

Approved August 25, 2016

**City of Rockland
Comprehensive Planning Commission
Minutes for August 11, 2016**

Commission Present: Chair Eileen Wilkinson, Callie Black, Amy Files, and Michelle Gifford

Staff Present: City Attorney Kevin Beal and Code Secretary Roxy LaFrance

Guests: City Councilor Valli Geiger

Meeting Called to order at 6:07 p.m.

Previous Meeting Minutes: July 28, 2016

ACTION: Callie Black made a motion that the minutes be accepted without amendment. Vote 4-0.

Discussion led by Valli Geiger on Comprehensive Planning Commission roles and responsibilities

Valli Geiger explained that she wanted to make sure the Commission members were happy, to find out if any support was needed from the City Council, and wanted to check in with the Commission as there was a recent snafu regarding the 218 Main Street zoning amendment not coming back to Commission after first reading by the Council.

Amy Files explained that the meeting schedule had somehow gotten off-track which was the cause of the 218 Main Street being discussed prior to the City Council meeting, and that it wasn't an ordinance amendment at all, but instead 3 proposals for an ordinance amendment.

Eileen Wilkinson expressed that she felt it was inappropriate for the affected person to be present and at the table at the Commission meeting, prior to an ordinance, prior to a first reading, and that the Commission was uncomfortable with how the decision would impact TB1 zones across the city. Eileen also expressed frustration with continually having spot-zoning amendments when the Commission would like to move to a more simplified and form-based code.

Amy Files pointed out that the month following the 218 Main Street amendment the Commission was faced again with the affected person being present at the table of the Commission meeting regarding the industrial zone amendment for Health & Fitness Facilities.

Eileen Wilkinson expressed that she would like the city to elicit the help of consulting company which has experience with moving a town from a complex set of codes to a form-based code, as expertise would be needed to make such a change.

Valli Geiger pointed out that, in the meantime, zone change requests are likely to continue to come before the Council and the Commission. Valli explained that, per Audra Caler-Bell, there is money in the budget that could be utilized to help get the revised Comprehensive Plan completed. Robert Orr, a consultant from Connecticut specializing in form-based code, or Jane Lefleur, director of the Friends of Midcoast Maine and soon to be with Lift 360 are two possibilities for said contract work.

Eileen Wilkinson explained that Callie Black has started investigating Community Heart and Soul, and that it could be utilized for obtaining public input and to include the public in the process of a change to form-based code so that the public does not feel like the wool is being pulled over their eyes.

Valli Geiger explained that Jane Lefleur could help with both the Comprehensive Plan and Community Heart and Soul project, as she has experience with the Camden Gateway project. Valli also recommended that the Commission look into the background of Robert Orr, who is the foremost expert on form-based code. Valli explained that the Council is going to keep coming back to the Commission with ordinance amendments, including a potential in-fill ordinance, and that there is always the option for the Commission to ask the Council to postpone items for more time to consider.

Amy Files expressed frustration with the culture of City staff solving a problem for an individual or business, and then a Councilor pushing it through. Valli Geiger addressed the issue by stating that she personally asks herself if it is good for Rockland as opposed to if it is good for just the affected persons. Amy Files explained that in most cases there are other ways to help an individual or business, but often, due to time constraints they are not even looked into. Eileen Wilkinson asked for clarification of the current process. Valli Geiger explained that the process is that after an individual or business has found out from Code Enforcement that they can't do something they then are taken to the City Manager's office to investigate the possibility of having a Councilor sponsor an ordinance amendment.

Kevin Beal explained that in some communities you have to apply for a zone change, and pay a fee. The applicant could be responsible to show if the zone change is supported by the Comprehensive Plan, and the application process could require that abutters and/or other property owners that might be affected by the change to the same zone be notified. Eileen Wilkinson inquired how a similar process could be adopted by Rockland. Kevin Beal explained that there would need to be an ordinance written and adopted by Council. Valli Geiger stated that she would support such an ordinance, and asked the City Attorney to write it. Kevin Beal cautioned that even with the adoption of such an ordinance, that a Councilor would still be able to bring proposed zone changes to Council for consideration.

