



# TOWN OF BAR HARBOR

93 Cottage Street  
Bar Harbor Maine 04609

## Comprehensive Planning Committee Meeting January 12, 2022, 6:00 – 8:00 PM Municipal Building/Council Chambers

### MINUTES

Comprehensive Planning Committee (CPC) members present were Elissa Chesler, Jacquie Colburn, Greg Cox, Kevin DesVeaux, Cherie Galyean, John Kelly, Jim Mahoney, Calistra Martinez, Michael McKernan, Kristin Murphy, Misha Mytar, Val Peacock, Allison Sasner, Kyle Shank, and David Woodside.

Staff Present were Planning Director Michele Gagnon, Assistant Planner Steve Fuller, Code Enforcement Officer Angie Chamberlain, and Deputy Code Enforcement Officer Mike Gurtler. Town Manager Kevin Sutherland was also in the room via Zoom.

Consultants present by Zoom were Steve Whitman, Maggie Mills, and Liz Kelly.

The meeting started at 6:00 PM.

**1. Call to order**

As a chairperson had not yet been elected, Michele Gagnon called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

**2. Excused absences.** All members were present.

**3. Zoom logistic, review of meeting agenda and adoption.**

Assistant Planner Steve Fuller explained to the members of the Comprehensive Planning Committee attending in person that the consultants were participating remotely and that they could not see them, only hear them, and therefore it was important for people to state their name before speaking and to speak loudly.

On a motion by David Woodside, seconded by Elissa Chesler, the agenda was adopted (15-0)

**4. Adoption of Dec. 14, 2021 minutes**

On a motion by Elissa Chesler with a correction to the date of the public hearing being January 12, not the 19, and a second from David Woodside, the minutes were adopted (15-0).

**5. Role and election of Chair and Vice-chair**

Kyle Shank nominated Misha Mytar as Vice-chairperson and it passed (15-0).  
David Woodside nominated Kyle Shank as Chairperson and it passed (15-0).

**6. Public comment period**

None

**7. Public hearing/adoption Remote Participation Policy**

On a motion by Elissa Chesler, seconded by Jacque Colburn, the Remote Participation Policy was adopted (15-0).

**8. Public engagement**

**a. Outreach and Engagement Plan**

There was a discussion about how information was to flow from the Comprehensive Planning Committee to the boards and committees and vice versa. Steve Whitman said that for the boards and committees that have representation on the Comprehensive Planning Committee, those representatives can provide that feedback. Liz Kelly noted that the existing conditions feedback form should help with the transfer of information. There was a general agreement that a monthly brief could be written and distributed to the boards and committees, and that they could include a Comprehensive Plan update item to their agenda.

Members asked how will public television be used for outreach? Liz Kelly explained that this is typically used as advertisement for the project. Steve Whitman further explained that short educational videos advertising the purpose and progress of the Comprehensive Plan are being planned and that shorter/simpler clips for specific events could also be considered. He went on to add that we could consider doing a short video sooner, possibly featuring the Comprehensive Planning Committee chair and vice-chair to announce the project, how to follow the project and be engaged in the process. There was a brief discussion about stakeholders. It was said that neighborhoods should be seen as stakeholders.

There is an interest to make sure that we quantify the outreach, so we know how many people were engaged in each aspect of these outreach activities. It was suggested that we may want to focus on a more direct and creative approach to stakeholder outreach.

**b. Feedback Form**

There was a feeling that the Comment Form was not user-friendly (too jargony). Steve Whitman explained that at this time, the form was meant for internal use. If, and when, we decide that it will be for external use, then we will change the header to be more mainstream and less academic. The consultant will resend Existing Conditions Feedback Form with a PDF of this presentation.

At the February 9, 2022 meeting, the consultant will present the draft Comprehensive Plan website.

9. *There was no agenda item #9*

10. **Existing conditions:**

**a. Overall update**

Steve Whitman explained that we are starting the Existing Conditions phase of the project, which is the very beginning of the three phases of this planning process. He explained that when he provided a project update to the Planning Board on January 5, 2022, it was said that they did not want to just “update” the 2007 Plan. The consultants will provide the Comprehensive Planning Committee with topic-specific profiles by May to inform and guide this process.

**b. Discussion on Population/Demographics**

The comments on population and demographics are listed below:

- 2020 Census data will be used.
- To have a good understanding of trends, maybe we could include anecdotal information from employers and other stakeholders that can provide some context to accompany this data.
- The last two years have been atypical and really disruptive. They might not be representative of the population trends in Bar Harbor.
- How is full-time resident defined?
- Will we be using seasonal and daytime population figures?
- What is the rate of change in the community? We should talk to big employers. Bar Harbor is more diverse than surrounding communities, and that is a strength.
- What is the timeframe of the sampling? Annually? Quarterly? Micro-peaks within the seasonal season?
- We should consider the different ‘types’ of seasonal population. Seasonal residents, day tourists, employees.
- Data on summer population, daytime population, workers, etc. Maybe H2B visas would provide information on worker data.
- Acadia National Park does not count visitors. The data collected does show patterns of visitation over time.
- Curious about the high school kids graduating. Are they staying or leaving? In- or out- migration of residents?

**c. Discussion on Natural Resources**

The consultants noted that more than half of the land in Bar harbor is protected.

The comments on natural resources are listed below:

**What natural resources (terrestrial and marine) in Bar Harbor are most important to you?**

- Eagle Lake — drinking water source to the town, important destination in Acadia National Park as it is a major attraction and a very popular parking area.
- Public Access – specifically to the Shore Path. It is highly used by all. It was mentioned that overall, Bar Harbor has good access public access to the shore. It was also mentioned that public access to the shore is limited and often access points have no parking. Access to the water.

