

York, Maine
Planning Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 21, 2021; 7:00 P.M.
Remote Meeting via Zoom

Call to Order; Roll Call; Determination of Quorum; Appointment of Alternates

Chairwoman Kathleen Kluger called this special meeting to order at 7:00 P.M. A quorum was determined with five people voting: Kathleen Kluger, Vice-Chair Wayne Boardman, Board Secretary Gerry Runte, Al Cotton, and Peter Smith. Alternate Ian Shaw was present but did not vote. Ken Churchill was absent. Planning Director Dylan Smith represented staff. Patience Horton took Minutes. Votes were tallied via roll call. The meeting lasted two hours.

Susan Silberberg, principle of CivicMoxie [Brookline], was present. She had submitted a proposal of her work to the Planning Board, and it was referred to several times during the meeting.

Public Forum

Janet Drew

Janet has gone on line to review portions of the Comp Plan. She said that First Parish Church is polling congregants about the possibility of leasing out 20-acres of the northwest corner of Parish Woods for a solar array.

Chairwoman Kathleen Kluger encouraged Janet to return to a Planning Board Public Hearing if the item comes before the Board.

Kathleen closed the Public Forum.

Discussion/Review Comprehensive Plan Update

Kathleen Kluger: On Tuesday, January 19, Vice Chair Wayne Boardman and I had a meeting with Board of Selectmen Chair Todd Frederick and the Vice Chair Robert Palmer. Originally, we were talking about their assistance with rewriting the Comp Plan. We have just learned that the Board of Selectmen has another plan that has to be written, the Climate Action Plan. It is a subject of expertise for the Energy Steering Committee. The question is, can the two plans be put together under the Planning Board auspices? The two documents have to “communicate,” share information, and engage with the community. They overlap.

Al Cotton: There is a big difference between the Planning Board and the Energy Steering Committee. The Energy Committee has no statutory authority the way the Planning Board does. The Energy Steering Committee informs and advises the Selectboard on energy issues and policy. That is why the Selectboard, not the Planning Board, has authority over the Climate Action Plan.

Kathleen: Right now, we are looking at two processes with two products at the end.

Gerry Runte said that he and Wayne Boardman are members of the Energy Steering Committee. We have been aware about Climate Action Plan for some time, he said. Information about adaptation and mitigation will be extracted from the Climate Action Plan and put into the Comp Plan.

Wayne Boardman said that it makes sense to develop the Climate Action Plan first and then integrate appropriate information from it into the Comp Plan. Perhaps the Climate Action Plan can be incorporated into the Comp Plan by reference, like the Village Master Plan has been, he said.

Peter Smith said that he would be concerned about having the Comp Plan depend on the Climate Action Plan too much. The Climate Action Plan will be dynamic and subject to ongoing changes. If we are expected to update changes in the Comp Plan, it will get messy with the voters. We can do the public outreach together, but the two documents should stand alone, he said.

Susan Silberberg said that CivicMoxie only recently learned there would be two plans, not one. At first, our assumption was that the Climate Action Plan would be attached to the Comp Plan and be voted on together, she said. We thought of the Climate Action Plan as an appendix to the Comp Plan.

Kathleen: If it is going to be attached and voted on, it might not serve either one very well in the end.

Susan: If we take the Climate Action Plan out of the appendix, we are proposing two tracts of work that have great overlap in terms of outreach, collection of data, and public management. There would not be two separate committees. Managing both documents with one committee, which we'll call the Steering Committee, is streamlined in its solidarity. It is less complicated. It is easier for the voters to buy-into a streamlined process. The Steering Committee will be made up of people from the Planning Board, Selectboard, and a diverse representation of the townsfolk.

Dylan Smith said that there will be sections of the Comp Plan, like utilities, housing, natural resources, transportation, and land use, that will be greatly influenced by information from the Climate Action Plan. Both will have discussions of climate, climate change, and environmental issues. The Climate Action Plan will be far more detailed and have more information.

Dylan explained that he sees himself as the general manager of both plans. He could see the work on the Climate Action Plan in the hands of the Energy Steering Committee and the Comp Plan in the hands of the Planning Board. Gerry Runte and Wayne Boardman, being on both boards, would be the experts going between the two Plans.

Susan Silberberg said that there doesn't seem to be any reason why there can't be a Steering Committee for the Comp Plan with a separate committee working under it on the Climate Action Plan.

Pete Smith added that CivicMoxie would tie the projects together as far as running public meetings and doing research are concerned. Until now, he said, we assumed that the seven members of the Planning Board would be the Steering Committee for the Comp Plan, but that has already changed.

I think the Steering Committee for the Comp Plan should center around Chairwoman Kathleen Kluger and one other member, he said. The balance of the Comp Plan Committee would be made up of a broad spectrum of participants.

Dylan: I think the Board of Selectmen will make the decision about who is going to oversee the Climate Action Plan. They want to see how the Planning Board feels about it. Kathleen and I are discussing this with them during the upcoming Selectboard meeting, Monday, January 25.

