

Unity Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting

November 13, 2014, 6:30 pm, Room 201 Koons Hall, Unity College

Present: Ken Murch, Emily Newell, Sara Trunzo, Don Newell, Jean Bourg, John McIntire, Sonia Antunes

Ken reported on his talk with the Windham code enforcement officer about enforcement of hazmat ordinances.

The meeting was spent reviewing the wording of the goals & strategies document. Here is the current wording with notes for items which may be added.

Below are the Comprehensive Plan Committee's recommendations of strategies that will accomplish the vision for the town. Any town budget funds allocated for any strategy would have to be individually appropriated at the annual town meeting.

Throughout this section, mention will be made of specific existing committees and existing businesses, organizations, and non-profits. The specific naming of these entities is not meant to commit them nor exclude the possibility of other entities being involved with, or conducting the work, as new groups may be formed or existing groups may gain or lose momentum after the finalizing of this plan. The committee who put this document together thought that specific mention of appropriate partnerships would help specifically direct any people or groups who want to carry out one or various strategies in this document.

When this document refers to the "town", it means the town management, committees, and organizations.

Comprehensive Plan Strategy Framework

Goal 1: Retain our small town character, historic downtown, and identify as a farming community, while carefully growing as an economic hub for surrounding towns.

Objective 1a: Celebrate our unique identity as both farming community and market center.

Strategy 1a-1: Task the Tax Incremental Financing or an economic development committee to develop a branding strategy including logo, slogan, and signage to reflect our identity. Develop several options and gather feedback from the town on their preferences. Use this consistent theme for all things Unity including economic development.

Strategy 1a-2: The town should work with Unity Historical Society, Waldo Trails Coalition, and/or other groups to create brochures for tours of Unity that incorporate historical information and scenic areas with trail walks, paddling trips, and bird watching.

Strategy 1a-3: Work with interested local organizations to hold annual Unity celebrations.

Strategy 1a-4: Work with local groups to sponsor events that specifically celebrate downtown, for example, a First Night celebration that uses several downtown locations or a Halloween or Christmas event.

Objective 1b: Promote Unity's identity as a center of sustainable farming.

Strategy 1b-1: Partner with Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets and other organizations to create an outstanding Farmer's Market with a wide variety of vendors and community activities.

Strategy 1b-2: Task a town economic development group (possibly the Tax Incremental Financing Advisory Committee) to explore how to use the new Food Hub as a springboard for economic development.

Objective 1c: Sustain the distinctive look of downtown.

Strategy 1c-1: Plant shade trees on Main Street, School Street, and Depot Street.

Strategy 1c-2: Maintain and enforce the current design guidelines in the Land Use Ordinance.

Strategy 1c-3: Work with the state to create safe travel ways on Depot Street and between town and Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (may include a pedestrian/bike/horse/buggy travel lane on each shoulder, speed reduction, limiting large truck traffic on Depot Street, etc.).

Strategy 1c-4: Add appropriate facilities (for example park benches, shelters, or bike racks) along frequently traveled routes to support foot travel and cyclists.

Strategy 1c-6: The signage rules in the land use ordinance should be updated to take into consideration current technology while preserving traditional character and an attractive look.

Add: to prevent disturbing lighting throughout the night downtown, or glaring light in the rural district....A lighting ordinance shall be drafted based on the Lighting Manual "Promoting Quality Outdoor Lighting in Your Community" by what was the Maine State Planning Office.

Objective 1d: Promote business development in keeping with our unique identity.

Add: Retail businesses that are less fitting with a walkable community/shopping district (like a lumber yard, agricultural goods/feed store, or landscaping products store) may be allowed in the lesser developed section of the Downtown district along the Thorndike Road and the Bangor Road and in the Rural district along Route 220 from Depot Street to the Thorndike town line.

Strategy 1d-1: Retain existing businesses by assisting them in finding the resources they need to thrive.

Strategy 1d-2: Recruit appropriate new businesses to provide unmet needs that would complement current businesses

Strategy 1d-3: Encourage building practices that are in line with the standards of the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code.

Strategy 1d-4: Work with Unity Utilities District to establish an impact fee for large system users.

Strategy 1d-5: Maintain all the provisions in the Land Use Ordinance that concentrate new retail businesses (other than home-based businesses and retail associated with farming and forestry) in the downtown district, as a means of preventing sprawl and ensuring that new businesses help existing businesses by creating a more vibrant commercial zone.

Objective 1e: Protect existing farmland

Strategy 1e-1: Maintain all of the provisions in the Land Use Ordinance designed to help protect

farmland (including setbacks, flexibility in lot sizes, density bonuses for development located off farmland, etc.).

