

Brooksville Comprehensive Plan Committee
Notes from Community Meeting on November 4, 2021 at the Brooksville Elementary School

Present were: Jonathan Hall, John Gray, Carol Gray, Bud Fisher, Abbie McMillen, John Kimball, Richard Bakeman, Hal Snow, Jarod Farn-Guillette, Barney Boardman, Penny Boardman, Sally Tomkins, Barbara Kourajian, Joan MacCracken, Bob Holmberg, Susan Cranmer, Michael Cranmer, Bruce Stahnke, Tony Ferrara, David Zachow, Annie Guppy, Eliza Hill, Sally Stone, Morris Zar, Jen Chase, Phil Chase, Nancy Knowlton, Michael Maynard and Debbie Grimmig. (There may have been other participants who did not sign the contact sheet.)

John Gray opened the meeting. He explained the process for development of the draft plan, the review by the State, adoption of the final Plan and the time line. An approved plan will place the community in a better position when it applies for state, federal and non-profit funding for various capital projects and programs. It will not increase taxes and does not create any ordinances.

Jonathan Hall welcomed the members of the audience to the second of two community meetings. He thanked the Committee members for their hard work on the draft plan and Jarod Farn-Guillette of the Hancock County Planning Commission for his technical expertise and advice. At the first meeting, the goals and strategies of each chapter were reviewed. The format of the second meeting will be review of the highlights of each chapter and time for comments and questions for each section. The meeting was open to general questions. There were none, so he proceeded to a chapter-by-chapter review.

Chapter A. Population – Brooksville as with the State and Hancock County, has an aging population. Population in Brooksville is expected to increase. One of the main issues is how to attract young people. One way to do this is to provide more access to broadband. There is also a need to provide more support for persons aging in place.

Chapter B. Economy – No comments.

Chapter C. Housing -- There are more seasonal homes than homes occupied by year-round residents. There is a problem with the lack of affordable housing. The Select Board established a Housing Committee to define housing needs and seek options for solutions. Chris Raphael and Bruce Stahnke are members. Bruce Stahnke spoke to the issue of the town need for workforce housing in order that families of lower incomes can afford housing. Other communities similar to Brooksville such as Deer Isle, are addressing these needs and these communities may provide models for Brooksville to consider. He encouraged more people to serve on the Housing Committee. More people will bring in more ideas and will lead to more solutions. Someone asked if the Town can set aside seed funds or reserve funds to be used toward the purchase of land for housing needs. Jarod Farn-Guillette said there were several housing programs which use community and non-profit funds to purchase land. The resident buys the property and then pays property taxes. The challenge is to find the right fit for Brooksville. Jarod Farn-Guillette noted that affordable housing is one of the four top core issues identified by the American Association of Planners.

The question was asked if there are ordinances that can encourage development of affordable housing. Jarod Farn-Guillette described one development model called Rural by Design which is cluster development that has smaller house lots organized around common green space. These developments provide more units per square mile, retain the rural character identified as important to the community and have lower impact on utilities, roads, school bus transportation. It allows for more open space and is

more homogeneous with surrounding area. These homes are more affordable and keep their value. Someone noted that people from more urban and suburban area may be intimidated by the rural nature of the community. They are used to having more neighbors. The Rural by Design encourages more neighborhoods. In response to the question of the Town setting aside funds for affordable housing projects, John Gray said yes. Once the Housing Committee comes up with suggestions for solutions, the Town can begin to raise the money.

Chapter D. Transportation and Mobility – Jarod Farn-Guillette described a program that links people with transportation needs to services via cell phone app. Concerns were raised about the speed in the area of Wharf Road. High speed traffic coming along Coastal Road from North Brooksville to West Brooksville creates serious risks for a major accident. People are encouraged to walk in this area, but the drivers are going too fast. The Town should work with MDOT to reduce speed and provide more signage in this area. There were questions about defining areas where it would be safe for bike lanes. Jonathan Hall explained that the 2006 Plan recommended more bike lanes, but this was not completed. The Plan also recommended establishing a Recreation Committee, but this was not accomplished either. There has been more discussion of establishing a Recreation Committee to address developing more bike paths. Jarod Farn-Guillette noted that the MDOT now has an active Transportation Planner whose goal is to reduce the vehicle miles traveled by encouraging more biking and walking. The CDC also encourages more biking and walking. These are good resources for finding ways to reduce vehicle speed without having to redesign the roads.

