

Swan's Island Comprehensive Planning Committee Minutes

October 17, 2017

The Swan's Island Comprehensive Planning Committee meeting began at 6PM. The following members were in attendance:

Bill Banks, Sonja Philbrook, Christal Applin, Sarah Lane, Myron Sprague, Jr., Keith Harriton, Dexter Lee, Sue Estler and Donna Wiegler. Members Candi Joyce and Gary Rainford were not in attendance. Carol Loehr, MAC Chairman was in attendance.

Chairman Sonja Philbrook introduced and welcomed new comp plan committee member Sue Estler.

Minutes from the committee's previous meeting held on September 19 were read by secretary Donna Wiegler. Sonja Philbrook made a motion to approve. Dexter Lee seconded the motion and the minutes were approved.

Chairman Sonja Philbrook shared that she has been in contact with Phil Carey from the Municipal Planning Assistance Program and he will be sending information that will be helpful to our committee in the spring. Sonja introduced Tom Martin, Hancock County Planning Commission's Executive Director who she invited to come out to our meeting and help us as we begin this project.

Tom Martin shared with the committee his experience and knowledge of preparing and writing comprehensive plans. He asked the committee why we wanted to update our 1994 comprehensive plan. A discussion ensued and Tom shared that an up-to-date comp plan is helpful when applying for grants. He referred to a comp plan as a "map for the future". Sometimes plans can be updated, but Tom felt that our plan would "essentially need to be rewritten" since the plan is so old.

A question that came up during the discussion was, "How are we going to keep the town alive?" Tom suggested we look at the old plan and see what was predicted and what has happened since that plan was written in 1994. Each committee member has a printed copy of the 1994 plan and each member was emailed a current plan from an island community that they are responsible for reviewing and reporting about at a future comp plan meeting. The plans ranged from 100 pages to over 400 pages in length.

Tom asked about some of our concerns for the community. Two topics important to the future of the community were identified--economic development and affordable housing.

Tom made the following suggestions for the committee to think about as we begin the multi-year project of rewriting a comprehensive plan for Swan's Island:

- Hire someone to help write the plan
- Expect to take at least two years to complete
- A consultant could cost a minimum of \$22,000
- University of Maine in Machias has interns that can help with the project, but Tom added, "You get what you pay for"

- A professional mapper may be needed

The committee is entertaining the idea of applying for an Island Institute fellow to start next September to assist with the project. Sonny Sprague said the selectmen are supportive of this effort. Several other island towns have been able to recently write and adopt new comprehensive plans with the help of an Island Fellow. They include: Frenchboro, Isle au Haut and Vinalhaven.

A community-wide survey will be conducted that will involve all community members so that their voices will be heard and reflected in the final plan. Tom said, "Communication is key" throughout this process. Meetings of the committee should be posted and open to the public. Discussions should be held with all segments of the island community...include everyone in the writing of the plan. It is a vision for the future of Swan's Island and everyone should be part of it.

A discussion took place around enlisting other community members, both year-round and seasonal residents, who have experience and expertise to help with researching and writing various parts of the plan.

Tom suggested that after the plan is completed and approved by voters that an implementation committee should meet once a year to ensure the plan is being followed.

The next Comp Plan Committee meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 21 at 6PM at the Town Office.

Sarah Lane made a motion to adjourn. Dexter Lee seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Donna Wiegler
Secretary