Strategy 1e-2: Explore ways to strengthen the Land Use Ordinance to provide more protections for farmland, given the important role farmland can play in Unity's future economy.

Goal 2: Improve our economic future by building off our many strengths—including being a crossroads location, home to Unity College, and a growing center for sustainable agriculture.

_____ Sign ordinance should take into consideration regular practices of farming.

_____ -Take advantage of opportunity to have super high speed internet

Objective 2a: Use the strengths of our local non-profits and other organizations for the overall good of the town.

Strategy 2a-1: Partner with local non-profits Unity College, and churches on appropriate projects that make use of their technical expertise and their skills in grant-writing and people organizing.

Objective 2b: Collaborate with Unity College on economic development projects.

Strategy 2b-1: Recruit representatives of Unity College to join the Tax Incremental Financing Advisory Committee or other economic development group and participate in the search for green businesses that could employ their graduates.

Strategy 2b-2: Partner with Unity College in attracting an investor for an appropriate lodging project.

Objective 2c: Support the existence and growth of local and home-based businesses.

Strategy 2c-1: Ensure that the Land Use Ordinance allows for appropriate home-based business and for renting part of a home for lodging.

Strategy 2c-1: Task a town group (possibly the Tax Incremental Financing Advisory Committee) with creating a local business exchange.

Goal 3: Attract businesses/employers that fit our character and identity and that pay living wages in order to attract newcomers and enable all residents to thrive.

_____ Add: Promotion should be done about the development district that showcases the benefits of developing there.

Objective 3a: Make Unity's various ordinances more accessible and easier to use.

Strategy 3a-1: Create and direct citizens to an easily navigable and searchable version of the Land Use Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance for use at the town website, perhaps through an electronic brochure.

Strategy 3a-2: Prepare a brochure sized guide to the local building and business ordinances. Encourage newcomers to contact town clerk, who may direct inquiry to planning board members, as appropriate.

Objective 3b: Market Unity as a welcoming location to businesses that are in keeping with the vision.

Strategy 3b-1: Create a website specifically for information about how to start a business in Unity (now funded by Tax Incremental Financing . The funding was approved at special town meeting July 23, 2014).

Strategy 3b-2: Task a town group (possibly the Tax Incremental Financing Advisory committee) with developing a list of businesses/services needed in Unity and a strategy for attracting them.

Strategy 3b-3: As the land use ordinance is written, a supplemental document explaining each policy's rationale should be created so that in the future, the policy's intent can still be understood.

Goal 4 : Adapt to more complex demands on local government, like road maintenance and municipal services, while retaining Town Meeting as our chosen form of government.

Add: The town officials are expected to support the code enforcement officer to uphold the letter of the Town's ordinances.

Add: The land use ordinance shall include a haz mat response section outlining Company will pay for any haz mat response – that any development seeking approval which has a haz mat potential hire a third party to do a risk assessment. Development review may require the business to pay for inspections of the potential haz mat risk to prevent a problem from going un-noticed. Also require ongoing inspections for a company determined to have a substantial haz mat risk. Any failed inspections shall be followed by a remediation procedure and follow-up to ensure that work has been done.

Add: any activity connected to the Unity Utilities District that has potential for effluent that can harm the lagoons system shall be required to have an in-line effluent treatment system. This shall be an item of development review to assess whether this potential for hazard is relevant to the development. The planning board may require a third-party professional to make this assessment at the expense of the applicant.

Objective 4a: Move toward a professional town management for Unity.

Strategy 4a-1: Create a committee to explore other common forms of town management, and in particular, a form that utilizes a town manager, to learn what has worked for other small communities, and to make recommendations for changes to our existing management system.

Strategy 4a-2: Clarify the charter of the Budget Committee to guide all fiscal matters and meet as often as necessary to properly conduct business, as an operational council to the town management.

Strategy 4a-3: Create a manual of standard operating procedures, job descriptions, and expectations for elected officials, town committees, town staff (clerk, manager, etc.).

Strategy 4a-4: A capital investment and long term maintenance plan for the roads and the town sewer system should be developed that will survive the succession of town officials.

Strategy 4a-5: Provide facilitation, leadership, and process management training as needed to town management and committee volunteers.

Objective 4b: Increase transparency and accountability in town government to make it easier for citizens

to be involved

Strategy 4b-1: Propose and bring to town meeting a few ordinances that seem to work well for other towns. These ordinances should include a demolition ordinance, a recall ordinance, an outdoor furnaces regulation ordinance, and moveable signage ordinance. (*Point of process: these specific ordinances need to be approved in town meetings by a vote.)

