

**Town of Newcomb
Comprehensive Plan Committee
Meeting – March 28, 2019
Minutes**

Members present: Paul Hai Chairman, Clerk Ricki Dick, Dave Olbert, Kelly and Tony Audino, Denise and Kevin Bolan, Charles and Lurrinda Minke, Margaret and Bob Hampson, Lorraine Miga, Skip Hults, Chris Fisher, Rose Bush, Mary Lamphear, Lana Fennessey, Robert Yandon, Peter Armstrong

Members present via Phone: Mary Monaghan and Charles

Meeting was called to order at 7:08 PM and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Paul Hai welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance. He briefly explained the comprehensive plan and its goals. He explained that everyone in the room has something to add to the process of creating the new comprehensive plan. He explained that his part as the chairman to this committee is to maintain organization and to help keep things moving. Everyone plays an equal part in this process.

Paul Hai explained that being a part of this committee is completely volunteer, attendance is always appreciated and never mandatory.

Dave Olbert added that members can invite other people to attend meetings at any time, everyone is welcome. The more input from the community the better.

Agenda for the meeting was handed out (copy attached)

Paul Hai asked if everyone had a copy of the current comprehensive plan. He explained where to gain access to the current plan if needed. The current comprehensive plan can be found on the on the Town of Newcomb website (newcombny.com) by clicking on the tab located in the upper right-hand side labeled documents, it will be the second tab down in the drop-down menu labeled comprehensive plan.

Paul Hai discussed the proposal that he wrote and presented to the Newcomb Town Board in January. (handout attached)

Paul Hai's first request to the committee is to go through the old plan, assess it, see what was done, what needs to still be done, what worked, what didn't. Look for ideas for the new plan, such as solar. Research the plans that other towns have in place.

We will need to rewrite the current plan. As a committee we will need to decide if we will rewrite it or just put together our ideas, submit them to Chazen and have them rewrite the majority of the plan.

As a committee we will be researching, reviewing and processing ideas, collecting info, putting those ideas into writing for the new plan.

Meetings will be held once monthly for 2 hours. The last time the comprehensive plan was written it was a 16-month process, with meetings twice monthly.

Meetings can be held more than once monthly if needed, but that will be decided during a meeting by the whole committee if the need arises.

The idea of special conversions or focused meetings were discussed.

A community engagement meeting will be held during the summer at the school to help collect ideas from the community

The use of a survey similar to the one used with the prior comprehensive plan which was used to help to gather input from the community was discussed

Dave Olbert asked if we can keep the public updated on the comprehensive plan process via the town website

Paul Hai stated that we will try to have the minutes from each meeting posted before the next scheduled meeting for anyone who wants to review the process

Kevin Bolan stated that we should look at the current comprehensive plan to see what was achieved, what still needs to be done and see if a new direction is needed. He also stated that we need to make sure that it is a working document that does not get stagnant, that all the work and effort that goes into making it is not wasted.

Paul Hai agreed that yes assessing the old plan is very important. He added making sure that this is a working document we also need to make sure that it is a practical document that reflects the goals and values of the town.

Charlie asked if the old plan was about 10 years old and if the old committee members were around to help with this plan

Paul Hai stated that yes, the old plan was written about 10 years ago. He also stated that 4 of the 16 former members were present at this meeting

Charlie asked if we could start with why things did not get done with the old plan and then figure out what we can do different this time to make sure things get things done

Paul Hai reminded everyone that a lot of things from the old plan did get accomplished. He referenced what Kevin Bolan stated earlier about going through to old plan looking at what was accomplished and what was not done

Dave Olbert added that a lot of ideas in the current plan were completed, some are still getting accomplished and that some of what was not completed came down to resources or money.

Paul Armstrong asked where our work as a committee goes once we are finished putting everything together

Paul Hai stated the we will put together the new plan, present it to the Planning Board to revise and make sure that it is consistent to current town zoning laws and APA laws or see if it encourages new town laws to be created. The Planning Board will give us feedback which we will use to make revisions. Once revisions are made we will then present it to the Town Board for their input and to hopefully adopt as the new comprehensive plan.

Bob Hampson shared that it was his belief that when the original plan was prepared it was approved by Town Board then by the APA, which was a big deal because Newcomb was a head of the game compared to other communities

Paul Hai added that the Town of Newcomb was the first of nineteen to have its own Zoning laws and regulations, giving Newcomb a level of control that others did not have, that it was a major asset for our town

Paul Hai asked if there were any further questions on the comprehensive plan process

Bob Yandon asked were any legal or state requirements to take into consideration?

