



WASHINGTON COUNTY  
COMMUNITY GUIDED PLANNING and  
ZONING PROCESS

Planning Committee Meeting Minutes and  
Follow Up "to dos"  
5-7 PM October 18, 2016



**Torrey Hall Room 226 University of Maine at Machias - Machias, Maine**

**Attendees:**

Judy East, Washington County Council of Governments  
John & Marie Dudley, Town of Alexander  
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager  
Sarah Strickland, Strategic Wisdom Partners  
Samantha Horn Olsen, Land Use Planning Commission  
Stacie Beyer, Land Use Planning Commission  
Crystal Hitchings, WCCOG, DART  
Tora Johnson, University of Maine GIS Service Center and Laboratory  
Susan Hatton, Sunrise County Economic Council  
Travis Howard, land manager – Wagner Forestry  
Jacob van de Sande, Maine Coast Heritage Trust  
Al May, Maine CDC/Trescott resident  
John Hough, Edmunds resident

**Regrets:**

David Bell, Cherryfield Foods, ME Wild Blueberries  
Dwayne Shaw, Downeast Salmon Federation  
John Bryant, American Forest Management

**Meeting Goals:** a) review and interpret public input received to date, b) add detail to floating zone ideas, c) re-examine schedule for completion and Plg Committee meetings given additional public input, and d) split up chapter review in sub-groups

Introductions, agenda review – no change to agenda

Review results of Public Input – Judy prepared a summary of public input to date from the 6 public meetings and 2 citizen-initiated public meetings in Trescott. It is posted on the Planning Committee page (<http://www.wccog.net/planning-committee.htm>).

We took time to read the Public Input Summary (PI Summary) and then went around the table with each Planning Committee member commenting on the summary and any additional observations they had from attending the public meetings.

**Susan Hatton:** PI Summary covered it well; Agreed: more meetings are a good idea; need a map that depicts the recommendation reached so far (in Public Input Summary) for meetings; and online.

**John Dudley:** Similar observations as in PI Summary except that in Baring there was an additional conclusion to keep the land residential along the river, commercial along Route 1 and CI zoning off of Route 1 using a planned access road with internal circulation.

**Samantha Horn Olsen:** The need for internal circulation and combining access could provide a rationale for choosing a prospective zone vs. a floating zone.

**Betsy Fitzgerald:** PI Summary captured it mostly, yes. I was surprised at the depth of feeling. I heard a defensive stance. Particularly that some seemed offended that we were asking about zoning. They want their way of life to stay the same; I was not prepared for the possessiveness of the “place.”

**Travis Howard:** I was disappointed by the lack of participation by Marion residents.

**Samantha:** Summary accurate. Commenting to Betsy: Many who live in the UT do so because they do not like government; some simply don't like being with other people. Asking people to come to a meeting is a big ask. Participation in Aroostook was very low; much lower than in the meetings in Washington County. The Committee chose in Aroostook, as we are proposing here, to come up with zoning tools that provide flexibility and aid in economic development; rather than making map changes now.

**Crystal Hitchings:** Only attended in Baring but from what I heard there were some who wanted the kind of flexibility that we are proposing but they did not understand that the tools proposed would provide it. People seem to perceive that this is something being done to them vs being offered to them.

**Jacob van de Sande:** It appears from the notes that nobody believes that development will happen even though it is and does happen. Climate change refugees are already moving here.

**Samantha:** Does the in-migration of people from extreme climate have implications for residential development? We have focused mainly on commercial development. Are properties opening up to new residents through natural turnover?

**Tora Johnson:** We are doing this planning on the heels of an economic downturn; even in the absence of climate change there will be residential development pressure with an improved economy. Pressure for more residential development is inevitable and it is coming.

**John Dudley:** There are 277 lakes in Washington County. Back in the 1970s the town of Alexander had ~170 people; now there are ~500+ people – all of them settled around the lakeshores. We have not addressed development pressure on shorefronts.

**Jacob:** Demand for coastal frontage properties has decreased during the economic downturn; lake frontage has remained stable (both value and demand) over the downturn.

**Samantha:** LUPC is currently reviewing/revising how the adjacency principle operates jurisdiction-wide; this will include significant discussion on residential development. Wonder if the LUPC process/discussion on adjacency will address residential development pressure sufficiently? If the Planning Committee's concern about lakeshore residential development is general in nature it might be worth waiting for the outcome of the adjacency review. If there is something specific then address it by all means.

