and out). Potential need for underground (year-round) water in developed areas. Wells going dry or salty in places.
 - Availability of 'starter homes' and 'workforce housing.' Allow smaller lot sizes with common subdivision wells, septic?
 - Road safety – more pedestrians, bicycles, older drivers. What can be done about sidewalks, cycle lanes, off-road trails?
 - Can we protect undeveloped land for wildlife corridors, outdoor recreation, and watershed protection?
 - School capacity and quality – and their cost.
4. What are the greatest unknowns and greatest threats?
 - What changes will Covid make permanent? In particular, how many part-year residents become full time? Is the growth a temporary bubble or permanent?
 - Lobsters continue to move north; the Gulf of Maine looks like Long Island Sound.
 - Other impacts of climate change: sea level rise, storms, droughts
 - As national political and social tensions rise, the squeeze on the fishing economy and on housing prices leads to growing tension between 'local' and 'from away;' 'haves' and have-nots'. We have been fortunate to largely avoid this to date.
 - We wake up one morning to find we have become Boothbay Harbor: one or more wealthy developers have bought up major properties for their big plans, and we can do nothing.

5. Selfishly, what would the Town Administrator ask from the Plan?

- Consult widely. This is a once-in-a-generation chance for debate about what we want the Town to be in the future. People will differ; best to argue it out.
- Make the final Plan acceptable to the State so that Town Ordinances will take precedence over state departments and utilities' wishes
- Give the Town the power to control both major single-project developments and cumulative, multiple small developments whose impact is just as great
- Set a capital spending plan (needs and priorities over five, ten years) including discussion of borrowing capacity and desirability
- Review of Town Governance. Possible Town Charter? Discuss joining 200 other towns in moving to Town Manager plan (post Chris Hall)? Future issues resulting from growth – public works? building codes? parks? harbors?
- A commitment to protect undeveloped lands along the Pemaquid River and elsewhere (in partnership with land trusts when appropriate) for public hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, etc.; and to increase access points to the ocean shore.
- A commitment to maintain the historic properties of the Town and the appearance and roles of the historic villages' centers
- Commit to a major study of water supply for the town, including evaluating options for expanding existing water utilities (GSB Sanitary District, New Harbor - Chamberlain Water Association) - and be prepared for big \$\$ price tags
- Commit to keeping Bristol attractive to young families as well as older. Includes: support for the school, developments that will provide starter homes, etc.