

Come Give Your Opinion About Land Use!

Hosted by the Bowdoinham Comprehensive Planning Committee
Wednesday February 28, 2024, Bowdoinham Community School

Land Use Forum Highlight Notes

About the Forum

About the Forum

The Town of Bowdoinham Comprehensive Plan Committee has been working hard to update the 2014-2024 Comprehensive plan and they want to hear from the public before finalizing the Plan and sending it to Town Meeting for approval.

As with previous public input meetings about the Comprehensive Plan, this meeting will be facilitated by Craig Freshley of Good Group Decisions, Brunswick. All ages welcome. Snacks and drinks provided.

Agenda

- 6:00 **Opening/Welcome**
 Committee Chair Dave Asmussen will welcome everyone and introduce facilitator Craig Freshley who will explain the agenda and ground rules.
- 6:05 **Introduction**
 How the plan was updated and how it will be used
 Inventory Analysis
 Vision
- 6:20 **Plan Presentation**
 Broad overview
 Plans for public engagement
 New concepts (remote work, solar energy, climate change, e-mobility)
 Section-by-section explanation (including new sections)
 Future Land Use Plan (including the town map)
- 6:40 **Facilitated Discussion**
 All questions and comments welcome and encouraged. If there is a large attendance, we might break into table discussions by topic as follows. A committee member will lead each discussion and take notes.
 A. Land Use - Housing
 B. Agriculture – Forestry – Water – Sea Level Rise

- C. History - Recreation - Economy
- D. Transportation - Age Friendly - Public health
- E. Public Facilities - Finances

7:25

Closing Comments

Each committee member will have a chance to say a last comment.
Town Planner Yvette Meunier will explain what happens next.
Chair Dave Rasmussen will express thanks and adjourn the meeting.

7:30

Adjourn

Ground Rules

- All views heard
 - Recognized before Speaking
 - Email comments welcome: Planning@Bowdoinham.com
 - Differing points of view okay
 - Listen with respect
- Understanding First
- We're here to advise, not decide
- Minimize distractions
- Flexible agenda and neutral facilitation

Introduction

- About the Plan
 - The plan is a documentation of community assets and goals
 - We want to manage change rather than be changed
 - Even “keeping things as they are” requires us to make decisions and take actions
 - We update the plan every four years
 - The plan doesn't create rules but charts a direction
- The Process
 - 44 committee meetings
 - Public surveys
 - 7 public forums
 - Collaboration with BCDI
 - Planning Board and Select Board Workshops
 - Interactive tables at Celebrate Bowdoinham
- New Vision Statement
 - This time we have a very short vision statement
 - In many ways, it describes exactly how we are today

Plan Presentation

- New in the plan - overall
 - Building in the same direction of 2014
 - Rural feel
 - More engagement with new committees and plans
 - New Concepts
 - Remote work, solar energy, climate change, e-mobility
 - New sections
 - Age friendly
 - Public health
 - Land acknowledgment
 - Removed things that got done
 - Updated inventory and data analysis
 - More people
 - More older people
 - More younger families
 - More development in town and in surrounding communities

- New in the plan – by chapter
 - Economy
 - Capitalize on remote work
 - Plan for energy infrastructure to meet higher electricity demands for transportation and heating/cooling
 - Agriculture
 - Increased development pressure
 - Agricultural Conservation Plan
 - Forest Resources
 - Educate forest owners about invasive pests
 - The role of forests in climate change
 - Development of new forest resources through the town and school
 - Natural Resources and Water Resources
 - The role of natural resources in climate change and extreme weather
 - Create a Conservation Commission
 - Historic and Archeological Resources
 - Create and implement a Historic Preservation Plan
 - Preserve and enhance the historic character of our village
 - Recreation
 - Support new opportunities at the Waterfront Park
 - Enhance existing recreation areas
 - Housing
 - Direct development to village areas with public water
 - Create a new land use district served by Richmond Utilities

- Support the work of the Housing Sub Committee
 - Transportation
 - Plan for e-mobility infrastructure
 - Investigate traffic-calming measures (make things at a human scale)
 - Public facilities and services
 - Improved accessibility
 - Resolve cell phone dead zones
 - Fiscal Capacity and Capital Investment
 - Efficiency with the most bang for the buck
 - Land Use
 - Direct growth to areas served by public utilities
 - Encourage alternative and cooperative wastewater treatment
 - Better preserve open space and farmland
 - Sea Level Rise and Climate Change
 - Shifts emphasis from sea level rise to climate change and extreme weather events
 - Develop a Climate Action Plan
 - Enroll in Community Resiliency Partnership (provides municipal assistance)
 - Age Friendly
 - To foster change to make it a more hospitable place for all ages and abilities
 - Improve transportation options
 - Access to health care resources
 - Walkability/Access
 - Aging in place
 - Reduce social isolation
 - Age Friendly Bowdoinham Committee
 - Public Health
 - Plan for threats
 - Pandemic
 - Toxic spills
 - Extreme weather events
 - Meet emergency service needs
 - Create a Public Health Committee
- Next Steps
 - More public input until March 12
 - Public input will be incorporated
 - March 26 – Selectboard
 - May 22 – Educational Meeting
 - June 1 – Town Meeting

Discussion Comments

What we like about the Plan

- Much appreciation for the work that's been done
- Appreciate the land use section
- We have to manage change or be changed
- We are right next to two sophisticated communities that we should aspire to be like Bath and Brunswick
- We need to take proactive action in order to preserve what we love about Bowdoinham, such as density restrictions
- Like the concept of a high density area near Richmond
- Looking forward to when the Merrymeeting Trail is completed between here and Richmond

Concerns about the Plan

- Wondering about small septic systems and who is responsible if they go bad
 - Small homeowners associations would be created to be responsible for each small septic system
 - Still there is a concern about liability
- We should look at the overlap between the Public Health Committee and the Emergency Services Committee
- Broadband access is always a concern
 - Clarified that naming broadband access in the plan doesn't ensure it but simply paves the way for it to become possible
 - For instance, having it named in the plan might help us access grants and attract commercial ventures
- Clarified that this is a thick and detailed plan but that the recommendations and goals only take up about 15 pages
 - This is the part of the plan that is easiest to read and digest
- There should be better ways to communicate with people about meetings like this and how to be generally engaged going forward
- I like the focus on volunteerism
 - There should be specific goals around volunteerism and community engagement
 - Such as meeting attendance
- We shouldn't use the term "village" to refer to the higher density district near Richmond
 - We should save the term "village" to refer to our true village center here in Bowdoinham
- The hard work will be in the implementation of this plan
- Thanks especially to the younger people who are in the room today
 - You are the future of Bowdoinham
- We need we need to make sure that the town has the resources to inform and engage the public going forward

- We want to make sure that we don't make a mistake like the green monster again
 - The way to do this is to have historic preservation district
- Clarified that most large land areas in Bowdoinham are owned by the State of Maine and by George Christopher.

Closing

Yvette Meunier and Dave Asmussen thanked everyone for coming and encouraged attendance at the Town Meeting on June 1.

They also encouraged anyone who has concerns or question to get in touch with either one of them as soon as possible.