**Al May:** Baring and Grand Lake Stream seem ready to go. There was limited participation by Cathance and Edmunds residents. There is a very different dynamic taking place in Trescott where they took time for more meetings and to really understand the existing zoning, the need for zoning, and the tools being offered in this process. Many were involved in both the Bold Coast Scenic Byway planning work as well as the opposition to wind development. The PI Summary says that the D-RB floating zone would not be on secondary roads; I recall the opposite. Edmunds residents are 80% seasonal; old families don't participate, and only new residents participate in these kinds of meetings.

**Travis:** Regarding the note about no residential development allowed in the D-Recreation Business Services floating zone: why not allow residential? It should be allowed.

**Tora:** The average age of participants was retirement or older. We did not hear the voices of young families; that is expected in these kinds of meetings. Concern is the "we don't want change" message is not reflective of the need for more economic activity. Forest City input (but also Marion) was that they did not want change but they did want more infrastructure and services for their convenience, for their customers, for their young visiting families, and for their ability to telecommute. Some acknowledged that contradiction. We can conclude they don't want change to the look and feel of the place but they do want other improvements. They may not be saying precisely what they mean; this speaks to distrust or lack of understanding of the process. Also the word development means different things to different people: a few more cabins on my land or along the lake vs. a Family Dollar store.

**Samantha:** Floating zones, to start with it could provide a list of the UTs where it applies (exclude those UTs who expressed such antipathy toward any change); with the expectation that the # of UTs where it could apply could expand with experience. Also the floating zone could explicitly be allowed as an "opt-in" for UTs who are not listed in the first set where it is proposed. This would give people time to see how it works. Develop criteria for when a UT could "opt-in".

**John Hough:** Percentage of resident that participated was extremely low; age categories were missing; therefore we cannot conclude anything from the input we have received. I am not convinced people are not interested; they either do not understand the significance of these changes or they did not know. I sense that people do not think anything is broken; there is nothing that needs fixing and no need for this. The only thing that is broken is the 2-step process of needing to get a zone change and a permit and all we need to do is fix that.

Judy asked the group if this was a waste of time.

**John H.:** Yes, this is a waste of time given what we arrived at but we would not know this unless we had tried.

**Al** - what kind of participation do you see in the organized towns? Similar?

**Judy** – yes, towns vary considerably; Beals had 50% response to survey; others 12-20%; Beddington 44 full time residents; 10 times that in the summer but 55 people came to a visioning meeting on a Saturday afternoon in July; hard to know what will grab people and bring them out to say something; I am most concerned about Marion, Cathance and Edmonds; we also did not hear anything from Lambert Lake; was told that many from other towns in the northern area did not show up because of the location of the meeting; the Planning Committee conclusions before the public meetings were that only recreation development would prompt prospective zoning in Lambert Lake or Forest City.

**Travis:** I feel we owe this to the UT folks; very impressed with GLS and a waste of time? - not at all – this is headed in the right direction; it is focused on business and floating zones. Even if the only changes we propose are in Grand Lake Stream and in Baring then this was worth doing. Did we spend too much time on floating zones and business development vs. residential development? Concerned about adding adjacency to the discussion now.

**Tora:** This process arose from discontent. When you have discontent the process that reaches out to address it very commonly yields an outcome where there is very little change. The real difference is that people felt that they have been heard and had the opportunity to be heard. It is also common that processes are costly, difficult and yield an outcome with very little change. Ultimately the process is important though, not necessarily the outcome. We also got other important insights about infrastructure needs such as cell service and broadband coverage.

**Travis:** Absolutely agree; we went above and beyond to get the word out; it is not our fault that people did not attend.

**Samantha:** I heard important feedback that I would not have heard otherwise. Hearing individual's talk about how change will impact them is important. The change we are seeing is gradual. We are seeing many tower applications throughout the UT for better telecommunication infrastructure. Flexibility in planning and zoning options feedbacks to this infrastructure growth.

**Sarah Strickland:** LUPC needs to balance quality of life with infrastructure improvements and impacts.

**Jacob:** I have not been engaged enough; did not attend any public meetings; but did we advertise enough? Maybe we need to re-think the entire way that we engage the public. Use many more literal examples in the presentations.

