

**TOWN OF BAR HARBOR**  
**Comprehensive Planning Committee**  
**April 13, 2022, 6:00 – 8:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

The meeting was held via Zoom.

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

Staff present were Planning Director Michele Gagnon and Deputy Code Enforcement Officer Mike Gurtler.

Consultants present were Steve Whitman, Liz Kelly, and Zak Brohinsky.

**1. Call to order**

Chairperson Shank called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

**2. Excused absences**

Jim Mahoney was excused.

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

On a motion by Greg Cox, seconded by Kevin DesVeaux, the agenda was adopted (14-0).

**4. Adoption of March 9, 2022 minutes**

On a motion by Greg Cox, seconded by Elissa Chesler, the March 9, 2022 minutes were adopted (14-0).

**5. Public comment period**

No comments were made.

**6. Update on Other Related Efforts**

Michele Gagnon provided an overview of related efforts as outlined in her memo to the CPC. This included a review of the Planned Unit Development and Affordable Housing provisions of the Land Use Ordinance. She explained that inclusionary housing provisions are being explored. The next step will include case study scenarios. Michele Gagnon was then asked

how this may inform the comprehensive planning process. She said that waiting on the completion of the Comprehensive Plan to address the town's housing problem is not an option given the severity of the situation and that she is confident that this will be in line with the direction of the plan.

## **7. Outreach and Engagement**

Liz Kelly summarized the outreach activities completed to date and some ongoing efforts as identified in the meeting memo. Elissa Chesler commented that many people do not understand how the Comprehensive Plan fits with other regulations, or the role of the CPC. Val Peacock requested that there be clarification of what the Committee's role is on the various outreach tasks. Ms. Peacock also requested that outreach be tracked so that it can be quantified.

Ms. Kelly explained that the April newsletter is in the works, and that it will include a link to the Polco survey. Mike McKernan asked if the Polco questions are open-ended questions, and if so, how they will be analyzed. Steve Whitman clarified that these will be open-ended questions and the analysis will be focused on the qualitative responses. Michele Gagnon added that the intent is to look for the trends in this data.

John Kelly shared a concern that Polco alone will not reach everyone. This led to a discussion on all of the ways that outreach and engagement tools should be made available including online, on paper, and in-person when possible. It was decided that tabling (where members of the committee and/or staff will interact with residents to inform them of the Comprehensive Plan and distribute information) should begin in June for the election and Town Meeting. Kyle Shank, Greg Cox, and Cherie Galyean agreed to coordinate future tabling activities and to coordinate offline with the consultant on any materials that are needed.

Val Peacock suggested adding a demographic question to better understand who is responding, and Michele Gagnon agreed that this will help with some of the cross tabulation. John Kelly also mentioned that half of the businesses are part of the Chamber and that other ways need to be found to reach the rest. Liz asked for the Committee's help in doing that and in reaching other audiences in the community.

The September forum was then discussed briefly and Misha Mytar asked if the focus of the event will be on existing conditions review. Liz Kelly explained that it will include identifying barriers, opportunities and challenges that should be addressed in the comprehensive plan. Steve Whitman added that it should do so by allowing for the review of the existing conditions data and by looking to actions needed in the future.

## **8. Existing Conditions**

Steve Whitman provided an update on the status and timeline of the existing conditions work being completed by the consulting team, and provided an overview of a proposed deeper-dive housing needs assessment. He explained that the requested scope of work for the additional housing needs assessment and analysis work that will go deeper than a typical comprehensive plan, and could be completed by RKG Associates in parallel to this planning process. If approved this would provide additional information on the existing housing challenges, and

some possible strategies. Michele Gagnon explained that this is headed for approval and if she shared with the CPC.

