

South Berwick Comprehensive Plan Committee

January 9, 2023

MINUTES

Paul Schumacher	SMPDC	pschumacher@smpdc.org
Raegan Young	SMPDC	ryoung@smpdc.org
Jessica Cyr	Town Council	jcyr@sbmaine.us
Denise Clavette	Economic Developer	dclavette@sbmaine.us
Laura Leber	Committee Chair	laura.leber.maine@gmail.com
Nora Gibson	Recording Secretary	gibson.nora.p@gmail.com
Elita Galvin	Committee Member	elita.galvin@gmail.com
Deb Ganster	Committee Member	djganster@yahoo.com
Chris Harris	Committee Member	chrisbharris@gmail.com

Committee Members Not Present: Jack Kareckas, Jeff Minihan, Scott McPhedran, Jonathan Donahue

- Laura moved to approve minutes from the November meeting, seconded by committee members.
- Public Engagement
 - Best done following the completion of inventory of chapters.
 - SMPDC wants to know what is best form for the initial meeting(s)?
 - Public Informational Session to present findings seems most helpful at this stage.
 - How would public comments be addressed? SMPDC noted that feedback would not be structured (as with other meetings) and instead would be organic reactions shared in Q&A style. Also, could frame feedback by presenting reactions to specific pieces of information.
 - Would be helpful to provide chapter drafts/other information in advance, so attendees can review for context. Might be best to condense chapter drafts into key points.
 - Best to focus less on debate and more on presenting our work thus far. Other meetings, such as Focus Groups, would be helpful for deeper discussions.
 - Committee agreed a Public Informational Session would be helpful in having the public engage with context before recommendations.
 - Concerns were raised around potentially coinciding forums on traffic and budget issues, particularly how all these meetings may overwhelm the public.
 - Traffic is a pivotal issue that affects many other components. Sebago Technics should deliver traffic report shortly.
 - Ultimately, committee decided waiting for “better timing” may not be successful, as there are always competing priorities.
 - Committee supports holding a Public Informational Session once chapter inventory is complete in March.
 - For Focus Groups, SMPDC recommends inviting specific municipal staff and topic experts for small groups (4-5 people).
 - Committee discussed if it would be helpful to invite members of the public to ensure engagement (it likely would be a small few interested in attending). Main concern with this approach is that public opinion can overwhelm the general discussion and group goals.

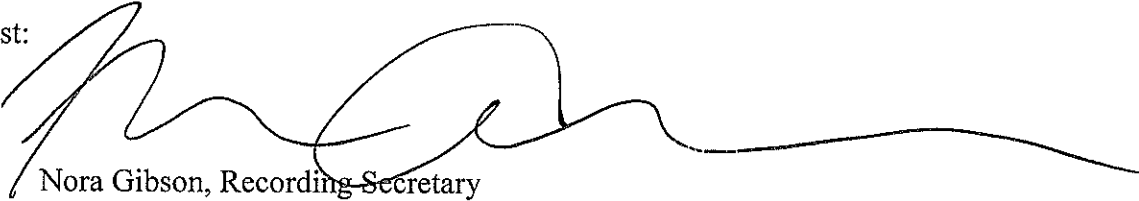
- People with a more advanced knowledge base could help brainstorm towards successful recommendations. Additionally, those same topic experts could champion action items later.
 - To ensure public engagement, findings from the Focus Groups could be presented in a committee meeting that is open to the public.
- Current plan for public engagement: Start with Public Informational Session in March, followed by Focus Groups with experts.
- Prior to public engagement, Paul will attend the Town Council Meeting on January 24th to provide brief update on committee work. This would be helpful as council is about to embark on budgeting season.
- Survey
 - Survey Results can be shared on home page for town website, as well as put in the town newsletter. Deb shared that people who participated in the survey have been asking for results.
 - SMPDC will add an executive summary to survey results to highlight main findings. Raegan will draft “Top 10” of major data points.
 - Denise noted that when referencing dates, it is most helpful to put recent year first so that it can be the most readily remembered. Denise volunteered to make those changes.
- Arts and Recreation
 - SMPDC reached out to SoBo Arts but has not heard back yet. SoBo Central is 501c3, and SoBo Arts is applying to be under them. Currently, funded predominately through individual fundraising.
 - Last sentence on Vaughn Woods section was accidental carry over, will be removed. (Note: Gymnasium is not open to public, is now owned by Seacoast Christian.)
 - Recommendation to highlight Powder House Hill and note that it now has basketball courts.
- Downtown
 - Former Downtown Chapter focused on walkable, vibrant downtown, but was not tailored specifically to South Berwick’s needs.
 - Committee acknowledged that town needs full scale revitalization plan, which is not possible to provide in the context of our Plan.
 - Towns spend an immense amount to revitalize their downtown areas and would need an extensive plan to secure investments.
 - This chapter needs details that would likely have to come from a separate planning effort focused specifically on downtown revitalization. Topics would include infrastructure improvement, businesses to attract, recreation opportunities, transportation matters, etc.
 - Town is currently looking at RFP for a market analysis. The analysis would help generate targeted strategies to attain businesses most beneficial to the community.
 - Market analysis involves surveys aimed at understanding what kind of businesses residents would support and not support.
 - Currently, the state will not approve our downtown as a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District without a specific Downtown Plan. (Local examples of TIF District include Pumpkin Town and Route 236.)
 - Purpose of this chapter could be to focus on the importance of our downtown and recommendations for a separate planning effort.
 - With regards to downtown parking, the term “parking at village scale” refers to small lots that are most suitable to our area. “Traffic calming devices” refers to road designs that slow traffic, such as narrowing roads, on-street parking, speed bumps, bike lanes, etc. Studies find that flat wide roads make people drive faster.

- Committee briefly discussed relationship to Berwick Academy, particularly town use of their facilities. School facilities are not public, but town is in dialogue with the Academy.

NEXT MEETING
Monday, January 30th at 6 PM
Police Department, Training Room

Meeting adjourned by Laura at 7:23pm.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nora Gibson', written over a horizontal line.

Nora Gibson, Recording Secretary