A member repeated the concern with having zone change applicants seated at the table with Commission members, suggesting it could be intimidating. Kevin Beal stated that the public could always be in the audience of a Comprehensive Planning Commission meeting, and suggested that the Commission could establish a physical separation by keeping the public in the audience as well as setting a time for the public to speak—such as is done at City Council meetings. The Commission should consider public notification of their opportunity to speak to ordinance amendments.

Callie Black discussed the latest and simplified draft for zone change decision making document presented to the Commission. Eileen Wilkinson stated that the questions contained within it may be a good addition to the potential zone change application.

Callie Black inquired if City staff would be able to help gather some of the information needed for Chapter 10 of the Comprehensive Plan so as to update the figures in the revised plan. Kevin Beal and Valli Geiger stated that City Staff should be able to fill in the numbers as they had recently been tabulated for the creation of the latest City budget.

Amy Files pointed out that the Code states that City facility changes and street changes should also be coming to the Comprehensive Planning Commission, but she feels that they do not currently, and that the Chair of the Commission should be in communication with the Chair of the Planning Board.

Consensus was that just as the Commission was not aware of those aspects, neither was the City Council or Planning Board. Amy pointed out that the code states that the Commission has 30 days to respond to the Council on ordinance amendments and therefore, the Commission does not generally have to make a decision on an ordinance amendment at the first meeting.

Eileen Wilkinson inquired into meeting with Jane Lefleur. Valli Geiger will find out from Audra Caler-Bell how much money could be put toward a contract.

Kevin Beal will ask if City staff can provide updated figures for the Chapter 10 Comprehensive Plan revisions.

Finalize Chapter 1 (Population & Demographics)

Eileen Wilkinson explained that she has not read the finalized chapter and that Julie Lewis who was not present is most familiar with the chapter so the Commission will postpone this item.

Amy Files presented a draft of Chapter 3 (Agricultural & Forestry Resources)

Amy Files explained that Chapter 3 is a very small chapter and that overall it shows that there isn't a lot Rockland can do with its agriculture resources. The forestry section is not nearly as in depth as the previous version, and that it states that the Bog is Rockland's biggest resource of forestry. Amy expressed that she feels the forestry section could be expanded upon with some of the information that Mike Grondin had stated at previous Commission meetings. The farm portion of the chapter spoke of the farmers' markets and she expressed that she felt the Commission could look at that section more creatively by including a new focus on backyard gardening. The chapter contained a statement that she disagreed with where it stated that there is not a need for community gardens. Amy expressed that she feels that because of the population of those living in apartments, the City could in-fact benefit from the use of community gardens. She again expressed that with some creative thinking, and with help from those who specialize in the different areas (such as Mike Grondin Tree Warden and the Jamie Wood of Good Tern Co-op) this chapter could be expanded upon.

Eileen Wilkinson stated that she feels Mike Grondin, as well as the rest of the Parks Commission, could be a great resource for this chapter. Eileen expressed that if the Parks and the Harbor Trail Committee members were involved this chapter, she feels the chapter could really be transformed, and through speaking with those experts the Commission would be able to come up with strategies and goals for the chapter that would enhance the community.

Amy Files explained that the Chapter states the number of properties with farm land, tree growth, and open space exemptions currently in existence the city. Eileen Wilkinson inquired if the City could provide the Commission with a map of those properties. Kevin Beal explained that John Root would be able to provide such a map.

Kevin Beal inquired if the Chapter spoke of the area west of Old County Road being re-zoned to RR2, as the driving-force for that change was to promote agriculture and farming. Amy Files explained that she does not believe that it is mentioned.

Michelle Gifford inquired if the Chapter mentions protecting the canopies of trees within the City. Kevin Beal stated that a couple years ago the City sought “tree city” designation and that there are currently some protections of street trees in Chapter 13 of the City’s code.

Amy Files explained that there are a number of blanks in the chapter that still need to be completed.

Amy Files explained the STAR Communities program which encourages cities to do different things to meet certain goals in order to obtain points which then calculate the stars the city receives. When thinking about strategies for this chapter, Amy recommends the Commission reference the STAR Communities program’s goals and strategies for ideas.

Eileen Wilkinson suggested that other towns have a Sustainability Coordinator, and that at some point, Rockland might consider a staff position to bring all of the sustainability threads, including solid waste and recycling together.

Amy Files explained that Renew Rockland is planning to perform a trash audit as well as meet with David St.Laurent, and possibly put on a backyard composting workshop.