**Samantha:** There was substantially more public input in this process than in Aroostook; yet people are happy with the outcome in Aroostook; no specific problem was identified, therefore they chose to

create flexibility and opportunity in the future. If there is no burning problem and the process creates flexibility and additional opportunity then those who want the flexibility can take it and those who don't care will see no change.

**Al:** Prepare an evaluation of the input at the 1<sup>st</sup> few meetings with the changes that are recommended. The Planning Committee needs "champions" who will communicate what is going on and keep up the momentum. I have been doing this in Trescott.

**Travis:** the e-mail list is 130 people; they are hearing that we are doing this to create opportunity. I did not think we were here to solve individual problems. We heard from those who care.

#### Review and add Detail to floating zones in Washington County –

Judy started this discussion by asking Samantha how detailed the input was in the Aroostook County process.

Samantha noted that input was pretty general; such as keeping natural resource based industries further from the road, retail opportunities closer to the roads; LUPC and NMDC staff drafted the language for the rules and the committee reviewed it back and forth a few times.

Judy noted that we have ~20% of the budget remaining so how far can we get with the resources we have left? Do we go with the three categories from Aroostook? (Travis: Yes!) Judy: Trescott wants to know what each one really needs to know what it looks like and additional meetings should expand invitation to participate to Edmunds, Marion and Cathance.

Al reiterated that we need visual presentations of what is allowable for the additional public meetings. Stacie noted that she has some good visuals and 3-D renderings. Both Judy and Samantha have some "good neighbor standards" to present as starting points; the public and committee conversation needs to contribute to what is desired for the D-Recreation Services Business floating zone. John H reiterated that we need a draft of what is proposed in order to comment on concrete proposals. Tora also noted that she could prepare 3-D rendering and compute the square footage of varying sizes that are provided in visual examples. An example of what is anticipated in the D-Recreation Services Business floating zone would be the kayak rental business on the south side of the dyke in Machias.

Several comments about where to allow D-Recreation Services Business floating zone (**not resolved**):

- John H: Problem with proposal from Trescott public meeting to locate it on primary roads: then there is no means of transport to the recreational asset (trail, water tec.)
- Jacob: kayaks are always transported from the Machias business to a water access anyway and it is on the water
- Travis: it should be near the recreational asset
- Al: will there be enough parking?
- Travis: we are not here to solve every problem; make it flexible and floating

- Samantha: there are no current parking rules; if there is a concern about parking the standards could require that parking be sufficient, off-road, screened etc.
- Samantha: depending on where and how much is allowed it will change the recreational experience
- Travis: we have the Downeast Sunrise Trail with lots of intersections with a public roads
- Samantha: proximity to a public road as well as proximity to the recreational asset could be a criteria for where to allow the D-Recreation Services Business floating zone to “land”
- Stacie: if you limit the # of places it could “land” you reduce the opportunity for synergies among similar businesses and the benefit each derives from being among a cluster
- Samantha: In considering when to allow a residential use in a zone that is not primarily residential (eg. D-RB) we need to make sure don’t leave a backdoor way to get a residential subdivision approved in a place that it would not normally be allowed. In a floating recreation zone this is a key question – if we allow residential in D-RSB (D- Fun) because people wish to integrate their recreation business with their residence, then we may say Residential and Recreational business is allowed but subdivision is not.

The Planning Committee agreed **and additional post-meeting follow up included:**

- Meetings - timing:
  - We will host 1-2 more public meetings
  - Grand Lake Stream meeting is scheduled for Nov 2 already
  - Planning Committee will meet in early December (meeting doodle to go out with minutes)
- Meetings – content
  - Prepare strong visuals depicting size, scale impacts using 3-D and computation of square footage using examples of known structures in Washington County
  - Include mapped descriptions of zoning (prospective and depictions of floating zone) that are proposed to date.
  - Post mapping (existing and propose) on line when ready to do so
  - Have examples of good neighbor standards
  - Samantha and Stacie will prepare table that describes the standards in the existing D-RB zone and how they address some of the concerns raised at the public meetings to date.
- Proposals to date:
  - Baring has reached general consensus; need additional input on neighboring properties to CI zone near airport (**new proposal received 10-28-16 from Baring resident Joseph Freddy** – to be circulated to Planning Committee)
  - Grand Lake Stream proposals anticipated by end of meeting on Nov 2

Chapter Review – There are 5 chapters. We did not break up work in to sub-committees. Judy will post drafts and send notices when posted.

**Next meeting: time and location TBD from meeting doodle**

Respectfully Submitted

Judy East