

TOWN OF CAPE ELIZABETH
MINUTES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE

March 22, 2018

7:00 p.m. Town Hall

Present: Timothy Thompson, Chair
Peter Curry
Elizabeth Goodspeed
Kevin Guimond
Susana Measelle Hubbs
Harvey Rosenfeld
Victoria Volent

Absent: Sara Lennon, Penny Jordan

Also present: Maureen O'Meara, Town Planner

Call Meeting to Order

Mr. Thompson called the meeting to order and called for public comment.

Public Comment

Paul Seidman said he is eager to see the survey results as they meld into everything you are doing.

Approval of minutes of January 3, 2018

The minutes of January 3, 2018 were approved 6-0.

Conversation with Clinton Swett, Town Assessor

Mr. Swett said he had started working with the Town in May 2017. He also outlined his job history.

He said his office creates new value for the Town through building permits. They also process real estate transactions, assist property owners and maintain equity by revaluations.

In 2016 there were 22 new single family homes and in 2017 there were 26.

By doing a 10 year look back, in 2007 the taxable value for the Town was 1.3 billion and in 2017 it was 1.7 billion. 2011 was a revaluation year.

In 2007 the median sale price of homes in Cape Elizabeth was \$441,000. and in 2017 it was a little over \$500,000. He then spoke about the sales ratio and, when properties sell for more than the assessed value, the sales ratio is effected. The State wants the Town's assessed value to reflect the market prices, and when that gets too far off, the Town must do a revaluation.

Mr. Swett explained how the revaluation can drop the tax rate by dividing the town's budget by a larger property valuation.

He spoke about the TIF which covers 35 properties in the Town Center District. He and several committee members spoke about the advantages of a TIF.

On the subject of goals and accomplishments, he said they are researching a possible property tax assistance for the elderly. They are sending monthly sales reports to the Cape Courier. They are sending "welcome to the neighborhood" letters to new residents.

Ms. Volent was asking about tax acquired properties, and whether they could be used for housing.

She was informed that it is likely none of those were buildable.

Mr. Rosenfeld noted the general rule of thumb that in a revaluation 1/3 of valuations go up, 1/3 stay the same and 1/3 go down.

Public Opinion Survey Report review

Mr. Guimond said the survey reinforced his opinion on housing. He thinks the survey was well done. Mr. Curry pointed out that the structure of a housing question may have reduced apparent support for some multi-unit housing. All agreed that the main type of housing will continue to be single family homes.

Ms. Goodspeed asked what we do with it now? Is it the time to do a vision statement? Ms. O'Meara said the vision statement is on their schedule for this fall.

Except for Mr. Curry, everyone felt it was a good survey.

Mr. Rosenfeld made a motion that they approve the summary report and post it on the town website.

Ms. Measelle Hubbs seconded the motion and it passed, 7-0.

On the vision statement, it was agreed to go back in October to craft the vision.

Committee meeting schedule review

The Committee decided to change their meeting schedule to the 1st Thursday of each month to avoid conflicts with members' work schedules.

They also decided 7-0 to hold a makeup meeting on May 17, 2018.

Public Facilities Chapter second review

Ms. O'Meara said she had added a key findings section to the chapter to mirror the format of the previous chapters.

Ms. Measelle Hubbs said she has a disagreement with the findings on school enrollment. She said it has flattened, not decreased.

A discussion about school enrollment ensued. They want the data to be accurate. Ms. O'Meara cited the town population demographic data, the enrollment projection study, the analysis of children coming to Cape as part of home sales, and the fertility rate, as indicating a further decline in school enrollment. Ms. O'Meara said the school department had supplied the actual enrollment numbers she used in the chapter. Ms. Measelle Hubbs mentioned a study that the recession delayed starting families, but the committee did not agree this would reverse the other indicators. The committee agreed to change the end of the first sentence toslow but also to continue to state there is an enrollment decline.

The committee also noted that there is a big increase in senior population. Seniors are moving into Town, and young families with children are not moving into town. Many Cape Elizabeth families are sending their children to private schools.

Mr. Curry was surprised at the projections for the early grades. It shows them increasing which is contrary to what he expects.

