

MEMORANDUM

TO: Michael McGovern, Town Manager
FROM: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner
DATE: January 31, 2005
SUBJECT: New Comprehensive Plan Initiative

Introduction

The Town of Cape Elizabeth has a tradition, going back to the 1970's, of preparing a Comprehensive Plan every ten years. State statute also implies a 10-year planning window. The most recent Comprehensive Plan dates back to 1993. This proposal outlines the commencement of a new Comprehensive Plan process for Town Council consideration.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

It is a comprehensive, long range plan intended to guide the growth and development of a community that typically includes inventory and analytical sections leading to recommendations for the community's future economic development, housing, recreation and open space, transportation, community facilities, and land use, all related to the community's goals and objectives for these elements.

Why prepare a new Comprehensive Plan

1. Community Process. Comprehensive Planning is more than a document. It is a process that encourages a community to come together, evaluate its current status and decide what it would like its future to be. The current plan includes the direction set by town residents in 1993. It is appropriate for the residents of Cape Elizabeth in 2005 to reflect on the present and choose the direction for the future.

2. 2000 U. S. Census. The current plan is based on the 1990 U.S. Census. Now that a new census and related data is available, it is a good opportunity to analyze this information and use it to make adjustments in the town's direction.
3. Implementation of Current Plan. With the adoption of the 1997 Zoning Ordinance, much of the current Comprehensive Plan was implemented. There are other recommendations in the plan that the town has decided not to implement. Because a comprehensive plan and related ordinances should be consistent, it is important to evaluate the current plan for effectiveness and develop a new plan that more closely reflects current goals and objectives.
4. Age of plan. At 12 years old, by any professional measure the current comprehensive plan is just plain old.

Creation of Comprehensive Planning Committee

It has been the Town's practice to appoint a Comprehensive Planning Committee to prepare a comprehensive plan for Town Council consideration. The 1990's committee was composed of eleven members, including representatives from standing committees such as the Planning and Zoning Boards. The 2005 Comprehensive Planning Committee is proposed to be 9 members, comprised of the following representation:

Town Council	1
School Board	1
Planning Board	1
Zoning Board	1
Conservation Commission	1
Town residents	4 (of which 1 should also be a town business owner)
 TOTAL	 9

This representation is intended to provide the committee with inherent knowledge from existing town governing bodies, and at the same time balance that with a fresh perspective from town residents not necessarily involved with day-to-day operations of the town. It is expected that representatives from standing town bodies will also function as liaisons to those groups, providing feedback to the Comprehensive Plan Committee and also progress reports to their respective group. Finally, it is hoped that Comprehensive Plan Committee members will be advocates for final adoption of the plan.

Comprehensive Plan Committee Charge

The Committee is specifically charged with the following:

1. To prepare for Town Council consideration a draft comprehensive plan to be completed 18 months from the first meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Committee;
2. To craft a plan that is expected to be consistent with State Comprehensive Planning Goals;
3. To incorporate public education and participation efforts such as public forums, a public opinion survey and articles in local newspapers and the town website in the preparation of the plan; and
4. To elect a chair of the committee, record attendance, prepare minutes of meetings and to provide an update to the Town Council every 6 months.

Committee Staff

The Town Planner will staff the committee, with assistance from the ACP Office Manager. In addition, the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) will be retained to prepare inventory and analysis sections, and assist with the survey and GIS technical support as needed. All other town staff will also be available to meet with the committee within their areas of expertise.

Budget

The Town Council has allocated \$12,000 for the Comprehensive Plan process. These funds may be allocated as follows:

GPCOG Inventory and Analysis	4,500
Minutes Secretary	2,000
Survey	3,000
Printing	2,000
Miscellaneous	<u>500</u>
TOTAL	12,000

In addition, limited comprehensive planning grant monies may be available from the state, subject to successful completeness of a grant competition. If the Town receives grant funds, those could be used to expand the survey, expand GIS

coverages as part of the inventory and analysis, and obtain additional technical support, such as tabulation of the survey results.

Assumptions

This Comprehensive Planning process includes some assumptions:

- First, it is expected that most (75%) of the policies in the current Comprehensive Plan will still be valid and carried over into the new plan.
- Second, that following an evaluation of the success of the current plan, there will be recommendations to better implement current and future policies.
- Third, during the Comprehensive Planning Process, the Town will refrain, as much as is practical, from amendments to the Zoning and other land use ordinances and land use related master plans until the Comprehensive Plan is complete.

Conclusion

The Town of Cape Elizabeth has a long and impressive history of comprehensive planning every ten years. The 1993 Comprehensive Plan has been the basis for forward looking policies and regulations, including the award winning 1997 Zoning Ordinance. Undertaking a comprehensive plan is time-consuming and resource draining effort, but the final product will heavily influence town decision-making for the next decade. To continue moving forward in a responsible and fiscally efficient manner, it is time for the Town of Cape Elizabeth to prepare a new Comprehensive Plan.