



Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting Minutes Twenty-Ninth Regular Business Meeting Tuesday, November 28, 2023 6:30 p.m.

Committee Members Present: Alfred Ajami, Alex Beaudet, Tom Bishop, Becky Cooper, Paul DiMauro, Jamie Doherty, Richard Francis, RoseAnne Holladay, Steve Jorgensen (via phone), Ken Kortemeier, Mary Piasecki, Jess Yates

Committee Members Absent: Brittany Gill, Pat Jennings

The meeting was called to order at 6:45 p.m. and members participated in the Pledge of Allegiance. (Note the delay in the start of the meeting was due to the Committee's inability to access the Town Hall. The situation was soon rectified and the meeting was able to proceed as scheduled.)

Minutes

The minutes from the October 26, 2023 Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting were presented and approved.

Adjustments to the Agenda

None.

Timeline Review

The Committee reviewed the proposed timeline for the Plan's next steps and discussed the progress since the last meeting. Yates noted the Select Board had met to discuss the Plan on November 1, as scheduled. Yates further noted that the next significant event on the timeline was the Public Hearing, scheduled for December 7 at 6:30 p.m. at the Bristol School.

Draft Plan Comments Discussion

The Committee discussed the suggested edits previously provided to the Committee by Chad Hanna, the Select Board Chair ([Appendix C Mark Up, 11/7/23](#)). Doherty appreciated the Select

Board's public support for the Plan, and recognized that, in his edits, Hanna was trying to remove impediments to the Plan and help get it approved. He stated his support for Hanna's edits. Piasecki noted that the Committee could not accept 100% of Hanna's edits; specifically he had crossed out an accountability section on page 42 that is, in fact, required by the state. Ajami shared he had reviewed the suggestions and felt wordsmithing was not as important as getting a plan in place. He agreed the changes to the accountability section could not be made if the Committee wanted to create a consistent Plan. Bishop also shared his general support for Hanna's edits.

Beaudet shared his particular concern with Hanna's edits regarding low taxes because the data collected through the surveys did not indicate this was a priority for most people. He wondered if the feelings of a handful of people should be incorporated into the priorities as Hanna suggested and stated the process felt a bit "icky". Bishop believed Hanna included information about low taxes from a "selling perspective." Ajami recognized there had to be give and take with the Plan. He suggested the Committee reference a reasonable tax rate (as opposed to affordable) and offer qualifying language regarding the survey results in an accompanying explanation. Doherty suggested the Committee wordsmith Hanna's proposed statement to address both concerns. Yates suggested that Hanna's phrase "Maintain a reasonable property tax rate" may conflict with the other priorities and proposed it be edited to read "Balance a reasonable tax rate with fulfillment of the Town's priorities" on pages 14 and 33. Jorgenson (by phone) shared he was comfortable with Hanna's edits. Cooper recognized the importance of a give and take. Committee members agreed to Yates' suggested language, and, overall, agreed to the majority of Hanna's edits.

The Committee discussed the suggested edits, questions, and comments provided to the Committee by the members of the Planning Board ([11/9/23](#), [11/10/23](#)). Doherty stated that he had attended three meetings of the Planning Board at which the Comprehensive Plan was a topic of discussion; the first meeting, at which the Board reviewed relevant goals and strategies, went well while the second and third meetings were more challenging. He recalled the Planning Board made a point of comparing their roles as elected individuals to the Comprehensive Plan Committee members' roles as appointed individuals. Doherty further noted that it appeared many members of the Planning Board had axes to grind with the Plan. Francis shared his concern that many people, including members of the Planning Board, only had read Appendix C and ignored the goals. Yates shared her recollection that the Planning Board expressed dislike of the Plan and are planning to issue a Memo against the Plan to the Select Board. She shared her concern that bickering between the two entities was not helpful. Ajami suggested that the Committee adopt the useful edits and issue a letter to the Planning Board generally thanking them for their comments and letting them know they would be taken into consideration. Committee members agreed with this strategy.

Discuss Public Hearing Presentation

Doherty shared his thought that a Public Hearing should be an event at which the Committee does not say anything but instead listens and addresses questions/clarifications only. Bishop countered this opinion, noting the Hearing was an opportunity to further sell the Plan. Beaudet agreed that the opportunity should be used to the Plan's benefit and to further educate the public about the Plan. Francis asked if the consultants from North Star planning should give a brief presentation at the start of the Hearing. Committee members generally frowned on this idea, with Holladay noting that people have been saying that people from away created the plan. Beaudet suggested that Yates give a brief introduction, and take any opportunity to emphasize that the Plan is not a mandate. Ajami agreed, and suggested that the introduction also focus on the letter to the community from the Co-Chairs and the Select Board, as well as increased options for home rule. Bishop also suggested that financial information be included; he shared he has been working with the state to help quantify the benefits of a Plan. Doherty noted this information is challenging to find. Holladay suggested the presentation also acknowledge the edits made to address the community's concerns regarding the misunderstanding that the Plan was a mandate, and include some examples of these edits. She also suggested that introductions of the Committee members occur at the initiation of the Hearing.

Committee members also agreed that (a) a moderator was not necessary, (b) one microphone should be set up, (c) speakers be asked to provide their name in conjunction with their comment, (d) comments would be heard and questions addressed, and (e) comments would be limited to a predetermined amount of time. At the suggestion of DiMauro, the Committee agreed that, if few people attended the Hearing, Francis and Yates would sit at the front and Committee members in the audience. If many people attended the Hearing, the entire Committee would plan to sit at the front with Francis and Yates to assist with the Hearing.

Other Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Jess Yates

Co-Chair, Bristol Comprehensive Plan Committee