

Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
 February 28, 2023
 7:00 PM
 Meeting Summary

Name	Attendance
John Auble	Y
Daniel Backman	Y
Crispin Bolese	Y
Emily Bryson	N
Shanna Crofton Mitchell	N
Judy Colby-George	Y
Hildy Ginsberg	Y
Miriam Markowitz	Y
Tim McGonagle	Y
Karin Orenstein	Y
Neena Panosso	Y
Todd Rich	Y
Bill Richards	Y
Lynn Seeley	Y
Sophie Wentzell	Y
Jamie Whittemore	Y
Sarah Witte	N
Erin Zwirko, Planning Director	Y
Julie Dubovsky, Assistant Planner	Y
Ben Smith, North Star Planning	Y
Logan Capone, North Star Planning	Y

I. Review Meeting Summary from January 23

Motion to accept moved by Bill Richards and seconded to approve by Daniel Backman. The Committee unanimously approved the meeting summary from January 23.

II. Election of Co-Chairs

Motion to accept nomination of co-chairs by Judy Colby-George and seconded by John Auble. The Committee unanimously approved Bill Richards and Hildy Ginsberg as steering committee co-chairs.

III. General Discussion on Comprehensive Plan with Planners and Consultants

Steering committee members asked questions of the Erin and the NSP team pertaining to the purpose and scope of the comprehensive plan. They explained how the comprehensive planning process is framed by Maine’s Growth Management Act with certain requirements (data collection, analyses, strategy alignment, and goals) to assess existing conditions and plan for future growth. Although it originates in land use, it is all interrelated with the facets

of communities and balanced with future needs and demands, state and regional policies or plans, and the community's goals. Questions included:

1. Is most of this effort about managing land use? A. The Community Planning and Land Use Regulation Act, also known as Maine's Growth Management Act, is based in land use but the overall purpose is to consider how a community functions and will do so in the future. Various elements come together in a comprehensive plan including "10-year projections of local and regional growth in population and residential, commercial, and industrial activity; the projected need for public facilities; and the vulnerability of and potential impacts on natural resources. "
2. How does land use planning here affect zoning? Or related? A. Recommendations for zoning ordinance changes can come out of the comprehensive planning process. They can be specific revisions or broad; the Planning Board and Town Council would then choose whether or not to implement the recommendations. A committee member pointed out that the comprehensive plan is not a legally binding document, and Erin reiterated its purpose about guiding policy and investments, and consistency with regional and state level planning.
3. How does Yarmouth fall under the discussion of growth and available land? How are we seen as a Town? A. Ben pointed out that this question will come into play during the required Future Land Use section. The 2019 Open Space Plan analysis that NSP conducted for the Town showed that Yarmouth is one of the most densely populated municipalities in the region based on population and Town size, but there will likely be continued growth pressure that requires assessment of the Town's ability to grow based on infrastructure, services, and community needs.
4. Is it more than residential growth? Also commercial? A. Yes and the NSP team includes consultants researching commercial and market analysis and housing demand. There are required analyses for future population, residential, commercial and industrial growth.
5. How do our recommendations influence the capital budget for the Town? A. The plan requires an assessment of capital facilities and public facilities necessary to support growth and development, and to protect the environment and health, safety and welfare of the public and the costs of those facilities and services. It is important for the plan to be grounded in fiscal responsibility since the plan can inform decisions about operations and capital investments.
6. Will we be addressing community input in the process? A. Next discussion on the agenda is the draft blueprint for a Public Participation Plan. A state requirement for the comprehensive plan is to include a summary of the public participation process. Erin asked that if anyone is especially interested in this topic and implementing a PPP to contact her.
7. To what extent should a comprehensive plan consider neighborhood communities, tie into regional plans, or the plans of other towns? A. The plan must include a Regional Coordination Program about shared resources and facilities, and each Topic Area section of the inventory must also contain consistency with respective state goals and policies, or highlight adoption of a regional plan in a topic area, like a regional housing plan.

8. Would we be looking at the top 10 or 15 tax payers in the town to determine their long-range plans? A. Economic chapter does look at the Town's largest employers, but primarily from employment numbers and impacts on the local economy. NSP will coordinate with Camoin Associates on how the Town can be positioned to take part in those employers' long-range planning, perhaps through a Strength Weakness Opportunity Threats (S.W.O.T.) analysis.
9. Are we building on the shoulders of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan? A. Erin noted that this should be a group discussion at a future meeting; there is a lot of good information in the 2010 inventory and there are individuals who were involved in its development on the current committee. However, many conditions have changed since 2010, hence the purpose of an expiration date on plans. Much from the 2010 plan was achieved, so pertinent to review what can be updated, what still needs to be advanced, and what must be revised to reflect current conditions.

IV. Review Inventory Chapters

Logan gave a demonstration of how to use the Adobe tools to review and comment on the draft chapters; all the comments are due by May 1st. For any technical challenges, members should reach out to Logan and Erin. The inventory chapters will be released for review in batches; steering committee members are encouraged to review them as they are distributed rather than waiting for the entirety and coming up against the deadline. The NSP team are looking for high-level feedback and to ensure that the chapters are factually accurate and complete. They also plan to add a page before each section, like in the 2010 plan, with a summary and the key 10 takeaways. Erin suggested that a separate document be created as a repository for the forward-thinking questions to make sure that they're discussed during the public engagement process. As there is a wealth of data and information in the inventory chapters, the committee discussed ways to make them more easily digestible to the public, including noting any underlying factors (like COVID) affecting the data. Erin recommended adding a temporary table of contents to provide a framework for the larger layout.

V. Adopt Engagement Plan

Logan walked the committee through the draft plan and Ben reiterated that it is an outline and blueprint that will be regularly evaluated during implementation. The NSP team asked for feedback overall and specifically on the idea of holding topic-based or place-based workshops. The committee discussed this strategy and voiced concerns with segregating conversations or becoming myopic. They found consensus on holding topic-based workshops with skilled facilitators who can deftly connect the topics to various parts of the town. Ben offered that maybe specific events, like a walking tour, could be place-based and issues associated with those places separated from the larger town-wide conversations. Erin encouraged anyone interested in public engagement strategies to contact her.

VI. Public Comment

No public comments were received.

VII. Adjournment