Strategy 4b-2: Develop and adopt a set of guidelines for transparency. These guidelines would include, for example, the use of the town website to publish all public documents, to list all upcoming public meetings along with the agendas for those meetings beforehand and the minutes of them afterward.

Strategy 4b-3: Develop a process to ensure accurate, thorough enforcement of ordinances and foster a culture of fairness and adherence to community rules.

Strategy 4b-4: Town Management will ensure broad representation and encourage the inclusion of differing opinions, types of stakeholders, demographics and perspectives in town business and committee work, to the extent of recruiting diverse participation if necessary.

Goal 5: Engage more of our citizens in civic and community activities by increasing government transparency, communications, and volunteer opportunities.

Objective 5a: Create working groups and committees to help with town work.

Strategy 5a-1: Appoint a committee to run the town's website and a monthly newsletter, conduct business promotion, organization outreach, etc. Reenergize existing committees, for example, the recreation committee.

Objective 5b: Partner with local non-profits, churches, businesses, clubs, and other groups to get specialized work done.

Strategy 5b-1: Appoint a committee to work with the Friends of Lake Winnecook on their projects for water remediation in Unity Pond.

Strategy 5b-2: Partner with Unity College, Unity Foundation and other organizations on grant writing for economic development projects.

Strategy 5b-3: Partner with Maine Farmland Trust and MOFGA on projects involving farms as businesses and employers.

Strategy 5b-4: Partner with the Seabasticook Regional Land Trust (and other organizations) on projects involving public recreation land, including walking trails, water-access and places to hunt and fish.

Strategy 5b-5: For elections at every level, partner with interested groups to facilitate candidates' forums.

Strategy 5b-6: Develop programs in partnership with the Unity Area Regional Recycling Center to promote recycling.

Goal 6: Improve public access to existing recreational and cultural activities, identified new activities, and

encourage participation.

Objective 6a: Improve public access to existing resources.

Strategy 6a-1: Work with Unity College to assure townspeople access to Field of Dreams, Unity Library, and Unity Center for the Performing Arts by developing agreements between the parties for programming and access.

Strategy 6a-2: Work with Friends of Lake Winnecook to improve the safe public access to the lake at Kanokolus boat landing.

Strategy 6a-3: Create a designated swimming area that is separate from the boat launch.

Strategy 6a-4: Partner with the Unity College Library to promote literacy events such as a town Book of the Summer and Story Walks.

Strategy 6a-5: Partner with the Unity College Library to create a Library Volunteers Corps in order to keep the library open more days in the summer.

Strategy 6a-6: Appoint a town committee or otherwise partner with the Unity College Center for the Performing Arts to bring music, speakers, and films to the theater.

Strategy 6a-7: Work with local land trusts to promote the public use of existing land trust properties, including walking trails and water-access points.

Goal 7: Dramatically improve the water quality of Lake Winnecook (Unity Pond), and protect and preserve the local aquifer.

Objective 7a: Minimize the impact of existing development on Unity Pond.

Strategy 7a-1: Support the efforts of the Friends of Lake Winnecook in their restoration of the flashboard system at the pond's outlet.

Strategy 7a-2: Collaborate with the towns of Troy and Burnham to develop a 3-town remediation plan for the lake.

Strategy 7a-3: Incentivize the re-establishment of a vegetative buffer strip around the lake.

Strategy 7a-4: The town of Unity shall find a way to inspect all septic systems in the Shoreland Zone of Lake Winnecook that have not been inspected in the last ten years in order to create an inventory of the condition of those systems. This project, if possible, should be done in partnership with Troy and Burnham to include the septic systems on those towns.

Strategy 7a-5: If septic systems in the Shoreland Zone of Lake Winnecook must be replaced, the town shall work to minimize expense to the landowner, including encouraging alternative systems that are allowable by law.

Objective 7b: Minimize the impacts of future development on Unity Pond water quality.

Strategy 7b-1: Amend the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to require that all permit-required activity in the Shoreland Zone go before the planning board and that no Shoreland Zone permits be issued solely by the Code Enforcement Officer.

Strategy 7b-2: Establish a committee to locate where shared septic systems could be installed and provide that information to property owners.

Objective 7c: Protect the aquifer for future use by the town.

Strategy 7c-1: Maintain language in the Land Use Ordinance that establishes an Aquifer Overlay District with rules for protecting the aquifer.

Strategy 7c-2: Adopt new rules that protect the aquifer from private purchase of its water.

Objective 7d: Improve the water quality of Lake Winnecook

Strategy 7d-1: Work to obtain funding for the Solar Bee, a turbine that provides oxygen to the lake bottom.

Strategy 7d-2: Prevent invasive species from entering the watershed and Lake Winnecook and initiate a practice to stay aware of upcoming issues and act quickly to resolve or prevent them.

