

**Western Maine Planning Process for Townships and Plantations Served by the Land Use
Planning Commission**

**Somerset County Subcommittee
-Thursday March 26, 2015-
Northern Outdoors, The Forks**

Meeting Minutes

Attending: Committee members David Spencer; Julie Richard; Luke Muzzy; Suzanne Hockmeyer; Kay Michka

Staff: Chris Huck, KVCOG; Hugh Coxe, LUPC; Ben Godsoe, LUPC.

Public: Alan Michka, David Small & wife

Agenda Items:

1. Welcome and Introductions: Chris Huck welcomed members of the committee and asked for introductions of members and guests.
2. Discussion of channels for Public Input: How do we inform residents and others in the UT about our activities and invite comment? Hugh stated that the Franklin subcommittee had debated sending out a targeted survey to specific interest groups. Suzie and Julie brainstormed possible information targets: bulletin boards, snowmobile clubs, schools, websites, stores, Pleasant Pond association (other pond assns..?). A survey should include an invitation to attend meetings. Kay says she's already been making some phone calls, and suggested the New Portland town newsletter, which gets up to Lexington. Luke suggested property owners' lists and a link to a survey monkey.

Hugh asked if the committee was suggesting targeted surveys or a general one. David observed that any general mailing would probably include a lot of out-of-state and seasonal people, whose opinions on the future of the region could be divergent from local. The committee discussed prospective questions: what new business opportunities and housing needs are out there, what level of quality of life is preferred, what growth concerns do we have? Need for schools, commercial centers, or home businesses?

The committee discussed some development issues. Hugh observed that the experience in some places is that the new wave of recreationists are looking for a "softer" experience, i.e. a rugged bike or hike, with beer and hot tub at the end of the day. This may create a demand for services not contemplated in current zoning. Luke said that a hypothetical business needs investment assurance, such as a clear path to rezoning and permitting, more predictability. Kay said that local residents live here realizing their circumstances and that the development energy is needed in the service centers, which are often outside of LUPC jurisdiction, and that we ought to stick to the recreation focus.

3. Committee Members' input: Each of the committee members in attendance had the opportunity to expound upon their interests and perspectives for the process.

David says that as an employee of Somerset County, he is concerned with economic growth. The county's TIF provides opportunities. But growth means change, and we need to be prepared.

Kay represents residents and small landowners. We need to understand what is driving and holding back the Somerset County economy. Economic growth brings with it pressures that many residents have sought to avoid. Will change be positive or lead to sprawl? Landowners are concerned with regulation and landowner equity, but also with how expanding recreational use could affect landowners, wildlife, and the character of the region.

Luke represents large landowners. Landowners are concerned with their rights and abilities to carry on their operations. One of the issues is the location of new trails over private property and the presumed property rights that go with them.

Julie represents service centers. She provided a handout depicting the role of service centers – specifically Bingham – in the region.

Suzie represents recreation and tourism. She observed that the economy of the region has evolved from a time when the woods industry was big. It's possible that the county could see one or two big resorts at some point in the future. Her local concern is with ATV use on trails.

4. Review of Preliminary maps: Chris offered some of the preliminary mapping done of the region. At a large scale, very little can be seen of the detail of zoning or protected resources. Future maps should include The Forks, Tomhegan.
5. Opportunity for Public Comment: Guests were invited to express any concerns they had.

Alan Michka said that he has great interest in informing residents of the planning process and has a group willing to donate to the cost of a mailing.

David Small lives in Norridgewock but has land in the UT's. He would like to see any time for public input be at convenient times and places. He is concerned that pressures from development will impact the traditional way of life in the region.

6. Next meeting date- Thursday, April 30th, 3 PM, Valley High School in Bingham

Meeting adjourned at 5:10 PM.