

Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC)
 May 25, 2023
 7:00 PM
 Meeting Summary

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

The Committee unanimously approved the meeting summary from April 25, 2023.

II. Review Inventory Chapters

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. Economy

For Economy, Erin asked the CPSC to consider the following questions:

1. Can you determine whether the economy in Yarmouth is healthy? The CPSC discussed the definition of a "healthy economy" as one that serves the daily needs

of residents, employees/employers, and visitors, and attracts people at different times of the week and day. There was confusion around the accuracy of the data on business sectors, and employees and employers (which is extrapolated from the US Census and the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)). Clarification is needed on the charts and in the text, and consideration of seasonal employment patterns.

2. Are there constraints to growing the economy in Yarmouth?

Several members felt that the chapter was lacking information on what is hindering that dynamic activity, such as the lack of commercial space or limited attractions in the evening. John offered insights from an origin-destination study that he'd compiled for a client, that showed mostly local and neighboring towns travel to Yarmouth for evening activities, not Portland. While the chapter highlights top employers, it does not highlight the small, locally-based businesses, which is part of the town's long-held desire to be a walkable community.

B. Land Use

For existing Land Use Erin asked the CPSC to consider the following questions:

1. What is surprising about the existing land use in Yarmouth?

The CPSC discussed the findings of the building permit map and how only 47% of development in the past 10 years occurred in the growth area. This appeared to be one of the surprising takeaways. Erin pointed out that the CBDC is still a work in progress and that there still hasn't been enough time or projects to tell whether it is working or not. Logan added that Camoin's market study, which is still in development, will also look at the different land use categories and analyze the vacant land, potential sites, and current constraints.

2. Can you determine whether the existing land use drives the existing conditions identified in the other inventory chapters?

The CPSC discussed how the historic pattern of town couldn't happen under the current zoning, even under the CBDC, and that this point should be noted in the chapter. A larger discussion about conveying the gravity of land use and zoning regulations and potential engagement strategies to connect the regulatory process to the landscape ensued. Suggestions included a map of land use changes over the past 20 years and reframing the "future development" section to show the cause and effects of zoning and constraints are. It was suggested that the current industrial zoning and suggested capacity for economic development there needs further analysis.

C. Fiscal Capacity

The committee considered Fiscal Capacity through the following questions:

1. Can you determine what the major constraints are to Yarmouth's fiscal capacity?

The CPSC discussed the general pattern of the general tax increases each year, in which 2/3 go to the school district, and that while there's enough capacity to carry more debt, it continues to grow. Several members asked that the chapter include the requested costs to support the needs, which Erin and Ben explained are included in the CIP and often are included in this chapter or the appendix. They clarified that the intention of the chapter is to give some sense of financial stability, anticipated costs to account for, and to determine if there's a buffer in case of unexpected needs.

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

The committee discussed at length the importance of breaking down revenue and costs to illustrate the importance of long-term financial stability for the town. This included how housing and population diversity are directly related to this, and the challenge of framing this in terms of financial investment and not a judgement on how or where the town invests most heavily. A suggestion was to frame it as a question: How do we maintain a mixed community and what zoning and investment choices do we need to support that? Strategies to examine this more closely in the chapter included looking at the general obligation funds, new costs, and the uncontrolled costs (like health insurance), and an analysis on the repercussions of fiscal choices. Erin suggested also framing as binaries: sustainability and the tax base, or growth and maintenance. It was suggested that a comparative table be added to show how much the town is spending to maintain assets or postponing maintenance.

The next steps for North Star is to bring these drafts to the resident advisory committees for comment. They are also now publicly available on the PlanYarmouth.com website. North Star anticipates making revisions to the chapters in response to public and steering committee comments in the winter.

III. Planning for June 12th Public Meeting

The CPSC reviewed the draft presentation for the evening and discussed activities and stations. It was noted to include other modes of interaction for attendees without smartphones and the importance of time for a traditional Q&A session. Print outs will be included as well, and the slide deck and presentation will be available afterwards online. Activity stations included the topic idea boards and the map station on new investment vs.

preserved lands. Bill suggested bringing the visioning statement to bridge between last year's work and this phase. Erin added that information on summer pop-ups will be shared so CPSC members can identify when they can participate too.

IV. Coordination with Climate Action Taskforce

Erin relayed the discussion with the Climate Action Plan team, which includes new staff member, Meddy Smith, and the team from the Greater Portland Council on Governments (GPCOG). Similarly, to the CP timeline, they are continuing to gather data this summer, leading into the climate action plan drafting in late summer/fall. The CP and Climate Action Plan teams are coordinating to share the baseline/existing conditions information and will regroup mid-summer to discuss integration in more details. Additional engagement is anticipated in the early fall to discuss strategies, actions, and implementation. The goal is to have the Climate Action Plan adopted by the Town Council before the end of 2023.

V. Public Comment

None received. There were no members of the public in attendance.

VI. Adjournment