

Workshop Minutes
Community Guided Planning for the
Unorganized Territories of Franklin and Somerset Counties
6:00 – 8:30 pm; June 24, 2014

Approved _____

Conveners:

John Maloney, AVCOG
Jim Batey, SEDC
Chris Huck (for Rosie Vanaderstine), KVCOG
Samantha Horn Olsen; Planning Manager, LUPC
Hugh Coxe; Senior Planner, LUPC

Facilitator: Frank O'Hara, Planning Decisions

Recorder: Alison Truesdale, LandForms

Steering Committee members in attendance:

Steve Steward, Bingham Selectman
Luke Muzzy, Plum Creek Timber Company
Russell Walters, Northern Outdoors
Tom Rumpf, The Nature Conservancy
Lloyd Trafton, Somerset County Commissioner
Janet Peruffo, CSM Real Estate
Gordon Gamble, Wagner Forest Management
Clyde Barker, Franklin County Commissioner
Jay Wyman, First Selectman, Eustis
Rich Wilkerson, Sugarloaf Mountain
Alison Hagerstrom, Greater Franklin Development Corporation
Betsy Squibb, High Peaks Alliance
Alan Michka, Friends of Highland Mountains
Don Kleiner, Maine Professional Guides Assoc.

Other attendees:

1. Bruce Bell, Redding Mountain Wind
2. Kaitlin Bernard, Appalachian Mountain Club
3. Kirsten B. Burbank, Friends of Highland Mountains
4. Eliza Donoghue, Natural Resources Council of Maine
5. Bill Gilmore, Land Use Planning Commissioner
6. Karen Bessey Pease, author, blogger; Lexington Twp.
7. Claire Polfus, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
8. David Spencer, Asst. Dist. Atty., Somerset County
9. Jim Taylor

AGENDA

Introductions

Overview of Community Planning Process

Brainstorm Opportunities and Risks

Setting Priorities

Comments from Public Members at the Meeting

Next Meeting

GENERAL IDEAS

- Convert natural assets into economic benefit.
- Consider incentives for large landowners as compensation for public access.
- Provide flexibility in land use regulations to allow for new land uses such as huts and trails model and zip lining (e.g., regs based on impacts, not land use definitions).
- Businesses must be able to operate in 3-4 seasons in order to survive.
- Snowmobiling is a significant use but probably not expanding (and may be declining due to aging population and the cost of entry).
- ATV use is growing.
- Destination mountain/trail biking is growing.
- Local food movement is worth noting.
- Maple sugaring is a growing business.
- Wood products industry continues to be a significant and important part of the economy but is not likely to experience significant growth and has experienced some reduction in employment, primarily from production and operations efficiencies in this sector.
- Any new uses should be planned and sited so as to avoid or minimize potential impacts to the wood resources of the area.
- Recreation and tourism appear to be poised for growth in economic activity and employment.
- Focus of planning process should be on land use policies that respond to economic opportunities and less so on trying to fix any perceived land use regulation problems.

Service centers:

- Allow development that supports population centers;
- Augment culture, community and education in order to retain population, attract new residents (address reasons why people – young and old – are leaving)
- Don't forget the ski mountains and UT's that act as service centers:
 - Sugarloaf
 - Sunday River
 - West Forks
 - Rockwood

- Eustis
- Pleasant Ridge

Maintain the wood basket:

- Value-added wood processing may be an area of potential growth – in addition to the significant mills already in the area
- Trails need to be compatible with forest management
- Long term wood supply contracts need to be met

PRODUCT IDEAS

1. Opportunity zones
2. Rezoning and development standards along scenic byways
3. Prospective zoning, especially looking at the need for infrastructure, capitalizing on opportunities
4. Recreational Trail Plan
 - Existing trails:
 - Bike Trails (on- and off-road)
 - Snowmobile trails (ITS and club)
 - Northern Forest Canoe Trail
 - Maine Huts and Trails (built and planned)
 - Appalachian Trail
 - Fly-Rod Crosby Trail
 - Scenic byways
 - Benedict Arnold trail?
 - Flexibility for identifying future locations for development and uses
 - not locking land uses in now
 - Looking at invigorating or revitalizing service centers/recreational hubs based on allowing UT to provide more value to the hubs
 - Preserve connectivity for wildlife habitat, especially across scenic byways
 - hub and spoke model
 - limit the number of trails so that they can be maintained at a reasonable cost (may be a certification issue for landowners)
 - Emphasize quality over quantity
 - Allow flexibility for landowners so forest management is not compromised
 - Buffers needed? Or zoning standards along trails?
 - Ensure local capacity for emergency services (e.g. backcountry rescue)
 - Consider compatibility of motorized and non-motorized uses
 - connect trails to service centers

THE STAKEHOLDERS

- Service Centers
 - Coordinate with their growth management plans
- Landowners
- Residents
- Businesses
- Scenic byway communities
- Maine Huts and Trails
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail
- State government (trail easements, public lands)
- Network of Networks
- Tourism groups, chambers of commerce
- Arts and culture groups

PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Should be broad-based
- Members should assist with outreach to local people and remote areas
- Planning process should be transparent
- Will need to be clear about how it will conduct a planning process across county lines or with multiple service center communities

QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER FOCUS

If the focus of the planning process were to look at invigorating or revitalizing service centers/recreational hubs based on allowing the UT to provide more value to the hubs, what sorts of changes would there need to be to the LUPC regulations? How would the group go about identifying that set of needed changes and what would it need from the LUPC to do so? For instance, since trails are already permitted within the M-GN, what regulatory changes would need to be made to enhance the opportunity for high quality trail development, with attendant services and infrastructure that fed back to the recreational hubs and service centers?

NEXT STEPS

Tentative Dates and Agenda for Future Workshops

Workshop #2: July 22-25

Based on Workshop #1 discussion, the facilitators will create a “straw man” proposal for a Franklin-Somerset community-guided planning process and mail it to committee members prior to Workshop #2.

Agenda:

- Review, reshape, elaborate on, add detail to, and sharpen the straw-man proposal.