## **9. Parks, Open Space, and Recreation**

Zak Brohinsky provided an overview of the topics as they are defined by the State of Maine, and explained why these appear to be especially important to Bar Harbor. The following feedback and ideas were offered by committee members during the discussion:

- Limited in recreational boating access, limited mooring space with long waiting list.
- Hadley Point provides limited launching opportunity, and the launch in Town is challenging as well.
- Vocal contingent asking for space for dogs.
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust hears that coastal access, places for dogs, and community garden spaces are in need.
- How much more open space is needed?
- The lack of mountain bike trails leads to some informal use and some use where this should not happen. Breakneck Road is a current spot for riding.
- Maybe Bar harbor does not need to provide it all?
- Need to recognize the economic importance of open space. It is the biggest economic driver in the community.
- Recreation opportunities for children are needed closer to where they live. Currently most are at the YMCA but fewer children live in this part of town.
- If there are natural resources we value, we should make sure the land use regulations actually protect them.
- The Glen Mary Woods area needs protection and we should provide more recreational opportunities for older children. The Glen Mary Pool skating rink is not maintained.
- Consider miniparks along major routes and other places where green space could be formalized.
- We need to recognize that the town does not have a Parks and Recreation Department and that this role has defaulted to the YMCA. The YMCA charges and therefore the services are not accessible to all. Who is not being served?
- The in-town park was fixed through non-municipal funding and fundraising, as was the skate park, dog park, and Town Hill park.
- Based on the size of the community it is amazing to have so much available including Little League, and programs through the YMCA paid for by the town.
- Facilities are well maintained. The town staff should be commended and this should continue.
- There is pressure on these locations, and it is challenging to sustain the number and type of users as they continue to change. There is a need for a clear plan for open space and recreation areas and funding behind the plan.
- Increasingly people are discovering every spot in town.
- There is an opportunity to think about open water and recreational aspects, and the open space management of the waterfront. This should include considering aquaculture and other potential impacts. The open space of the ocean.

- Need a clear vision for open space and recreation, what the town can commit to, and what others should do.
- Should clarify how formalized the open space and recreation spaces are between the many organizations that care for them.

#### **10. Community Facilities and Services Discussion**

Steve Whitman provided a short introduction to the topic and explained the work completed to date with the various department heads. The following feedback and ideas were offered by committee members during this discussion:

- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure is needed.
- Energy – some buildings are very expensive to operate and may not be deficient otherwise. Should we consider new facilities or additional investment in existing facilities? Could the school buildings be an option?
- There is a need for a police station.
- Could the municipal office building be moved? It is expensive to run and is not as accessible or inclusive as it could be.
- The Town needs an overall facilities assessment and plan.
- Has regionalization of the police department been successful? Yes, and this success has been documented.
- Looking at regional ambulance service now.
- Could trash and recycling be handled differently? Large impact from visitors. The town has University of Maine interns doing a waste audit to inform the management of this system. Climate to Thrive is also looking at waste issues.
- Important to know that many businesses are having their waste and recycling hauled away privately.
- There are wireless/internet capacity issues during summer and the increase in remote workers has added to this issue.
- The municipal fiber project is moving forward.
- Need to remember our role as a tourism destination versus the community needs when considering solutions.
- Can there be a comparison of the visitor impact by comparing the town to other communities of a similar size that do not get as many visitors?
- Mention the MDI Search and Rescue which is a non-profit coordinating with the Park and others.
- Life Flight comes to Bar Harbor often and the service does not have access to the best infrastructure, but a new landing area is in the works for the corner of the field.
- Overall, most are very satisfied with the department efforts.
- Some facilities may be under-sized – Fire Department and schools as examples.
- Is the Fire Department in the right location?
- Sea-level rise and the need to address the pier, Harbor Master's office, and other facilities?
- Other climate change impacts relate to the roads and culverts.

**11. Next Steps**

- Members interesting in staffing the tabling effort should submit their name to Kyle Shank.
- Note that the next meeting is May 16<sup>th</sup>.

**12. Public Comment Period.**

No comments were made.

**12. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50 PM on a motion by John Kelly, seconded by Mike McKernan (14-0).

**Minutes approved by the Comprehensive Planning Committee on May 16, 2022:**



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

5/26/22

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**Date**