



Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting Minutes (Amended)
Meeting #6

Tuesday, October 12, 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, Jamie Doherty, Richard Francis, Brittany Gill, RoseAnne Holladay, Pat Jennings, Kenneth Kortemeier, and Jess Yates*

Committee Members Absent: *Paul DiMauro, Leon MacCorkle, Jason Sewall, and Dan Sullivan*

Also present: *Chris Hall (Town Administrator), Jessica Westhaver (Treasurer), Ben Frey and Rem Briggs (Representative from Newcastle Comprehensive Plan Committee), Chuck Hansen, Mary Piasecki, John Lappen, and Steven Jorgensen.*

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

Doherty made a motion to approve the minutes from September 14th, 2021; seconded by Davidson and passed, 9-0 (*number present at time of vote*).

Survey Update

Mary Ellen Barnes and two colleges from the Lincoln County Regional Planning Commission (LCRPC) who believe we are on the right track, reviewed and made suggestions to the current draft survey and results are viewable on the Town website at (<https://www.bristolmaine.org/comprehensive-plan-committee/survey-development>). General feedback was the survey seems reasonably complete, though it may be too long. Ajami reminded the board Bristol has five very different villages with many different viewpoints. All committee members were encouraged to review the current draft of the survey and forward questions to Ajami, Francis, or Yates.

Guest Speaker

Bren Frey and Rem Briggs former Chair and members of the Town of Newcastle Comprehensive Plan Committee attended the meeting to share information from Newcastle's process.

The Town has a population of approximately 1,700, had a Comprehensive Plan that was originally established in 1972, and while there had been updates, the plan was no longer cohesive and needed a full rework. 87% of the Town is rural and the commercial element

was a special exception built into the plan. There were residential exceptions within the commercial zone, and the Town found it was hard to work with as there was no leeway for residential structures.

The plan was last reviewed in 2006 where many well-meaning and enthusiastic individuals came together to complete the process. However, once it was approved it was not used. In 2015 Newcastle decided to do a complete overhaul of their plan, with a completed product ready for the 2018 Town Meeting vote. The committee met almost every week for 3.5 years and looking back believed they were over ambitious. The committee was formed to complete the process expecting they would update the Comp Plan and the Land Use Ordinance together, but in hindsight realized this was too large of an undertaking. Frey wanted to convey the importance of using the Comprehensive Plan once it is completed as a guide to update ordinances and policy. He reiterated the plan should be a living document used for guidance for future direction and planning. Ordinance updates should happen once the plan is passed and be used as a guide.

Issues the committee ran into were:

- The checklist from the State easily overwhelmed members
- Language discrepancies. Frey was very clear that language is one of the most difficult pieces of writing the plan. Oftentimes simple words have very different meanings to different people. Interpretation is everything.
- Radical changes created large amounts of pushback
- People divided in their want to keep the character of their Town the same, but also did not want too many regulations telling them what they can and cannot do.

Being able to interpret what people want is key. Oftentimes if you ask individuals what they want their Town to be, they are unable to articulate it.

In 2018 the Town approved the plan, however the State found it inconsistent. It was stated the lack of information on natural resources and protecting endangered species were two large factors.

Briggs stated they immediately went back to work with a smaller committee to update the areas the State did not accept and knew they wanted to hire professional consultants to aid in the process. This was beneficial because the consultants are well versed in what is needed in a Comprehensive Plan and knew what the State needed to ensure the plan was conformed.

The consultants were instrumental in the outreach to the community. They helped with advertising and media, workshops, social media posts, and numerous ideas on how to involve the public. They suggested a 4 day workshop over a long weekend and recoded over 600 contacts. There were people making door to door visits, leaving postcards, sending flyers, and communicating by phone to make sure people knew their input was invaluable. Ultimately, the committee used the document created by the consultants as a template, and where they were able to use the ideas that made sense for their Town and remove or manipulate those that didn't work. This also allowed the committee members more leeway and freedom in discussing the plan, as they were dismantling a document that was created

from outside their group, so no personal feelings were hurt. Briggs shared that standard human nature is to reject change and it is sometimes frightening. If you take the time to explain the language in your plan, people will be more.

Another important factor was that residents are territorial and identify with “where in Town” they live. Bristol was urged not to discount people’s feelings on this issue as it will reflect poorly in the reception of the Plan. You need to keep the individuality of the villages in mind.

Questions from the committee:

Ajami – How did you convince the Town of the ideas of the Comprehensive Plan?

Briggs stated copious amounts of communication, outreach, and one on one’s with residents. It was suggested to people to drive down a road they hadn’t seen in a while and note the changes. This was a good basis to help people understand how fast things can change.

Ajami – Was there direct participation by the Select Board?

Both Frey and Briggs shared the board was initially very limited with their role for the Comprehensive Plan. Their role was to establish the budget and present a warrant article at Town Meeting to fund the Comprehensive Plan process. When the plan was found inconsistent with the State, the board were much more hands on especially in the development of the Land Use Ordinance. Much of the direction was to make ordinances and codes shorter and not overly complicated. Initially the LUO was 250 pages, and they were able to make it 11 pages. It was also noted to be careful with the use of pictures. While they can be visually appealing, they create unnecessary length and can sometimes be confusing. Their final Comp Plan was 104 pages. With consultants the total cost of the plan was \$144K over the entire process.

Beaudet – How do you converse with and people who want to preserve what they have, but don’t want regulations to tell them what they can and cannot do? He also asked how you achieve that in a plan?

