

MINUTES
TOWN OF TOPSHAM
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE
TOPSHAM LIBRARY, FORESIDE ROAD
MAY 14, 2018 – 4:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Larry Fitch, Chairman
Mark Kate Appicelli
Douglas Bennett, Vice Chairman
Joe Feely
Matthew Nixon
Susan Rae Reeves

MEMBER(S) ABSENT: Jennah Godo, Sean Liedman

STAFF PRESENT: Rich Roedner, Town Manager; Rod Melanson, Town Planner; John Shattuck, Economic and Community Development Director; and Carol Eyerman, Assistant Town Planner. Selectman Bill Thompson was also present, as was Consultant Vanessa Farr from Maine Design Workshop. Patty Williams was present acting as recording secretary.

A meeting of the Topsham Comprehensive Plan Committee was held on Monday, May 14, 2018 in the Meeting Room, at the Topsham Library.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Fitch called the regular meeting to order at 4:05 p.m. and asked each person in attendance to introduce themselves. It was an extended meeting which began at 4:05 p.m. and ended at 8:25 p.m. Due to the length of the meeting, a break was taken half way through the agenda and pizzas were made available.

Mr. Fitch reviewed the agenda for the evening.

Selectman Bill Thompson was present and said he was in attendance as an independent citizen and not especially representing the Board of Selectman. Mr. Thompson told the commission what he liked and didn't like about the draft he had read of "Big Ideas." He said he would like to see more sustainable items and not so much effort towards WIFI management. He commented on the problem of getting people to come to town meeting, giving an example of a family with two children, father works in Portland, mother works in Augusta. By the time they pick up the children from daycare and return home, they are too busy to be able to attend town meeting. Questioned if the current system is conducive to families' scheduled. The Town Manager responded that plans are to form a governance committee in the fall to determine if the current system is still appropriate.

Mr. Bennett asked what Mr. Thompson would change to make our system work better. Mr. Thompson said we need to give people a good reason to come to town and spend money. All agreed Topsham is a good town, with good schools, a great recreation department, good library and centrally located as a hub for Portland, Lewiston/Auburn, Augusta, etc.

Mr. Melanson explained what the committee worked on at the last meeting and noted that the Big Idea Document is moving forward with several changes and adjustments having been made to better fit what that committee would like to see coming forward.

Chairman Fitch reviewed the agenda and expressed hope that the committee could get through the Big Idea document and, hopefully, find time to discuss preparations for the June Open House Public Meeting. Mr. Melanson added that we need to get everyone comfortable with changes discussed and move into the larger calendar stuff down the road. He emphasized the importance of being prepared for the June 23rd Open House.

A calendar was distributed with the first big goal being June 4th. The calendar included the following:

June 4, 2018, delivery of COMMITTEE DRAFT to the Committee.

Staff/Committee to take the summer to hash through.

Provide consolidated comments by the beginning of September. Maine Design Workshop (MDW) to provide general instructions for how to provide the comments.

Month of September: MDW re-draft.

October – Release of the Public Hearing Draft.

Take public comments up to Thanksgiving. Put it out to the ether, schedule hearings. Staff/Committee to conduct hearings. Committee can be processing batches of comments as they come in during October and November. Turn over one set of consolidated edits by December 1st.

December: Make last round of edits based on public comment period (MDW makes edits to draft based on public process).

January: Deliver final draft.

January/February: Sell the Plan.

Mr. Bennett's two memos to the Committee were entered into the record. The first dated May 9, 2018, Re: "My Hopes for Our Process Going Forward" and the second dated May 12, 2018, Re: "Framing and Presenting the Big Ideas." Mr. Feely said the papers were helpful and provided

an example of documentation that will be helpful to the public process prior to the June 23rd meeting.

Suggestion was made to schedule meetings prior to September with the Conservation Committee, Historic District Committee and Finance Committee. A workshop will be scheduled for July/August with the Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Melanson will work on placing the public meeting agendas on the website. It was suggested that the drafts could be sent around in June for review.

Chairman Fitch steered the committee back to discussion of the June Public Open House Meeting prep. Consultant Vanessa Farr from Maine Design Workshop, gave a power point presentation showing the June Open House Agenda. She said the idea was to circle back to the community with a first draft of maps, offer a brief presentation and give people time to review the maps. Request will be made for them to attach sticky notes to areas of concern, similar to what was done at the Charrette. Mr. Bennett asked when the committee can see the presentation. Ms. Farr responded 5 to 7 days prior to the event. Mr. Bennett urged the importance of the big ideas being wrapped together to present a story people can become interested in. It was noted that the Open House is not a final presentation and changes can be made where required. Mr. Bennett wants to be sure people can take in what's the motivation and what's the story. Ms. Farr said the Open House should be fun, interesting and present an opportunity for people to express concerns and ideas on sticky notes. She added the committee will be given the "polished plan."

