

South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee

August 29, 2022

MINUTES

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Chris Harris	Committee Member	chrisbharris@gmail.com

Committee Members Not Present: Laura Leber, Scott McPhedran, Jonathan Donahue

- Jack moved to approve the July meeting minutes, seconded by the rest of the committee.
- Survey Updates
 - Committee has received 1,000+ surveys (~33% of households)
 - 614+ digital responses to date
 - ~436 paper surveys
 - SMPDC will collect responses and provide analysis
 - SMPDC would need to strategize about inputting responses for paper surveys, as they do not have the staff availability for this number of surveys
 1. SMPDC will put together an estimate on resources (temp hire, etc.) to complete inputs
 - Survey end date tentatively set for September 30, 2022
 - There was a transcription error between printed and digital versions on question concerning the desirability of senior housing (typically found desirable)—though now too late to correct, can be adjusted not to significantly affect results
 - Quality Control: With enough responses, influence of errors is minimized and does not materially change how outcomes are interpreted
- Housing
 - South Berwick’s housing growth is smaller compared to surrounding areas, though not necessarily more affordable
 - Rental housing was steady in cost over last ten years, with slight decrease (could be a result of more rental units)
 - Units cost higher than all other towns, except York
 - Home affordability is down significantly, particularly in last couple years due to housing market price increases
 - Jeff noted, regarding the scope of towns within our vicinity for comparison, we are relatively affordable compared to towns like York and Eliot, but less affordable compared to towns like Lebanon and Sanford
 - Regarding “growth area,” the state determined the state consistency for all Comprehensive Plans adopted before 2012 has now expired. LD 2003 defines a “growth area” as one that is identified in a state consistent plan.
 - Town can define growth area and include in comprehensive plan

- LD 2003 currently does not relate to any grant programs (previously, projects such as Cummings Mill were funded by developer grants)
- Benefit of having the state evaluate the Plan for consistency is that zoning is considered consistent which protects against lawsuits (very uncommon)
 - Consistency also used to help with grant acquisition, but not relevant anymore
 - Inconsistent plans will be sent back to be changed
 - Approval takes less than 6 months
 - Best to focus on the process and not worry about approval and related bureaucracy
- Affordability
 - In recent years home prices have increased
 - High median incomes have helped with affordability
 - The calculations used to determine median income may exclude certain demographics, because Maine Housing uses U.S. Census data to define median income and adjusts it with their own sources. It is imperfect in terms of data collection, like any U.S. Census data.
 1. LD 2003 seeks to increase diversity of housing to capture more demographics
- The projection of total housing units needed in the future is based on the simple population projection SMPDC completed for the Community Profile chapter, and average household sizes according to the ACS. There is an explanation in the text of the chapter.
- LD 2003
 - LD 2003 information packet is available on SMPDC website
 - Law needs to be enacted by July 2023 at local level
 - Bottom line: LD 2003 appears to provide towns with flexibility to craft what is best for them
 - Three pieces to LD 2003:
 1. The town must allow affordable housing developments to get 2.5x the base density of the district if they provide designated affordable units for a period of 30 years.
 - a. This is only required within growth areas, which the town can determine in the Comp Plan. If the town does not have a growth area, it follows other standard boundaries such as areas of public water and sewer.
 - b. One challenge here is there is a lack of developers due to the affordability requirements
 2. Towns must increase density requirements, for instance, through allowing 2 units on vacant lots everywhere housing is allowed, meaning there is no longer single-family zoning. It also requires the town to allow up to 4 units on vacant lots in growth areas and allow any single-family dwelling to add 2 additional units.
 3. Town must allow accessory dwelling units (already allowed). Currently, limited by septic system support for units. Other limitations include HOA regulations, such as in Old Mill.
 - Interim guidance from the state should be available end of August
- General edits:
 - Include page numbers
 - Use larger fonts on chart

NEXT MEETING
Monday, September 26 at 6 PM
Police Department, Training Room

Elita Galvin moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:43pm, seconded by Jack Kareckas.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nora Gibson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Nora Gibson, Recording Secretary