Paul Hai stated that there are no legal or state requirements for the comprehensive plan but comprehensive plans are encouraged by the NYS department of State. There website has a lot of information on comprehensive plans

The following articles were shared and discussed

What Rural America has to Teach Us - By David Brooks

Paul Hai stated that this article relates to us in that we are also a small rural community and share some of the same strengths and struggles (article attached)

Bolton planning a recreation hub strategy – By Anthony Hall

Paul Hai shared that this article shows us that we don't always see what we have and what we can achieve, that we should look at our positive assets, we should look to see at what Bolton is doing to see if it is similar to what we want or maybe what we have been already working on

Paul Hai added that these articles are to help stimulate our thinking as we move forward. The more ideas we have, the more things we read, the more we can bring to the table the better

Skip Hults discussed his find on growth models for rural areas around the united states

Paul Hai stated that he will send the minutes from the prior meeting out via emails along with any other information to the committee prior to each meeting

Paul Hai stated that the purpose of this committee is to establish a vision for the future of Newcomb, set goals and determine how we can achieve those goals

Paul Hai requested that everybody think about what their personal vision for Newcomb may be, this will help us to form our vision as a committee

Paul Hai stated the as we move forward we need to respect the current plan without being tied to it. We should go through the old plan part by part looking for what ideas still hold true, what ones need to revised or replaced and think about our current vision for the future of Newcomb

Paul Hai stated that when looking into the current plan that we pay attention to sections 6, 7 and 8. We should assess what has been or has not been achieved and why or why not

Paul Hai asked the committee if it would be realistic that everyone can review and mark up the current plan by the next meeting date, as well as read the articles handed out tonight

Paul Hai stated that one of our first discussions or focused meetings, we could be to reach out to Dave Olbert and the Chamber of Commerce to discuss what barriers there may be for local businesses, we could also do the same with the school

Paul Hai asked the committee what are other areas should there be focused discussions on

Dave Olbert suggested the DEC

Kelly Audino suggested meeting with young families

Mary Monaghan suggested a meeting with the general public or with those who hold an interest in the town

Paul Hai stated that yes, we will do this at the open town meeting to be held at the school this summer when the most people are around. The public event will then be followed by the survey to all box holders within the town

Kelly Audino asked when do you plan to hold these focused meeting

Paul Hai stated that the focused meetings will be held on regularly scheduled meeting nights

Kelly Audino suggested that we should hold these focused meetings with the DEC, young families, the senior population or others first, this will help get people excited and feel included the process, then have the big town meeting

Kevin Bolan suggested one focus segment should include tourists, as tourism is a big industry in the Adirondacks and ask second home owners to attend as well

Kelly Audino added that a lot of second homeowners that are changing from this being their second residence to it being their primary residence

Paul Hai added that the last survey had a check box for the type of resident that was completing the survey

Denise Bolan added that maybe we should consider holding a focus meeting with just second homeowners to get their ideas, this may help them to not feel out of place

Paul Hai reviewed the different groups for the focused discussions: Young families, youth, local businesses, the school, DEC, tourists, second homeowners and the senior community

Mary Lamphear suggested the alumni population, to see what we could do to get them to come back to the area

Paul Hai stated that it may be difficult to get them here, but we could add them to list of people we want to send surveys to

Kevin Bolan added that it would be like doing an exit interview to find out why they are leaving and what might bring them back

Dave Olbert added that we should find out what things people would want in place when they come back to the area visit or stay, to make it more appealing for them for example what kinds of lodging

Rose Bush stated that getting people to come for these focused discussions may be difficult, should we do the survey first or then have the meeting

Paul Hai stated that is something that we should discuss as we move forward. During the last process we first got things moving along, then we held the community event, at the community event we handed out surveys, we then mailed out the surveys, we collected information from both the community event and from the mailings. We had about a 35% response rate last time. We took that information, digested it and processed it, consolidated and processed the practical ideas

Paul Hai stated we should all encourage young families to attend

Skip Hults suggested using the school, opening up the gym for the kids and providing childcare

Paul Hai added that we may need to be creative to get young families to attend

Chris Fisher suggested that we may need to be more mobile as a group, that if they cannot come to us then we could go to them

Paul Hai suggested that this could work but not as a whole large group that may be difficult to do

Chris Fisher suggested working in teams

Paul Hai stated that we will need to be flexible to make it all work

Peter Armstrong asked about the notices for our meetings

Paul Hai stated that meetings will be posted in the town bulletin, Laurinda will post it on Facebook, and it will be sent out via emails