Briggs shared it is important to lead with what people want the Town to look like, what character? Once people have an idea of what they want their Town to look like it is easier to come up with ideas on how to achieve those goals. If people are able to see the why, they will often be more receptive. One example Newcastle used was limiting setbacks and maintaining 250 feet between driveway entrances. Driving into Bristol, Route 130 is beautiful, how do you preserve that? If there are no regulations for these conditions you could have a driveway every 50 feet and all the houses could be close to the road. This would drastically change the character of your Town, and once it is done, there is no turning back. Frey also reiterated there is not one simple answer, and you will never convince everyone or encourage all people of your Town to be involved.

Beaudet – Asked for advice on the issue of “people who were born and raised here vs those from away”?

Frey shared this was an issue that came up and it was deemed unhelpful conversation. If an individual lived in the Town, they have a vote. This is the nature of all Towns; however, all voters have the same right and ability to dictate what their Town will look like.

Francis – What did the Town of Newcastle do wrong in the Comprehensive Plan Process?

Briggs believed they let the consultants push too much to form base code in the rural area and historic districts. Except the push for historic preservation in the rural areas. They had to re-think what a lot was, and where you can put things on lots. They were able to restrict without changing the character.

Frey shared they didn’t move quickly enough. It is important to have the community engaged and excited. The longer you wait, the more the excitement dwindles. Additionally it is important that your plan be more general than conforming to ordinance and code. Don’t talk about setbacks. Use the Comp Plan to inform the code, but don’t put code in the plan

Frey reminded the committee to remember to have fun!

Subcommittee updates

Yates shared the document shared with the committee titled “Subcommittee Updates” (*attached at the end of this document*), and stated it was self-explanatory. The chair and vice-chairs have heard that the work is overwhelming. Francis shared a document of different approaches going forward for each committee. The committee was asked to review these suggestions and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

The committee discussed the process of using consultants and what that would mean for the subcommittees. There was concern about whether there would be duplication of work by consultants and was it prudent for the subcommittees to continue. Yates shared that information gathering is always important and of value, and there is no guarantee of the approval of the use of consultants. It was agreed the hiring of consultants would greatly decrease the workload and offer the added benefit of outside perspective and knowledge of the process, though it is important to remember this will still be a plan for the Town of Bristol, and the Townspeople have the ultimately authority on what is in the plan. One question to be determined if it is appropriate to hire one consultant or numerous consultants.

The discussion moved to funding available to hire consultants. It was understood the Select Board had approved up to \$7,500 for the current year, an increase from the initial \$5,000 approved. There will need to be an article on the 2022 Town Meeting warrant for additional funding. Ajami also explained an outreach had begun to find private funding.

Beaudet raised concern with asking private individuals for funding a public project. His concern was a conflict of interest could occur as money may distort or corrupt project outcomes. He disagreed with the solicitation of private funds and believes the project should come from tax dollars or grant applications. Ajami stated that grants from foundations were likely.

Holladay raised the concern of public engagement. The feedback from Newcastle's view was public engagement was instrumental in having a successful plan. Bristol has yet to focus on this. She wondered if we were behind the ball? Francis reminded the committee Newcastle completed a lot of work before hiring consultants, and the public outreach started once they were onboard.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Items for Next Meeting

- Each member should review the draft survey and submit feedback to the chair and/or vice chairs.
- Each member should review the options for reorganization of the subcommittee process and be prepared to discuss at the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:25 p.m.

The next meeting will be Tuesday November 9, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. at the Bristol Town Office.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Westhaver

Bristol Comprehensive Plan Subcommittee Updates
October 12, 2021

Subcommittee	Update
Education	<p>The data required for Education in Chapter 208 is slight. The committee has completed its cut and paste and considered a first draft of the submission to the Committee, and will add details and data when the most recent (and closest in date to the final report) become available. There are a number of issues that the committee wishes to discuss further, vocational education, special education, post secondary education and adult education opportunities, although some may fall outside the limited brief.</p> <p>They will track the School's plans for Capital needs for renovation and extension of the existing buildings in conjunction with the Capital Finance Committee. (R. Francis)</p>
Finances, Capital Spending Plan	
Governance and Regional Cooperation	
History and Archaeological Resources	<p>The History and Archaeological Resources Committee has been interviewing people with knowledge of the history of the area and have a few more that we plan on speaking with. Using the information gained from these interviews and information from the Maine Historical Preservation Commission we have compiled lists of significant archaeological and historical sites and buildings. This comprises the bulk of the data required by the state for a Comprehensive Plan.</p> <p>We have begun the cut and paste project, answering the questions in Chapter 208. (R. Holladay)</p>
Housing	<p>The Housing Subcommittee has continued to collect data which is stored in a resource folder on the Subcommittee's page on the website.</p> <p>We began the cut and paste exercise using four towns Belfast, China, New Gloucester and Thomaston and compared their answers to the 6 questions asked in Chapter 208.</p> <p>Committee members have agreed to further research one of the questions each and bring it to the next meeting. (R. Francis)</p>

Land Use and Related Ordinances	Although the Land Use Subcommittee has suffered from member resignations, work proceeds in regards to identifying the most appropriate format for this section in the comprehensive plan. Members are currently tasked with reviewing the 15 sample plans provided by A. Ajami and selecting the sections/components they feel are the most appropriate templates for Bristol's plan. (J. Yates)
Natural Resources, Agriculture, Forestry, and Water Resources	Although the Natural Resources Subcommittee has suffered from member resignations, work proceeds in regards to identifying data sources and in regards to identifying the most appropriate format for this section in the comprehensive plan. Members are currently tasked with reviewing the 15 sample plans provided by A. Ajami and selecting the sections/components they feel are the most appropriate templates for Bristol's plan. (J. Yates)
Parks, Recreation, Water Access	
Population and Economy, including Fishing	
Town Government, Emergency Services, Transfer Station	
Transportation, Pedestrians, Safety	