

Approved at 11-12-15 Meeting

**City of Rockland
Comprehensive Planning Commission
Minutes for October 15, 2015**

Board Present: Chair Valli Geiger, Amy Files, Tom Keedy, Ann Morris, Adam Ackor, and Michelle Gifford

Board Absent: Eileen Wilkinson

Staff Present: Kevin Beal, City Attorney and Kara Cushman, Recording Secretary

Guest: Eric Galant- Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission

Meeting called to order at 7:01 p.m.

ACTION: Member Morris made a motion, seconded by Member Ackor to accept September 17, 2015 COMPS Commission Minutes as written. VOTE: 5-0-0

Eric Galant presents draft of the revised Population/Demographics Chapter

Eric Galant presented the draft of the Population and Demographics Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. He said it sets the parameters for what the next 10 years will look like and forecasts housing demands. Population and demographics all relate to each other. The chapter meets the minimum required statements. The questions in italics can be left out of the chapter and replaced with headings, but the answers are needed.

Galant discussed population trends. The state models are better for smaller communities. There is a motivation in Rockland to reinvigorate the community with economic development and housing. Aged populations are increasing in Rockland and 47-year olds are the typical Rockland resident. Rockland has seen a decline in young families and an increase in the older population. The increase is due to more assisted living facilities, retirement homes, etc. All estimates are based on a 5 year average from 2009-2013. The census every 10 years is an actual count. The average household size is declining as there are more single people and people marrying later. School enrollments are declining as well. The City Attorney suggested that Commission members review the current Population & Demographics chapter to help the Commission identify what goals and strategies they'd like to add to the new chapter.

It's stated that the Rockland Lobster Festival attracts approximately 50,000 visitors. The COMPS Commission wants to know if this is a daily figure vs. the whole Lobster Festival event. By comparison, all of Knox County has a population of about 40,000. Chair Geiger asked if we could check the figures with Audra Caler-Bell in Community Development. Galant said that the population could include daily shoppers and may mean a daytime population.

As a service center, more people are drawn to Rockland for employment and services. The Department of Labor estimates 451 businesses are in Rockland that employ an average of 6,200 people. Of the 6,200 employed, about 2,000 live in Rockland. There are about 4-5% of employed that live outside Knox County.

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Chair Geiger said that the municipality of Belfast has had many changes to encourage housing, including subdivided lots, and looser regulations allowing additions and accessory buildings to increase their population. Belfast has successfully encouraged development, with the assistance of city planners.

Ordinance Amendment #42, Ch. 19, Sec. 19-302 and 19-309 Zoning Provisions for Transient Accommodations

Chair Geiger said this proposed Ordinance Amendment #42 needs to change significantly before the City Council will pass it. Air B&B's are a big deal around the world, and they are not allowed in Rockland due to current ordinances. Two or more rooms are considered a B&B and are subject to life safety code requirements. There is a popular trend out there for people to rent rooms through Air B&B's. Visitors like them for many reasons including having access to a full kitchen and/or bringing their pets. Many towns in Maine are trying to figure this out. Some people are renting out rooms in Rockland, other people want to buy homes and rent them out as a business or seasonally. Chair Geiger recommends that people who rent their homes don't have to have an inspection, but instead are required to purchase a permit, show proof of homeowner's insurance that has a rider for rentals, or commercial coverage, and provide adequate parking for all guests.

Member Gifford said she has read about this issue. Other communities are responding to party houses and whole neighborhoods are changing to rentals. We are getting complaints from the business community. The shorter the stay for visitors, the more disturbing it is for the neighborhood. City Attorney Beal said that the City has also received some complaints from residents. Member Ackor said Air B&B's provide supplemental income to property owners to help maintain their older, larger homes and many owners rent homes out for a week at a time.

The Commission discussed making recommendations for the City Council's consideration at its upcoming, October 28, 2015, workshop on transient residential accommodations.

Chair Geiger said that any properties that are permitted must have enough parking and all neighbors will be properly notified with a letter. Member Morris asked if there would be fines for violating aspects of the ordinance. City Attorney Beal said there are general penalty provisions in Chapter 11, but the penalty is only \$100 per offense. The cost of the permit has not been set yet.

Member Files said that we are losing long-term rentals, due to the increase in the number of short-term rentals. Member Gifford asked if there would be a certain percentage of the neighborhoods that will be allowed to do this. Chair Geiger said we would need a separate ordinance to address this. Member Ackor said that many summer residents leave their homes empty all winter.

ACTION: Member Keedy made a motion, seconded by Member Morris, to recommend to City Council that short term rentals of non-owner occupied dwelling units be limited to no more than one party per week. VOTE: 5-0-1 (Amy Files Abstained)

ACTION: Member Keedy made a motion, seconded by Member Morris, to recommend to City Council that short-term rentals of owner occupied dwelling units and single-family structures be limited to 1 bedroom, to be permitted by the City of Rockland Code Office upon proof of adequate parking and insurance. VOTE: 6-0-0

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The COMPS Commission discussed the multi-family housing program that is funded by HUD, observing that it helped Rockland by funding rehabilitation of buildings in poor condition. It was last used in 2013 to help 3-4 property owners improve multi-family homes in Rockland.

Member Gifford said she would want to encourage more transient accommodations in more units than just one. Member Keedy said he would like to know the proportion between seasonal and year round rentals and what the numbers of 4-5 unit buildings that there are. There are other ways to generate occupancy like renting out a bedroom in the property owner's own space. Member Keedy also asked about the revenue to the City from transient housing through taxes and assessments. City Attorney Beal said the permit may prompt review by the Assessor and Wastewater Department, and that personal property in rented units may also be taxable.

ACTION: Chair Geiger made a motion, seconded by Member Morris, to recommend to City Council that the Council limit the short-term rental of dwelling units in multi-family and mixed-use buildings to 1 unit per building. VOTE: 5-1-0 (Michelle Gifford Opposed)

The COMPS Commission agreed that there should be clear criteria set and recommend penalty provisions. Member Morris said she would recommend fines per day. Staff will work on appropriate penalty language.

Next Meetings:

**November 12, 2015 – Eric Galant, Mid-Coast Regional Planning Commission, will be presenting.
November 19, 2015**

NOTE: There will be no second meeting in October.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kara Cushman
Recording Secretary