Dylan continued. There are serious staffing issues with the Planning-Department-of-one--me. We have to figure out a way to deal with the upcoming applications and reviews, ordinances and policies that we are trying to work through. In the next two years, we might have to push the pause button on some things while we work on these two plans. I don't want anyone to get burned out. The staffing issue and the workload issue are things that the Town Manager and I have to talk about.

Kathleen said that The Town of York is responsible for the administration of the plans. The Energy Committee has an intern who will be part of the Climate Action Plan group. It would be nice if the Planning Board were able to find an intern.

Al: Dylan, do you have the capability to get other resources on the engineering side or the administrative side?

Wayne: In an ideal world, the counterpart to Dylan in the Climate Action Plan would be a sustainability coordinator. Though there won't be a position as such because of the last vote, the Selectboard showed some openness to the idea of contracting with someone as a sustainability position who may be able to offload some of the work that Dylan may be asked to do. Administrative support would also be highly valuable.

Kathleen also said what a lot of work we have to do! We will probably have extra meetings. For the Comp Plan work, we are going to break out our own interests in different parts of the plan. Al, for example, will be most likely interested in the Green Enterprise Zone and the development of business in town, and Wayne and Gerry have their expertise in energy matters. We don't know what Ian will be interested in doing. It is his first rodeo.

Pete: We could have one Comp Plan/Climate Action Plan agenda item at each of our meetings—or perhaps just once at the monthly workshop meetings. There would be reports about the coordination of the two projects.

Kathleen: I think we should build in a 30-minute opportunity to talk about where we are in the process at both workshop and application meetings. I would be willing to start meetings at 6:30 and not 7:00 P.M. to accommodate that extra half-hour.

Susan: With all the Comp Plans we've done, there has been one sole Steering Committee that represents all the diverse interests. There has always been at least one member of the Board of Selectmen on the Steering Committee. There would be one or two people from the Planning Board

who report back to the Board. There are usually about 12 people on the Steering Committee. My one concern is having two separate steering committees for the projects instead of one.

Pete replied directly to Susan's comment. That is not what we were thinking. The Climate Action Plan needs to have its own leader and be a standalone committee on which Wayne and Gerry are members. They can be the liaisons and report to us in our regular meetings or have questions for the Planning Board. Both committees will have a broad spectrum of participants.

Wayne said that the Energy Steering Committee working on the Climate Action Plan would work through Dylan, just like the Comp Plan Steering Committee will. The Climate Action Plan will be taken off the shoulders of the Selectboard.

Pete said that Dylan and Susan are in charge of advising and consulting, and the Planning Board is in charge of planning. One person, perhaps the Planning Board Chair, should be the leader and coordinator of both committees, making the planning process come together in one place.

Dylan: Susan, what do you think?

Susan: I think you're making it more complicated than it needs to be.

Susan continued and reiterated some earlier points. For the Comp Plans CivicMoxie has done, there have always been one Steering Committee that represents the diverse interests of the Town. There has always been at least one member of the Steering Committee from the Selectboard. There are always one or two people from the Planning Board. They report back to the Board about what's happening. The whole Board does not feel they have to get involved, come to meetings, or make sure they are on all the subcommittees. They do what they want. The diverse group owns the process and moves forward. They are representing a lot of different boards and commissions--a lot of different interests.

Susan continued. It does not have to be as onerous as you might think. I would recommend that you keep it simple. Everything that has been said fits with how we do this. My concern is that if you have two separate steering committees for the projects, there is going to be a lot of overlap. If you have two people who are on both committees, all the sudden they have two sets of meetings. It doesn't sound like a lot, but when you start adding in public meetings and other things, there is a possibility of overlapping certain outreach. It would become very difficult.

Susan continued. The other matter is, you have to fill both committees. If you are looking for diverse committees, there may be an overlap of members. I don't know how deep you can go into the community to fill these committees. At times those committees are going to be meeting together. If you are looking to streamline work for Dylan, what benefits would there be by adding in two separate committees all the time?

Kathleen responded. I think it is possible that until now, we misunderstood what you put forth to us. I thought that you were recommending a steering committee for each plan. Now I understand this is about an overall steering committee with subcommittees for each plan.

Dylan: Does everyone feel comfortable with a Climate Action Plan/Comp Plan Subcommittee falling under the realm of the Planning Board? [Answer: Yes.]

Pete: There would be a large Steering Committee made up of Selectmen, Planning Board, and everybody else.

Kathleen: We will have one process. There will be a combined steering committee with subcommittees. At the end we will have two products: A Comp Plan and a Climate Action Plan. CivicMoxie will have one client, us planners, not Planning plus Selectboard. These are the recommendations we will give the Selectboard.

Dylan asked Susan for a diagram showing organizationally what this might look like. She said she would have it the following day, Friday morning. A graphic designer at CivicMoxie will make it look beautiful.

Wayne added that it is important that the Energy Steering Committee will own the Climate Action Plan. They should be given plenty of authority and not be micromanaged. All agreed.

Other Business

Dylan outlined the business for the upcoming Applications meeting.

Adjourn

Respectfully submitted,
Patience G. Horton
Recording Secretary