

Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC)

April 25, 2023

7:00 PM

Meeting Summary

Name	Attendance
John Auble	Y
Daniel Backman	Y
Crispin Bokota Bolese	N
Emily Bryson	Y
Judy Colby-George	Y
Hildy Ginsberg, Co-Chair	Y
Miriam Markowitz	Y
Tim McGonagle	Y
Karin Orenstein	Y
Neena Panosso	N
Todd Rich	Y
Bill Richards, Co-Chair	Y
Lynne Seeley	Y
Sophie Wentzell	N
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 March

The Committee unanimously approved the meeting summary from March 28, 2023.

II. Review Inventory Chapters

Prior to diving into the topics, the CPSC discussed formatting the draft chapters for easier reading. Many people found the multiple columns of unbroken text difficult to read, although it helped to condense the pages for printing. Erin indicated that she had recommended that layout to North Star Planning early on in the process, but perhaps needs to be reconsidered.

As with previous chapters' reviews, the CPSC considered:

- What is important and valuable for the average Yarmouth citizen to know on each of these topics?
- Based on the community values and draft vision statement, what should the Town be doing with this information?

A. Natural Resources

For Natural Resources, Erin asked the CPSC to consider the following questions:

1. Can you determine the stressors on Yarmouth's natural resources?

Some members felt that development as a stressor on natural resources was "light" and could be flushed out by using growth projects and buildout information. Ben noted that they were not doing a full buildout based on zoning, but rather over the lifespan of the comprehensive plan, the inventory phase would identify what is a reasonable development projection based on population and housing trends/permits and employment projections. The next steps would be to determine where it would go and what it would look like. Additional information would come from Camoin and Jeff Levine's Housing Market Analysis, which estimates future demand based on existing conditions. A parcel-by-parcel analysis was done for CPIC to develop "carrying capacity," and Town staff are doing this to a degree now to understand the application of LD 2003, which can be shared with NSP. It was encouraged that this analysis include numbers on nonconforming lots to inform a discussion on public perceptions of "character" and resistance to zoning reforms.

2. Are there areas that need critical attention?

Some CPSC members noted the absence of health impacts from old practices, infrastructure and buildings that are impacting natural resources' health and human health, such as lead and PFAS. For example, the chapter did not discuss the impact of the dams and history of manufacturing on the river on the condition of the river and water quality. Also missing was an analysis about water access, who is using the water and how.

B. Public Facilities and Services

Logan provided an overview of the chapter and comments received. Erin asked the committee to consider the following questions:

1. Can you determine what the major constraints are to municipal operations?

The point about public health led to a discussion about the chapter's illumination of the age of all the public facilities and the potential for large health impacts. Logan noted that public health recommendations could be incorporated into chapters. Local leaders in public health, like BeWell Yarmouth, who led the way in testing for PFAS, should be included. Planning for the aging population and the overall health of residents, outside of COVID, should be included because of the constraints on public services like Police and Fire/Emergency Services to respond to their specific needs. Erin noted that the department head interviews gleaned that recruitment, due to the number of career employees retiring, is also challenging because of

perception of municipal employment doesn't have the cache it used to. There is a need to get younger generations to see the connections to "think locally, act globally."

2. What might be the greatest challenges in the next few years?

Erin added that the major themes from the department head interviews are staffing and funding; it is hard to find staff and plan for the skilled workers of the future. Judy also offered a framework for reviewing this chapter as facilities and services potentially reaching their "tipping points" and assessing how close we are to hitting that.

Lynne noted that some groups and services that used to be here and aren't mentioned or aren't here anymore, and whether or not this constituted a "void" in services since the last comprehensive plans, such as the Village Improvement Society. Although they are cultural services, not municipal, they're not included anywhere but were integral to community. Other members agreed that since volunteering and civic engagement were part of the vision statement, it deserves a place. Scott noted that while it isn't "hard data," it may be worthwhile because they contribute to what gives Yarmouth a special sense of place. It was suggested noting if a facility is a privately owned, a non-profit, like 317 Main or the Yarmouth Arts Alliance, which builds community through art and runs the gallery in the library, or NYA, which allows public use of its private facilities.

III. Subcommittee Discussion and Planning

Erin explained that the intent of the subcommittees is to formalize a uniform approach to identifying the key points of the chapter, compare to 2010 and identify what issues are still relevant, and to report back on their findings at the May meeting. Erin clarified that meetings with Town staff or resident advisory committees would be done later in the engagement process. CPSC members would coordinate meetings amongst themselves, and Erin or Julie could assist if requested. Concerns were expressed that as there were several chapters without volunteers and many people were absent, it was too tight a turnaround to get work done by the May meeting.

Logan also clarified that the May meeting would be dedicated to the June 12th presentation, and she shared NSP's initial thoughts on organizing that presentation. Several ideas for the June 12th presentation were then discussed. The CPSC recommended that an hour-long presentation would be too much and recommended breaking it up by topic, with a Q & A after each one, so that it wouldn't be an hour straight of just listening. Strategies to make it more family friendly and dynamic were also discussed, such as having musical entertainment as people came in, having inventory chapter subcommittee reps in the hallway with information to share, and using interactive digital tools like live polling to provide instant feedback.

It was determined that missing members should have more time to sign up, meet in May informally to get to know each other, and save the work for after the June 12th public meeting when they could incorporate initial feedback from the public too. The group also found consensus on the need to revisit the public participation plan at the next meeting. Erin noted that the CPSC is also still waiting for the Land Use and Economy chapters to review, so this revised timeline would be beneficial.

IV. Consider Rescheduling May Meeting Date

Erin reiterated that a strategy is developing on how to coordinate with the Climate Action Taskforce (YCAT) and the Greater Portland Council of Government (GPCOG)'s work and to integrate elements about climate change into the inventory chapters. Scott LaFlamme, the Economic Development Director, added that the new Sustainability Coordinator, which is a shared position with Freeport, is starting in May so they expect greater clarity on this collaboration after that.

Committee members asked what other cities and towns are doing to incorporate climate change into comprehensive planning, and whether the inventory should include elements or facilities at risk due to climate change or a whole, separate chapter. Ben noted that the state law doesn't require it, but there is an effort underway to review the law and that new, current topics – like energy – have been added to the state's requirements in the past. Erin explained that the projects are complimentary but have different scopes; YCAT's focus is on energy and adaptation.

Since many members were not in attendance, the committee deferred a decision on rescheduling via email after the meeting. The final determination was to reschedule the regular CPSC meeting for May 25th so members could attend the YCAT public meeting on May 23rd.

V. Public Comment

None taken.

VI. Adjournment