Ms. Goodspeed said she called the Census Bureau and asked about the projected 50% drop in children age 0-5. The person she talked to said since we are such a small community, there is a larger error rate, but the trend is correct. Across the US, the State of Maine, and Cape Elizabeth, the trend is fewer children. She said she feels very confident in the data we are using.

Ms. O'Meara also pointed out that housing costs are a deterrent, especially for young families. This may explain why the elementary grades are smaller than the upper grades.

Mr. Guimond added that since they get almost no State aid, the town could save a lot of money on mandated programs if they made the schools private.

The decrease in volunteer firefighters was discussed briefly.

The paragraph about municipal buildings was changed to say...buildings are now aging and will require more substantial maintenance and upgrades.

The Committee also decided to change the chapter name to Public Facilities and Services.

Mr. Guimond wants an expansion of the wastewater network, especially in the more built up neighborhoods. He would like to get rid of as many septic systems as possible for environmental reasons.

The Committee then discussed public sewers and how to increase the coverage of sewers in town. It was agreed that Ms. O'Meara will add that the town should expand sewer coverage.

Ms. Goodspeed asked if this was the place to add stormwater management as it applies to Shore Road getting flooded at Pond Cove. She was advised Shore Rd floods during storm events, and the most likely section of the plan to put that discussion was the Transportation chapter. She agreed. She was also concerned about dealing with invasive species.

Ms. Volent was also concerned about making it a goal to deal with the damage from winter moths. She wants there to be funding for this issue.

Ms. O'Meara said she will add to Goal 2, to fund the removal of invasive species and damage from winter moths.

Ms. Measelle Hubbs would like to add funding to the recommendation in Goal 4, School facilities study. They have not yet paid for the study and need it to be funded.

Ms. Volent questioned specific goals for the school renovations. Committee members discussed that since the study is not completed, it is premature to list specific projects. It was agreed to delete a reference to specific improvements.

Mr. Guimond stressed that security is a need for any school project.

Ms. Volent made a motion:

Make strategic investments in school facilities to modernize and update buildings and grounds and ensure student safety.

Mr. Guimond seconded the motion and it passed.

Ms. Measelle Hubbs then explained the process and the need for funding the study of the school facilities.

Mr. Thompson added that the process that occurred around the funding for the library resulted in a beautiful building at much less cost than the original plan. Maybe the same process could be used on the school improvements. He would also like to see part of this project be directed towards the senior population.

Ms. Volent would like to see a recommendation about recycling.

After a brief discussion, Ms. Volent proposed a goal: Develop a plan to increase recycling to meet or surpass State goals.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the draft of the second reading of the Public Facilities and Services Chapter. It passed, 7-0.

Mr. Curry said it is the consensus of the meeting that Ms. O'Meara use her judgment going forward with regard to the capitalizations in the text.

Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan chapter first review

Ms. O'Meara introduced the chapter and said the State required information was covered in this chapter. She went through the chapter and goals in detail. Most of the information in the chapter comes from the 2016 Annual Report.

She described two options for handling the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the chapter. She met with the school superintendent and learned that there is no approved CIP for the schools. A CIP is needed to submit to the state in order to have the comprehensive plan deemed consistent. She added the information she could to this chapter to cobble together a CIP. Alternately, the CIP could be referenced and submitted separately, but if no CIP is ultimately adopted, then the comprehensive plan state certification will be problematic. Mr. Rosenfeld asked if the chapter presentation of the CIP would meet state requirements and Ms. O'Meara thinks it will. The committee agreed to include the CIP in the chapter rather than reference an outside document.

The Committee had no changes to propose.

Mr. Curry made a motion to accept the draft of the Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment Plan. It was approved, 7-0.

Public Participation

Ms. O'Meara asked for input on the next questions for the online forum. The Committee agreed that a question about sewer expansion should be asked. She reviewed the question schedule and moderators for the rest of the year.

Committee member items

There were no Committee member items.

Public Comment

Paul Seidman said he could help with the issue of capitalization. He said it is a keyword search and then you just go through it very quickly. He then spoke about Chris Straw's comments. He said he took away the conclusion that the projected 50% drop in the population of children aged 0-6 was a grossly misleading thing to say.

The Committee was unanimous in favor of adjourning at 9:30p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Hiroshi Dolliver
Minutes Secretary