Callie Black suggested adding a sustainability chapter to the Comprehensive Plan.

Callie Black discussed Community Heart and Soul

Callie Black explained the results of her meeting that day with Gardiner city staff involved in Community Heart and Soul. She explained that she was informed that Heart and Soul dovetails perfectly with developing a comprehensive plan because it brings people together to talk about what you want in the plan. She received only positive feedback regarding the program. The mayor of Gardiner explained to Callie that Heart and Soul has a place for everyone and that it pulls together all sorts of people from the community. Gardiner invited every citizen to every event. The program lasted a year to 15 months. Jane Lefleur worked with Gardiner and was wonderful at being a facilitator at the meetings. Eileen Wilkinson inquired as to how the leadership of the program functioned. Callie explained that the leadership in Gardiner was different than the leadership in Damariscotta. Gardiner suggested at least a part-time person who has a broad picture of the program to keep track of everything. In Damariscotta the Community Development director facilitated the program. Callie explained that she asked for volunteers at Valli’s breakfast group and got a small group of volunteers already. She may be able to get more volunteers from a men’s group she knows of in the city.

Eileen Wilkinson explained that she recently stopped into an empty store front on Main Street and inquired about it, because she feels it would be great to have an interactive space on Main Street that is present in the community from which to operate the program.

Callie Black explained that by the Commission’s next meeting she will have met with all of the towns that have utilized the program. She expressed that because the Commission will need public input into the creation of the revised Comprehensive Plan, and because that input will likely be from public meetings, she feels that the Commission should utilize the process created by the Community Heart and Soul program.

Amy Files stated that the Commission should vote on the utilization of the program and then send a memo to Council to get their support. Amy Files suggested Callie Black speak to the Council and present

her findings on the Community Heart and Soul program, as well as having a speaker from a town that has already utilized the program if possible to answer Council's questions, if any. Callie Black explained that Robin Meyer from Damariscotta has stated that she would be glad to speak to Rockland about her experience with the program.

Eileen Wilkinson suggested voting on the Community Heart and Soul program at the next meeting of the Commission.

Callie Black suggested members go to the Orton Family Foundation website to look at the materials they provide.

Amy Files inquired if there would be enough time for a memo to get to Council for their next meeting. Kevin Beal explained that there would be enough time for the memo to get to Council before their Agenda Setting meeting on September 7th, and that Callie Black and Robin Meyer might be able to speak to Council at that meeting.

Eileen Wilkinson suggested that Callie Black be the project lead and the Commission utilize Jane Lefleur as a consultant since Callie is so passionate about the program, which would save the City money as well. Kevin Beal expressed that he feels there should be a City staff member dedicated to the program, but as the Community Development Director is filling the role of Acting City Manager at this time, it may be a hard role to fill.

Callie Black expressed that she feels the City needs to buy into the program but that there needs to be a clear separation and transparency in the City's utilization of the program to gain public support.

Eileen Wilkinson expressed that she feels it would be valuable to sketch out a timeline for updating the Comprehensive Plan and that she would like to set goals of when the Commission will finish the plan revision.

Callie Black explained that she inquired to Gardiner staff if the survey was tied in to their Community Heart & Soul program and was told that the survey was not a State requirement, but that the Commission simply needed to solicit input from the public, not necessarily by a survey. Kevin Beal stated that he will look into the language of the State's requirements. Michelle Gifford suggested still putting a survey on the new website. Amy Files suggested waiting until some feedback has been received from the public in order to craft the survey. Eileen Wilkinson suggested looking at the survey that Callie Black and Amy Files created, which was drawn from the Comprehensive Plan, again at the next meeting. Callie Black stated that she will send the survey out to members of the Commission again by email.

Michelle Gifford stated that she has begun looking at the Housing Chapter and that she feels she needs to sit down with Audra Caler-Bell to see what has already been met for goals for housing. Kevin Beal explained that the City could do a housing study.

Kevin Beal explained that there was a former contract with \$30,000 allocated for Robert Orr to be a consultant for implementing Smart Code in the Camden Street area but that he is unsure where that currently stands.

Next meeting: August 25, 2016

ACTION: Eileen Wilkinson made a motion to adjourn. Vote 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Roxy LaFrance
Code Secretary