- Working waterfront and the pressure on workers and fishermen, and conflict between historical use (such as fishing) and other uses.
- Northeast Creek — important resources as a salt marsh, scenic, and for water quality.
- Viewsheds are important for both residents and visitors, alike. Used to have vistas on Route 3 but those are disappearing. Mountains views, of mountains and from mountains.
- Night sky — the impacts of lighting from projects outside of the town political boundaries, such as in Frenchman's Bay (Gouldsboro) – American Aqua Farms, should be considered. Night sky studies were done in the early 2000s. The annual Night Sky Festival (5,000 visits) held in September around the New Moon. Darkest sky east of the Mississippi River. Seek Dark Sky Preserve status. Glow emanating from Pirates Cove area.
- Connections between neighborhoods and open space.
- Crooked Road and Norway Drive farm area/agricultural space, good farmland soils. Salt marsh. These environments are limited in the Town but special.
- Bar Harbor Open Space Plan (not town-adopted).
- Neighborhood trails, Stone Barn, Great Meadow, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust land.
- Carrying capacity of resources.

**In your opinion, are natural resources in Bar Harbor well protected? Are these protections regulatory or non-regulatory?**

- Ballfields – not sure if they are well protected. It was explained that the fields are split into two different lots. One side was transferred to the town with restrictions. The athletic field, to the other side, is private and deeded for athletic use only.
- Hadley Point — Parking overload is hurting local public spaces such as Hadley Point as it was not designed for the use they are seeing. Funding for maintenance is needed.
- Access to information for tourists (e.g., Facebook pages) is increasing and knowledge of these local areas has and continues to spread. Puts burden on maintenance and carrying capacity. Also, the carrying capacity of Town infrastructure, as well as the carrying capacity of the natural resources, has been exceeded.
- Shore path is a privilege and not a right, as it is privately-owned with multiple owners.
- Protection is not just regulatory or non-regulatory.

**In your opinion, what is the role of the Town in protecting natural resources in Bar Harbor? How should the Town collaborate with neighboring communities and the National Park Service?**

**What threats to natural resources are you most concerned about?**

- Habitat fragmentation — As land gets developed it gets further fragmented and will require fire prevention. Need to balance these impacts with the need for housing.
- Burden of the number of people in Bar Harbor on a given day that don't live here. Residents are the tax base – trying to use residents to fund visitation.
- There are many people that use the infrastructure and the resources but do not contribute financially.
- The Land Use Ordinance can be used to help with some of this/lots of missed opportunities, for example the redesign of lighting on Route 3 would have been a

great opportunity to change lighting to adjust for the night sky. But too many hurdles to get the new lights approved and ended up re-installing the old ones.

- Policy fragmentation. Many different stakeholders in Bar Harbor who care about natural resources but doing different things. Very active community. Need to be unified.
- League of Towns and Acadia National Park. The park is part of the League of Towns which is a way to get information from the park to the towns and the Acadia Advisory Committee is a way to get information from the towns to park.
- Carrying capacity of the natural resources and built environment

#### **d. Discussion on Historic and Archaeological Resources**

The comments on historic and archaeological resources are listed below:

- The entire Downtown is what makes Bar Harbor, Bar Harbor. Big part of who we are/our character. The density, buildings, and activity all contribute to the character. Many sites have been lost, and those that remain should be protected.
- The fire of 1947 burnt a large portion of Bar Harbor. [*The Fire engulfed 67 seasonal estates known as Millionaire's Row on the shores of Frenchman Bay, as well as 170 homes and five grand historic hotels near downtown.*]
- There are a lot of old agricultural and fishing vestiges which gives us a sense of time and place.
- There are many layers to Bar Harbor from being a seasonal place with the rusticators, to a place for the middle-class, and now tourism.
- Three groups often identified: Who is a transient, a transplant, or a trustee of the resources in Bar Harbor?
- There is a depth/breadth of history and heritage around all the time. Including high level museums and iconic buildings.
- The lab has shaped who we are and has a long history.
- Some of the archaeological resources are not well understood and therefore not well protected.
- There is a lack of financial resources to protect old buildings
- Historic and archaeological resources in the park are protected but also under threat due to high number of visitors.
- The character of the downtown is eroding as buildings are being modernized.
- The Design Review Board is doing good work and the town is lucky to have it in place.
- Many historic buildings are owned by non-profits who may not have the funding to maintain them, and they are very well used with high visitation. In general, many of Bar Harbor's historic buildings have high levels of visitation and high costs with maintenance, making preservation a challenge.
- What do we mean by "protected," as far as historic preservation goes?
- It would be good to see the heritage of historic industries like fishing and farming preserved, but also consider how Bar Harbor is supporting the current uses of these practices that have both historical and contemporary significance. For example, how

is access for fishing being preserved, promoted, or restricted today? How are fishing rights being protected?

**10. Next steps**

- Continue discussing the Engagement Plan
- Draft website
- Announcement of project, at least in print
- Begin taking about land use
- Get the questions ahead of time so that the members of the CPC can get prepared.


**11. Public comment period**

Ruth Eveland, a member of the Planning Board, asked that consideration be given to being a Certified Local Government Program [“designed to promote preservation planning and cultural resources protection efforts at the local level that are consistent with state and Federal standards and guidelines”].

**12. Adjourn**

At 7:53 PM on a motion by John Kelly, with multiple seconds, the meeting was adjourned.

**Minutes approved by the Comprehensive Planning Committee on February 9, 2022:**

  
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**Kyle Shank**  
**Chair, Comprehensive Planning Committee**

**Date**