

TOWN OF CAPE ELIZABETH
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PUBLIC FORUM

December 8, 2005

7:00 p.m. Town Hall

Present: Barbara Schenkel, Chair
David Griffin
Jay Chatmas
Mary Ann Lynch
John Herrick
Elaine Moloney

Julia Beckett
Skip Murray
Anne Swift-Kayatta
Frank Strout
Bob Dodd
Marybeth Richardson

Also present was Maureen O’Meara, Town Planner.

Mrs. Schenkel opened the meeting by asking the Comprehensive Plan members to introduce themselves and what part of the community they represent.

Mrs. Schenkel explained that a Comprehensive Plan is a long range, visionary document, which will guide the growth and development of the community for the next decade. 75% of the policies written in the 1993 Comprehensive Plan have been implemented. She summarized the sections contained in the plan. The Greater Portland Council of Governments has supplied demographics to aid this process. Tonight’s forum will be the first of three forums. The public’s opinion is highly valuable and necessary to create goals for the next decade.

Ms. O’Meara gave an overview of how the forum would flow and asked that anyone present to sign in and provide their email for notification of future meetings. She gave an overview of the demographics in the Town. She stated that the Cape Elizabeth had a much slower growth rate than surrounding communities and considers it a “mature” suburb. The growth for the community since 1990 has been 2%. There have been subdivisions proposed in this Town since the 1800’s. She stated that the average age was 43 and that 16% of the population was 65 or older. This means there could mean significant housing turnover in ten years. There are also more households that do not contain school age than those that do.

More than 10% of the Town is land designated as open space in Town, which does not include the state parks. The combination of compact neighborhoods and open space allows the population number that currently exists without losing rural character.

MaryEllen FitzGerald, president of Critical Insights, gave an overview of the findings from the phone survey. The priority of the survey was to determine the overall satisfaction of the people living in the Town and what the priorities were concerning amenities and services.

There were 300 random telephone interviews conducted with a margin of error of 5.7%. The survey itself was 18 minutes in length, and there was a very low refusal rate. Over

half of the people interviewed were extremely happy living in Cape Elizabeth. The Transfer Station and the Police Department were ranked at the highest level of satisfaction. Sewage disposal, streetlights and stormwater drainage ranked lowest.

One third of respondents believe that preserving open space secures a rural character. One third believed restricting development would secure rural character. There was a lot of support for local farmlands, wetlands and recreational assets in Cape Elizabeth. 6 out of 10 respondents did not find commercial development important for the Town.

8 out of 10 respondents found the school system to be very important, as well as proximity to Portland and municipal services. Taxes were not seen as a benefit for living in the Town. 54% of respondents believe there should be affordable housing (>\$300,000). 49% believe the Town should encourage senior citizen housing.

8 out of 10 respondents felt there was sufficient access to coast, lakes and streams.

Respondents were very clear on the need for improvements of the roads, specifically, the intersections of Rt. 77, Scott Dyer Rd, and Shore Rd, and Rt. 77 and the High School. Spurwink Road was cited for needing improvements.

Some residents would support tax increases for improvement of public education, bike lanes & trails. Conversely, two-thirds of respondents were not in favor of economic development for tax reduction. Respondents did not receive the issue of public transportation favorably.

7 out of 10 respondents said there were sufficient retail/eating establishments in Town. When questioned about how the Town Center could be improved, one-third stated it needed no improvements.

Ms. Fitzgerald gave an overview of the demographics of the Town.

A question was asked why questions were worded a certain way.

Ms. O'Meara stated the Comp Plan Committee spent a significant amount of time deciding what questions would be asked within the specific time limit allowed.

Mrs. Schenkel stated the Committee was specifically interested in hearing comments on the following questions. 1) What do you view as the most special asset in Cape Elizabeth? 2) What would you consider the biggest challenge? 3) What is your vision for the next 10 years in Cape Elizabeth?

The public presented the following comments and suggestions.

