



**Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting Minutes
Thirtieth Regular Business Meeting
Tuesday, December 12, 2023 6:30 p.m.**

Committee Members Present: Alfred Ajami, Alex Beaudet, Tom Bishop, Becky Cooper, Paul DiMauro, Jamie Doherty, Richard Francis, RoseAnne Holladay, Pat Jennings, Steve Jorgensen (via phone), Ken Kortemeier, Jess Yates

Committee Members Absent: Brittany Gill, Mary Piasecki

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. and members participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

The minutes from the November 28, 2023 Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting were presented and approved.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Public Hearing Debrief

Yates invited Committee members to share their observations of the Public Hearing held at 6:30 pm on December 7th, at the Bristol School. Ajami considered the hearing useful and interesting but regretted that it became a political event which resulted in hypocritical commentary unrelated to the civic duty that the Plan was conceived to provide. He regretted that the Select Board had offered only lukewarm support. He believed that the Committee needed to address the speakers at the Public Hearing and the comments submitted by the Planning Board and to seek advocates on behalf of the Committee. He shared his personal opinion that he would need to decide whether to remain on the Committee or would work outside to support the Plan.

Cooper reported positive comments and support from other citizens voiced after the meeting.

DiMauro expressed concerns about completion of the edits for the Plan and the role of North Star Planning. He noted that he believed not all the edits discussed by the Committee at earlier meetings were included in the Plan, resulting in some inaccuracies. He felt that the Plan fell short in several places. Francis suggested this be discussed later in the meeting.

Holladay was concerned that some language was stronger than needed and suggested careful consideration of changes that should be made.

Kortemeier reported that he had found people were passionate but frustrated. He hoped that the Plan would energize more voters particularly closer to the Town Meeting. He regretted that the Committee did not engage more with the audience. He had spent some time with Bill Balicki earlier in the day of the meeting but was saddened that their conversation yielded disappointing results. He suggested that the Survey be redone, even if it were reissued in its original form, and that we should rework the Strategies, but was unclear how this could be achieved.

Jorgensen suggested that we think of the Plan as an opportunity to invite the residents into our process and hope to gain their full attention.

Doherty recorded that few people had read the Plan and they appeared unwilling to consider doing so. He noted that Future Land Use, the 'Z word' (Zoning) triggered strong feelings, and considered many of the arguments contradictory. He noted the support for planning in the survey and the Land Use Workshop and pointed out changes in demographics in the Town. His research showed that in other Towns property values increase when a Plan has been adopted. He believed that the core issue was the dichotomy between affordable housing and low property taxes and that this should be addressed.

Bishop regretted that the Plan was mainly unread and the point of the proposals was being missed. He was concerned about needing to change the language of our strategies. He pointed out that the conversation was monopolized by land use issues and taxes.

Ajami reminded the Committee that the Act also places a Town within the overall economic picture of Maine, that other towns have adopted strategies and that one goal of a Plan is to encourage adoption of best practices. DiMauro suggested talking to the Planning Board which is charged with producing a plan for the future of Bristol, and that the process of submission to the State should be delayed. Ajami agreed that the plan should not be sent to the State without Select Board input.

Beaudet agreed with many of the observations and suggestions. He would have preferred to respond to some of the speakers at the hearing and believed that conflicts should have been discussed. He has been unable to persuade some people to change their views and feared that the

discussion had become polarized. He was in favor of delaying submission to the State and encouraged more outreach.

It was agreed that the Committee should seek a joint meeting with the Planning Board and Select Board and would seek Bizarro's advice as to how to organize it.

Yates asked the Committee to consider ways to seek support from other parts of the community. There was concern expressed by several members that some parts of the community would never support the Plan and agreement that the Committee should find ways to achieve a consensus in favor of the Plan. Bishop reiterated that he thought the meeting was good and estimated there was support for the Plan and we should seek and incorporate further input. We would need, however, to sell the Plan. He believed we could achieve 60% in favor which he would regard as a major success. Holladay regarded 50% or 51% as unsuccessful and wanted a higher percentage of the Town to be in favor. Jorgensen asked if we had ideas on how to achieve a consensus. Jennings suggested a timeout and that she would ask for more specific answers and details of any problems with particular issues in the Plan. Beaudet suggested discussions with those who opposed the Plan, and Kortemeier reminded the Committees that the Plan needed to retain some controversial ideas despite opposition to particular strategies. Doherty agreed and pointed out that each idea had its own constituency.

Beaudet suggested that the Committee should develop a social media presence and make its ideas known via Facebook. Yates agreed that this could be a component of a strategy. The Committee considered another survey but rejected the ideas as too expensive and time consuming. Ajami pointed out the extent of the analysis of the data that he and the consultants had undertaken and the time invested which could not be repeated.

Other suggestions included using the emails collected by the Committee during its workshops and those gathered for the former Town Newsletter and sending out a regular email. The Town does not collect taxpayer email addresses but has mailing addresses.

Public Comment

Sage Jones regretted not completing the Survey because she was not aware of it and looked forward to receiving more information in future.

Frankie Poland said that in his view that the Committee was not listening to some of the long standing residents of the town who he felt were fighting for their heritage and for an unencumbered right to develop or sell their land now and in future generations. He thought that the Plan could be a game changer for the development of the Town and warned the Committee to expect stiff opposition.

Dean Russell said that he had not supported the 2002 Plan but had subsequently changed his mind. He had observed in his part of Bristol Mills the increase in building and subsequent addition to traffic and now believed that we need controls over future growth. He recalled that when he was young there were 6 houses on the Benner Road, and now there are over a hundred - with no improvements to the road, or the electrical grid. He said that control was a word that he hated, and which triggered negative responses, but recognized that to keep Bristol as we wish, something needs to be adopted.

Minutes of the Select Board Meeting of November 29th

Francis reported a meeting that he and Yates had with the Chair of the Select Board on November 20th, 2023 to discuss the suggested edits to the Plan, (which was reported at the Committee's November 29 meeting), and to offer information and discuss the current status of North Star Planning. Francis said that NorthStar had used all of the appropriated funds allocated to them and were now working in effect 'pro bono'. North Star had produced the formatted version of the Plan and agreed to make one final edit and help with the submission of the Plan to the State. There is no expectation that they will not complete this work and honor their agreement. The discussion with the Select Board Chair was whether a way of compensating the consultants could be considered. Francis expressed dismay that the informational discussion had resulted in a sum of \$6000 being rejected by the Board without Committee members being present. Bizarro asked for clarification of the contract which was given.

The Committee discussed the final editing process outlined in the November 29th Select Board minutes and the co chairs reported that the first part of the Plan was produced using software that was not accessible to the Committee. The Town staff do not have the ability to successfully edit the document. The co chairs would prefer that the Plan be edited by agreement and that a final version be produced with approval by all parties.

Other Business

None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Francis

Co-Chair, Bristol Comprehensive Plan Committee