Ms. Farr showed and reviewed the complete table of contents. Mr. Bennett said the table of contents was presented months ago and that he couldn't see where anything the committee has suggested has been included in it. He said "they" are doing it "their" way. Mr. Melanson suggested the committee wait until the draft product is presented and then the changes talked about could be made. Ms. Reeves said she appreciated what the consultant has done so far, especially how they wrote the Big Idea Document. Ms. Appicelli added that she liked what Vanessa has done and the committee needs to focus on involving more people. She added that the Face Book site has lost its momentum and the more people we can engage will tell other people and get more interest going. Mr. Melanson suggested that everyone make a list of 5 names to get involved.

At this point in the meeting focus was put on the **Big Idea Document** beginning with

- **Streets for People.** Mr. Bennett said this is not the right thing to begin with to peak the interest of people and that the document should start with neighborhoods. Vanessa suggested that each section could be placed on display and each person could be given 4 or 5 dots to place on the subjects they are most interested.
- **Embrace Slow Flow Traffic as the Topsham Way** – Mr. Nixon said he couldn't imagine a 20 MPH limit for the whole town. It was suggested speed limits should best be governed neighborhood by neighborhood. Vanessa will change the action item that says to adopt a resolution that reduces speed within Topsham's neighborhood and within 2 miles of schools.
- **Re-strips lanes throughout town to 9 and 10 feet in width** – All agreed this was OK as written.
- **Add protected sidewalks and bike facilities** – OK as written.
- **Improve Intersection Safety** – OK as written.
- **Avoid multiple lanes, turn lanes, and merges where possible** – OK as written.

- **Improve street connections** – Pros and cons were discussed . Concluded it was OK as written.
- **Make special plans for kid-prioritized streets** – OK as written.
- **Keep the streets green and lush** – OK as written.
- **Keep 196 as a traffic-prioritized street that is tame enough to cross** – Change “from Highland Green and neighborhoods north of the Connector getting to the village” to “from Village Drive/Community way.”
- **Make 196 from Main Street to the Androscoggin River 2 lanes** – Ask Kara is future traffic projections for the Connector supports this statement. Appears it can’t be done. Also, need to adjust the title. Rod Melanson will do.
- **Local and Regional Mobility** – OK as written.
- **Make bus transit connections to other communities** – OK as written
- **Support inter-town bus transit service** – Take first action item out.
- **Access to Nature and Open Spaces** – Seek private funding to establish an Open Space and Trails Ombudsman to work with Topsham Recreation Department. There was discussion if a boat ramp could be placed at the proposed park in the Lower Village. Response was that this would probably not happen because property belongs to the Sewer District.
- **Meet Your Topsham** – It was suggested to remove reference to “Highland Green’s private clubhouses” as it sounds too exclusive.
- **Make the Fairgrounds a centerpiece of the town** – Change the wording to read more like “Work with the Fairgrounds to make it a centerpiece of the Town.”
- **Support Knowledge Economy** – OK as written.
- **Be Deliberate about Growth** – Some felt this section is repetitive and should be dissected and placed in the appropriate spot within the document. This will be revisited when the document is complete.
- **Housing Diversity** – Change wording of “tiny” units to “small units”.
- **Support Publicly Funded Affordable Housing** – Note typo 4th line down. Should be “vouchers” rather than “voutures.”
- **Open Governance** – There was a discussion about the statement that the town is understaffed. Committee questioned if this was a true statement. Vanessa responded that every employee interviewed commented that they were doing the work of others and that their department was understaffed and there is a lack of funding to deliver the desired services.
- **Nurture a culture of civil discourse** – OK as written
- **A Sustainable Future** - Change to “A More Sustainable Future.”
- **Water Quality** – After “MS4” add (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System). Change first action item to: “Explore ways to monitor Topsham’s surface water quality ...”
- **Connect to Green** – Rod Melanson will review and add appropriate wording.

ADJOURNMENT

As it was after 8:00 p.m. (8:25 p.m.), the committee was in unanimous agreement to adjourn the meeting and to schedule another meeting for May 21, 2018 to begin at 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room of the library. The June public open house meeting prep will be discussed at that meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Patty Williams, Recording Secretary