Goal 8: Invest in the health of our citizens by creating a walking downtown with all-weather sidewalks and trails that provide easy walking, biking and wheelchair access to a compact and vibrant downtown, and by ensuring healthy food sources for all.

Objective 8a: Create a completely walkable/bikeable downtown.

Strategy 8a-1: Add park benches along common pedestrian and bike travel routes, such as near town office, post office, and other key locations.

Strategy 8a-2: Connect paved roads to unpaved trails and walkways with paths and signs.

Strategy 8a-3: Support the efforts of Waldo County Trails Coalition, Sebasticook Regional Land Trust, the Snowmobile Club, and ATV clubs in maintaining access to trails.

Strategy 8a-4: Create a townwide pedestrian/bicycle plan that identifies where there is need for pedestrian or bike facilities and that establishes priorities for improvements.

Strategy 8a-5: Assure that adequate crosswalks exist including proper signage and lighting.

Strategy 8a-6: Preserve and expand parking options for people who drive to town and then walk the downtown for their services/shopping.

Strategy 8a-7: Find a way to ensure a safe walking route through downtown Unity year-round. Eliminate personal liability issues for volunteers who want to clean sidewalks by adding a rider to the town's insurance policy to cover those named volunteers.

Objective 8b: Ensure that healthy foods are available and affordable for all residents.

Strategy 8b-1: Continue to support the work of the food pantry.

Strategy 8b-2: Work with Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association and other local non-profits to get fresh, local food into our grocery stores.

Strategy 8b-3: Work with Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets and local organizations to create an outstanding Farmer's Market with a wide variety of vendors and community activities.

Strategy 8b-4: Support the Food Hub and Veggies For All.

Objective 8c: Reduce the cost of energy used to power buildings in Unity.

Strategy 8c-1: Explore energy saving and efficiency measures as a community, and use these opportunities for demonstration and education, as appropriate. One example of this would be solar-powered street lights.

Strategy 8c-2: Explore partnerships and grant funding for community solarenergy resources in downtown Unity. *Needs words help*

Goal 9: Protect critical natural resources, including wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shorelands and unique natural areas.

Objective 9a: Limit development in sensitive natural areas that support rare plants and animals.

Strategy 9a-1: Utilize available Beginning with Habitat maps and overlays to identify critical habitats.

Strategy 9a-2: Enforce all shoreland and wetland protection laws and consider strengthening shoreland zoning laws.

Strategy 9a-3: Amend the Land Use Ordinance and Shoreland Zoning Ordinance to require the state's "best practices" relating to timber harvest and agricultural activities that would affect Lake Winnecook and its watershed. *Needs to be researched and assess by associations relating to the topics*

Strategy 9a-4: Encourage landowners to protect their working forests, farms, and wetlands through the use of Maine's various Current Use Taxation programs, designed to help alleviate some of the financial pressures which may lead to habitat destruction and development. (NOTE: Examples of programs include Tree Growth, Farmland, and Open Space. Under these programs, land owners pay a lower tax rate, but the difference is reimbursed to the Town by the State).

Strategy 9a-5: Work with Friends of Lake Winnecook to identify issues which might compromise habitats near Unity Pond.

Strategy 9a-6: Strengthen the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance by placing more environmentally sensitive land in the "resource protection district" that allows limited development.

Objective 9b: Protect remaining extensive large habitat blocks from development pressures, particularly those that support high value plant and animal communities. Promote connectivity between these blocks.

Strategy 9b-1: Identify significant habitat blocks and work with Sebasticook Regional Land Trust to preserve and connect unfragmented habitat blocks.

Strategy 9b-2: Add incentives in the shoreland zoning and subdivision rules as opportunities to limit impacts on unfragmented habitat blocks similar to the incentives that protect open space and farmland (like the density bonus)

Strategy 9b-3: Use any available grants and programs to support land protection and to fund habitat acquisition.

Strategy 9b-4: Critical habitats identified by the state, and water courses mentioned in Unity's 1993 comprehensive plan should continue to be protected. Many of these are within large habitat blocks and protect deer wintering areas, waterfowl or wading bird habitats, and other unique landscapes.

Objective 9c: Promote cooperation of the town management, planning board, and code enforcement officer with local conservation groups.

Strategy 9c-2: Town management should seek assistance in development of a comprehensive approach to identifying critical natural resources and analyze potential development impacts. One of their roles should be to protect the integrity of functioning natural systems.

Strategy 9c-3: Town Management should strive to utilize all available technical tools to inform decisions relating to planning, land use regulation and other activities impacting natural resources. This may include consulting with a GIS (Global Information System) professional or providing training for a town rep.