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STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
LAND USE PLANNING COMMISSION
22 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0022

Memorandum

To: LUPC Commissioners
From: Hugh Coxe, Chief Planner
Date: October 2, 2015
Re: Update on Franklin/Somerset Community Guided Planning and Zoning

Current Status of Franklin/Somerset CGPZ Process

The Franklin/Somerset County Community Guided Planning and Zoning (CGPZ) Committees have been meeting since January to develop ideas and proposals for this project. The committees are now preparing a joint Stage 1 report which identifies land use issues and will include a workplan to develop land use proposals. The committees expect to complete their draft report by October 7th.

This memo is intended as an update on the first phase of this planning effort.

Franklin/Somerset Land Use Issues

The primary area of focus of this initial planning effort is “the anticipated land uses needed to support outdoor recreation growth, and zoning changes needed to encourage/allow such uses, while not adversely affecting other uses such as manufacturing.” The following were identified as common issues in both Franklin and Somerset Counties:

- Limitations on rezoning

The LUPC policy that development should generally be within a mile of existing compatible development may limit opportunities for small recreation-related businesses that may have some need to be located close to the recreational resource but are not considered recreational lodging. (Examples may include a small business renting canoes or kayaks or offering services for mountain bikers.)

- Predictability of rezoning process

The committees identified that the rezoning process may be cumbersome in terms of time and effort and may lack predictability of outcomes for applicants. Sometimes there is insufficient coordination and communications in regulatory review.

- Flexibility for landowners

The committees expressed a desire to increase flexibility for landowners and to ensure that recreational demand is adequately assessed to accommodate future needs. They acknowledged that outdoor recreation demand is dynamic and can change quickly.

Provisions of Draft Franklin/Somerset Stage 2 Workplan

The committees have identified some broad tasks for Stage 2 to address the primary area of focus of this initial planning effort identified above. These tasks include:

- Research and evaluate information about trends in outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism and about demand for outdoor recreational services and businesses that directly support commercial outdoor recreation.
- Develop land use proposals that would allow a facility providing outdoor recreational services and businesses that directly support outdoor recreation to be located close to the recreational resource(s) upon which it relies.
- Develop land use proposals that increase the predictability of the rezoning process for a facility providing outdoor recreational services and businesses that directly support outdoor recreation and streamline the process where possible.
- Develop land use proposals that increase flexibility for existing and prospective business owners developing or expanding a facility providing outdoor recreational services or businesses that directly support commercial outdoor recreation and help to ensure that recreational demand is adequately evaluated in order to accommodate future needs.
- Develop a performance-based approach that considers impacts to existing uses and resources based on the type, scale and intensity of use or activity as the basis for allowing a facility in a particular location.

Next Steps

The committees' final draft report will be sent to the Somerset and Franklin County Commissioners for their consideration. Following that, the executive boards of the sponsoring organizations (Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG), Kennebec Valley Council of Governments (KVCOG) and Somerset County Economic Development Corporation (SEDC)) will review the report. If the boards of the sponsoring organizations approve the Stage 1 report it will be presented to the Commission at a future meeting for consideration.