Is there a map of all the recreation trails? There are numerous trails, but some are overgrown, poorly marked and some are on private property.

Chapter E. Public Facilities – No Comments.

Chapter F. Recreation and Health – Someone asked if Harbor Island is available for public use. It is the understanding that one half of the island has been sold and the other part is owned by Maine Coast Heritage Trust and there is public access for that part of the island.

Chapter G. Marine Resources – Jarod Farn-Guillette explained that information on the number of licenses is very difficult to obtain from the Bureau of Marine Resources. No other comments.

Chapter H. Water Resources – No Comments.

Chapter I. Natural Resources. Jonathan Hall suggested that a good projects for students might be conducting an inventory of natural resources. No other comments.

Chapter J. Agriculture, Forest and Open Space Resources – Abbie McMillen explained the soils map which details sites that are very good for agriculture. Understanding where these areas are critical in the decision on whether to develop these sites. There may be benefits to conservation easements to protect from development. As the climate changes create more higher temperatures, drought, and wild fires on agriculture land in the west, preserving agricultural land in the east will become more critical. There are State of Maine Tax Incentives to preserve forest land and open spaces.

Chapter K. Historical and Archaeological Resources – Abbie McMillen gave an overview of this section. The Plan recommends inventorying archaeological sites. This is especially important as sea level rise may cover these sites. Some sites have not been disclosed to prevent looting of artifacts. Other ideas include placing plaques on historical houses, some of which date back to the revolution. There was a question as to whether an organization such as the Blue Hill Heritage Trust could be induced to do this work in Brooksville. This organization or other organizations could do this work if they had the resources.

Chapter L. Broadband – Abbie McMillen provided an update on the Broadband project. The four-town consortium (Deer Isle, Blue Hill, Penobscot and Brooksville) received proposals from six companies. These are currently being evaluated. The information in the proposals is proprietary so she cannot share specifics. Fiber Optics is believed to be the best option. The meeting participants gave Abbie McMillen a round of applause for all her work to bring more broadband to Brooksville.

Chapter M. Climate Change – There was a question about the status of the Solar Project. The solar site will be located in Franklin. This is where Brooksville will obtain its solar power. The building on the project has started.

Chapter N. Current Land Use – In response to the question on the amount of time available to make changes to the land use map, the residents were advised that the changes need to be made soon. The target date for submission of the Comp Plan is December 1, 2021. The State needs six to eight weeks for review. The Plan will then be brought to the voters for approval by written ballot in March 2022. Time is of the essence to make all final changes.

Certain kinds of commercial enterprises may not be compatible with its neighboring residents. While there may not be agreement on the ways to deal with these issues, there is acknowledgement that there will be more friction over land use issues as more people move into Brooksville.

Chapter O. Future Land Use – Jarod Farn-Guillette said that the State requires a Growth Management Plan. This is not zoning. It is a set of recommendations for where in Brooksville development should occur. The recommendations are for development to occur around the existing historical villages that comprise Brooksville. This helps to protect the larger open spaces. There is also less impact in the infrastructure such as roads and utilities. The Rural by Design concepts also aligns with village centered development. Every chapter in the Comp Plan relates to future land use. Members of the public asked if there is a process for addressing land use issues and for creating dialogue with all members of the community. In both the Current Land Use Chapter and the Future Land Use Chapter, there are goals and strategies for promoting understanding of land use challenges and opportunities. The Planning Board will have a role in this. A special Land Use Committee could be established to help create a dialogue on these issues, but finding people to serve on these committees can be a challenge.

One resident noted that the land use section was a huge issue for Blue Hill and praised and thanked Jonathan Hall for the way land use is handled in Brooksville's Plan. The audience gave a huge round of applause to the Comp Plan Committee and to Jonathan Hall in particular.

Jonathan Hall expressed his appreciation of all the support Gayle Clifford and Freida Peasley have provided in getting the word about the progress on the draft Comp Plan to the community and posting information on the website.