

Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee (CPSC)
 April 23, 2024
 7:00 PM
 Meeting Summary

Name	Attendance
John Auble	Y
Daniel Backman	Y
Crispin Bokota Bolese	N
Emily Bryson	Y
Judy Colby-George	N
Hildy Ginsberg, Co-Chair	Y
Kevin Hartnett	N
Miriam Markowitz	N
Tim McGonagle	N
Tred McIntire	Y
Neena Panosso	N
Todd Rich	N
Bill Richards, Co-Chair	Y
Lynne Seeley	Y
Sophie Wentzell	N
Jamie Whitemore	N
Sarah Witte	N
Karin Orenstein, Town Council Liaison	Y
Erin Zwirko, Planning Director	Y
Julie Dubovsky, Assistant Planner	N
Ben Smith, North Star Planning	Y
Kate Burch, North Star Planning	N

I. Public Comment

Chris Stetson offered public comment. He noted that he has also submitted written comment which was forwarded to the Committee. He questioned why the Land Acknowledgement statement was included in the document. Mr. Stetson expressed concern about its inclusion diving people. Mr. Stetson also expressed concern about the combined cost to implement both the Climate Action Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. He estimated that the Climate Action Plan would cost over \$100 million to convert the school facilities and fleet to electric, municipal facilities and fleet to electric, and residences and commercial properties and vehicles to electric. Mr. Stetson expressed concern about the rising costs to the taxpayers as a result.

Steering Committee members responded that the Steering Committee is responsible for the Comprehensive Plan. The Climate Action Task Force prepared the Climate Action Plan. The Comprehensive Plan sets a vision and goals for the town, and the future implementation committee will help the town plan for capital investments.

Mr. Stetson suggested that the Comprehensive Plan and the Climate Action Plan be decoupled until financial models would be developed.

II. **Review Meeting Summary from February 27**

The Committee unanimously approved the meeting summary from February 27, 2024.

III. **Discussion and Review of Public Comment to Date**

Erin noted that public comments received as of April 12th were included in the packet for the Committee to consider. She indicated that she has also been various town board and committee meetings to provide an overview of the plan, to request comments, and answer any questions. Erin noted that the public comment period ends on April 30. The meeting on April 25 with the Town Council is venue to collect comments.

In general, Erin reported that the comments received so far are generally in five categories:

1. The limits of the Growth Area in the area of the Cousins River marsh and at Wyman Station.
2. (Re)Establishment of a Conservation Commission and additional regulatory controls on development.
3. Commitment to implementation through the development of priorities and metrics.
4. Ways to reduce the tax burden on community members.
5. Continued discussion on balancing growth and development with open space and natural resource protections.

Committee members noted that the first point is really a subset of the fifth point. Additionally, Committee members thought that issues around affordable housing could also make that list. Erin responded that she thought that the draft plan hit on most of the points in that specific comment letter. The Committee discussed generally the tenure of the comments on how the town can ensure that any growth and development is not just runaway growth and increased housing costs.

The Committee discussed the relationship between a Growth Area and zoning. The Growth Area is not a regulatory concept, whereas zoning provides levels of protection. In the area of the Cousins River marsh, the Committee decided to move the Growth Area to be consistent with the commercial zoning district. The Committee discussed how this is a good example of balancing growth with natural resource protection. At Wyman Station, the Committee decided to leave the property as a Growth Area consistent with the zoning district and to support strategic economic development initiatives. The Committee believed that recreation or open space opportunities could co-exist with any future redevelopment or reuse of the site.

The Committee discussed (re)establishing a Conservation Commission. The Committee discussed that a Conservation Commission in Maine has four purposes acquiring land, accepting gifts, education, and property management. The Committee discussed concerns about additional regulatory hurdles to go beyond those powers noted. The Committee discussed actions in the draft plan that suggest additional regulations and suggested that those processes and policy decisions should play out.

The Committee discussed committing implementation through prioritization and metrics. The Committee discussed various metrics, like percent increases of the commercial tax base or per capita open space acreage. The Committee decided to leave the development of metrics and prioritization to the implementation committee.

The Committee determined that the Town Council is the body that should be considering how to manage the tax burden as many decisions will have pros and cons and budget consideration. It is part of the Council's policy setting. The Committee generally discussed whether there is a tipping point of too much growth and tax increases, but were unsure where that tipping point lives. The draft plan calls for a focus on a levers that can generate revenue for the town.

Finally, the Committee discussed the continued commentary about really balancing growth and development with natural resources. The Committee believed that the draft plan does that currently but directed staff and North Star Planning to put the information front and center in some sort of call out. The Committee discussed that it might feel like growth is inevitable, but the town really needs to have a heavy hand in ensuring natural resource protection. The Committee discussed how the Growth Management Act intends for communities to do just that, balance where growth is appropriate and protect areas where growth isn't appropriate.

IV. Upcoming Meetings

Erin reported that the public hearing with the Town Council on April 25 is to collect comments. No one needs to respond to any particular comment. A draft presentation is in the packet if anyone has revisions.

The Committee scheduled a second May meeting for May 14 in order to review the rest of the comments. The later May meeting could be reserved to review the state feedback. The Committee asked Ben what he thought would be the scope of feedback from the state. Generally, Ben thought that the feedback would lean toward a consistency finding with optional revisions rather than an inconsistent finding and mandatory revisions.

V. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 PM.