

Comprehensive Plan Committee Minutes

Thursday, April 9, 2014, Room 201, Koon's Hall at Unity College

Present: Don Newell, Emily Newell, Bob Dostie, Jim Perry, Jean Bourg, John Piotti, Sara Trunzo, Michele Levitt

The agenda is to consider some policy items from the last comp plan, look at how they were or were not implemented, and consider what we want to do with them in the new plan.

There were policy amendments to the old plan in 2001. The third column in document is outcome of policy over the last 20 years.

The 10 page document we discussed can be seen at <http://www.unityme.org/gov/compplan/compplan-comparison.pdf>

The numbers below refer to sections of the document.

John Piotti explained the policies and commented on them.

John: looking at the big picture, we were naive; some policies were not implemented because they were not well made. In the 2001 amendments, the policies were more ambitious, but there was less will to implement them.

1. Downtown design: a downtown design committee was proposed, but the role fell to the planning board.

Without real incentives, the rules had to be put in the ordinance. And without incentives, the rules had to be watered down to pass.

Are the downtown design guidelines effective? The rules came into effect on the Family Dollar Store, the Credit Union, and the new town office. (Window orientation changed because of ordinance.)

2. Residential section of Depot Street.

3. Utilities district: prevent large lots in the district. Not a good policy for today because it doesn't maximize use of the utilities district. The aim was to prevent a single large commercial user from using too much of the remaining capacity of the system.

4. Attract clean commercial / industrial development in the downtown area.

Part b required proposed large developments in the rural area to demonstrate why they can't be downtown. Our ordinance currently says that all retail activity, except for home-based, has to be in the downtown district.

Look at possibility of the town creating a small fund for creating incentives. TIF funds could possibly be used for this purpose.

5. Support creation of industrial or office park. Idea was to use Hodges for this purpose. Almost got Johnny's, Toms of Maine to move here.

6. Support traditional agriculture. We have been successful with this policy.

Our policy on placement of new wells next to farmland has been adopted by the state.

7. Density bonuses. The idea is to get subdivisions to minimize the impact on farm land.

The rule allows and encourages clusters with the same density rather than forces cluster development.

8. Lot size and road frontage requirements are very flexible while maintaining the same limits to growth.

9. Assessment: the idea stated here is illegal. State law governs how land is assessed.

10. Require long term plan before subdividing land and developing.

11. Mixed use with performance standards rather than strict zoning into residential and commercial.

12. Access to scenic views.

No visual impact guidelines ever put into the ordinance.

We need to inventory our special places, special views.

Planning best practice has changed over 20 years.

13. Water quality. The plan succeeded in its goals but the goals were not effective enough because although we accomplished the plan's goals, we still have poor lake water quality.

20. We need to continue to be flexible about mobile homes because they are often better than many run-down houses and buying a stick house is not possible for many people.

We should consider going back to using the state building codes. It was law for us until just 3 years ago. It's a good code and makes for better buildings.

22. Old depot building. This got dealt with by private investor (Bert Clifford).

31. The budget committee is not working as envisioned. We need to give them some tools and guidance in the next plan.

Amended policy section of the document

1. Commercial zone -- never acted on.

Parking plan. We could have better use of on-street parking. The state roads are plenty wide enough for parking on both sides of the street.