1. The ability for kids to safely walk.
2. The inability to get anywhere without driving.
3. Be more bike/walk friendly.

4. A traffic light at Rt. 77, Scott Dyer and Shore Rds.
5. Bike lane on Shore Road
6. Question how the survey differed from prior one.
7. Not enough done with farm preservation; implement without extra tax cost.
8. Focus on plan implementation.
9. Committee challenged to increase commercial development.
10. Support the Land Trust rather than Town Open Space.
11. Town Council prefers "soft business"
12. Town Council hears from regular citizens, not just realtors.
13. Appears preserving trail, open space #1 priority, what percentages of citizens actually use?
14. Wants to know loss of taxes with no commercial business.
15. Doesn't care how high taxes are; you get what you pay for. Schools, trails are good.
16. Spurwink Road needs pedestrian area.
17. Doesn't believe Town needs more development.
18. The Comprehensive Plan has been used for Town Council decisions. Phone survey chosen because it is valid and scientific.
19. Comprehensive Plan is used; an example is preservation of the Jordan Farm.
20. Survey reflected high satisfaction level amongst residents. The Town is moving in the right direction.
21. Commercial development does not always increase tax dollars, be careful.
22. The community is beautiful; there are natural resources and very good schools.
23. Desirability is challenge; pressure for people to move here. How to balance growth and community?
24. Continue drive to keep rural aspect, find balance with new development.
25. Reviewed 1980 Comprehensive Plan; keeping rural character important.
26. Challenge is property taxes; residents are struggling to increase income to live here. It will impact diversity in the Town.
27. Impact on landowners with open space
28. Recognized the work of the Comprehensive Committee, confident the plan is in good hands.
29. Vision- have people move here for schools, and have the ability to walk or bike through town.
30. Impact of open space for landowners and property taxes.
31. How can you have education and low taxes? When elderly move out, and families move in. You get what you pay for.
32. It is safer to run in Boston than here.
33. Came for schools, stayed for beauty.
34. Survey said 60% of citizens have been here 11+ years.
35. Wants to keep everything as is; small improvements.
36. Moved here 20 yrs ago, big reason for schools.
37. Planning Board does well thought out development, and should trust local government.
38. Thinks community is overall satisfactory; just make small improvements.
39. Safety of roads for runners, bikers & walkers.
40. There are some dangerous roads; should be designed, reconstructed for everyone.

41. Vision of walking, running, cycling encouraged.
42. Homes from 1960's on septic that are now failing; sewer is expensive.
42. Wetland 250' setback has no scientific support. Is an arbitrary taking and does not allow an appeal process or mitigation. Property owner has to get soil study done at own expense.
43. Impressed with remarkable convergence of opinion and that nearly everything ranked high. It showed strong support of schools.
44. Collaboration accomplishes things; division creates problems. Work together with regionalism.
45. Town has finite resources. Limit development, likes to walk in woods and skiing.
46. Old plan still valid today with green/open space.
47. Other towns more innovative with their housing mix,
48. 2 acre lot developments are most expensive; high density with open space works better.
49. Other towns have 55+ developments. The Town should couple density with land preservation.
50. The Town cannot be everything to everyone. Believes the Town is on the right track.
51. Purchased house because of schools; all of Maine is beautiful.
52. Can't forget schools in Comprehensive plan.
53. Schools important asset in Cape.
54. Consider Mission and Vision statement of School Department.
55. Concur with w/support of schools.
56. Moved to Maine for beauty, Cape Elizabeth for schools.
57. Regionalism: go further with savings with combined resources, ingenuity, and frugality to manage forces.
58. Came to Cape Elizabeth for beauty and schools.
 Vision: Vibrant, diverse
 Values natural beauty
 Services effective/efficient
 School excelling
 Range of housing; including affordable housing
 Safe travel for everyone
 An attractive Town Center
 Active volunteers
59. Comprehensive Plan deserves thank-you for doing Comprehensive Plan.
60. Share road with motorists, improve safety for bikes on shoulders, bike lanes (not all roads)
61. Historic buildings need money for preservation
62. Safety for pedestrian/bikers. (Ex. Runner on Shore Rd pushed off Road)
63. Vision: enhance greater diversity, richness
 increase affordable housing
 wishes for a more attractive Town Center.

Mr. McGovern, Town Manager, stated that, other than the item concerning traffic lights (which was split), the survey results were very clear. There is a strong consensus of the

importance of schools, and open space. What is accomplished in Town is due to collaboration from all aspects of the Town. Regionalism doesn't fit, collaboration does.

Mrs. Schenkel thanked everyone for participating in the first Public Forum for the Comprehensive Plan and asked everyone to stay posted of new information from the Town website.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Palanza

Minutes Secretary