Laurinda Minke mentioned that the app for the town has opened and can be used to post events as well

Skip Hults suggested looking into recreation other than just the business side of recreation

Paul Hai suggested targeted surveys for tourism and recreation

Denise Bolan suggested asking groups like the Adirondack Mountain Club for their thoughts or ideas

Paul Armstrong suggested including the faith-based community

Kelly Audino asked if the website can have a link that we can use as a way to share this with others to help get them engaged or to get them to share their input

Dave Olbert added that surveys to recreational group members may not be worthwhile, as it has already done and the data is out there to review

Paul Hai added that we should try to collect that info from other people who have already collected similar data, from places like the Wild Center, the Adirondack Council

Dave Olbert stated that Ruth Olbert has some of this information and the key things that people are looking for are beer, different levels of lodging, food etc.

Chris Fisher suggested talking with newcomers to the town, people who have moved to Newcomb in the past few years

Paul Hai stated that we need to decide if we want individual focus groups for each of these groups or do we want to add specific focused questions to the survey, such as how long have you lived in Newcomb or why did you move to Newcomb

Kevin Bolan added that there is value in learning why the newcomers move to Newcomb

Workload

Paul Hai stated that it will be a lot of reading, a lot of discussions. We will want to keep things moving without it being too much

Work Structure

Paul Hai added that we could create teams or committees, to divide and conquer to help get things done. The goal is to have fun while we do this

Community Survey

The past survey that was sent out in March of 2009 was discussed

4 questions from that survey were discussed

1. What do you like about Newcomb?

The committee responded the quietness, the people, nature, the sense of safety, the cold weather, the change of seasons, the school, the medical center, the beauty of the area, the tranquility, the low taxes

2. What do you dislike about Newcomb

The committed responded the cold, the lack of shopping, the lack of grocery stores, the lack of a gas station services, the isolation, the speed of trucks and the truck traffic, the black flies, lack of broadband, the lack of street lights, lack of sidewalks, lack of downtown or a community core (Denise Bolan added that we could benefit from areas where there are gathering spots or a community center)

3. What would you like to see changed?

The committee responded the addition of services such as gas and food, additional levels of lodging, affordable year a round housing, more job opportunities, community infrastructure, more kids, more youth and more families

4. What are things you do not want to see change?

The committee responded the beauty of Newcomb, the scenic vistas, over development-controlled development so that we do not change the scale of our community, change in safety of the community, the value of the school change, keeping the quality of school and keeping our school open, changes in the confidence of our kids, keep our taxes affordable

Responses from the community in the last survey was reviewed and discussed

Paul Hai stated that the survey responses from the last survey are similar to the ideas that we referenced here tonight, which means that the core values that we as a committee want for the future of Newcomb do reflect what the community wanted then, meaning that that we have shared values.

Focused groups

We will design the questions for each group, so that the questions are strong enough to stimulate the thought process, to get the person give you the information that you are looking for

Survey design

Example of an intense survey was discussed

Paul Hai stated that we will need to come up with something for the survey that is somewhere between our 4 questions and what the intense survey asks. Something that is in between, that gets more than one-word answers without but not pushing people away

Kelly Audino asked about digital surveys

Paul Hai mentions a survey tool called Survey monkey, which gives you a 25-question survey for free, surveys of 26 or more questions will cost money

Paul Hai stated that at our next meeting we will work on survey design. He added that he would look for old survey to use or build on

Denise Bolan asked that as move along come up with ideas are there things that the town can subsidize or will our ideas need to fund privately

Paul Hai stated that we would do research both municipal funded and private funded ideas, we should include all pathways including suggested models into the new plan. In the end it is the decision of the town board, but having well thought out models and ideas make it easier for the board to make their decisions

Paul Hai stated that we could look at the affordable housing that was done in or near Elizabethtown for ideas and funding

Robert Hampson added that affordable housing is a first step, but this process takes times to complete and reach these goals

Schedule and dates

Paul Hai stated that he would not be here for the next scheduled meeting date of Thursday April 25th, he will be out of town

Paul Hai suggested we meet Wednesday April 17th at 7pm, then Wednesday May 29th at 7 pm, then we will go back to meeting the last Thursday of each month

Open Discussion

Paul Hai stated that we really want to engage everyone, while keeping things moving while being respectful of everyone's time, we know that not everyone can attend every meeting, to help keep things flowing we will have minutes available prior to the meetings to keep everyone up to date on prior discussions

Paul Hai asked the committee if they felt there was a need for formal minutes

The committee agreed that the minutes did not have to be formal

Meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM