

**TOWN OF BRUNSWICK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE STEERING COMMITTEE  
MEETING SUMMARY – DRAFT 2  
DECEMBER 3, 2019**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Larissa Darcy (Steering Committee Chair), Catherine Ferdinand, Fred Koerber, Alison Harris, Elizabeth Kohler, Marcy McGuire, Jacqueline Sartoris, and Christopher Watkinson (Town Council, District 5)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** John Perreault (Town Council Chair, District 4), Anthony Sachs, Sande Updegraph (Planning Board), and Kathy Wilson (Town Council, At Large)

**STAFF PRESENT:** Matt Panfil, Director of Planning and Development  
Laurel Margerum

A meeting of the Town of Brunswick Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee was held on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, in the Town Hall Council Chambers, 85 Union Street. Steering Committee Chair, Larissa Darcy, called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

The Steering Committee began the meeting by discussing the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update (“2008 Plan”) Report. Referencing a draft handout of a review of Policy Area 1 from the 2008 Plan, Matt Panfil stated that the vision for the report is no longer a single spreadsheet with notations, but rather a lengthier document including an executive summary, in-depth review of each proposed action item, and a spreadsheet summarizing the status of each item. In regards to Policy Area 1 and its focus on maintaining and financially supporting a quality public education system, Matt stated that many of the action items were not associated with a comprehensive plan in the traditional sense that they are not tied to land use and growth management, but focus on the School Department’s academic and programming goals such as test scores and class sizes. Matt introduced Shawn Lambert, Brunswick School Department Assistant Superintendent, to discuss Policy Area 1 of the 2008 Plan and how the School Department does its long range planning.

Shawn stated that in regards to long range planning, the School Department references the 2008 Plan in various policies, but it is not thought of as their guiding document. The School Department’s primary guiding documents is “Brunswick Believes: A Strategic Framework for Our Schools 2016-2021.” The School Department is conducting a search for a new Superintendent. Once hired, it is anticipated that the new Superintendent will have a significant influence on updating the next strategic planning document. In response to the 2008 Plan action items of which Matt requested the School Department’s help in responding, Shawn believes that they will be able to provide the information in a timely manner. Shawn stated that he would ask the School Board at their next meeting for their level of comfort with including questions about the Town’s public schools on the forthcoming Community Survey. Shawn also stated that he anticipates two (2) members of

the School Board, Teresa Gillis and Celina Harrison, will attend future Comprehensive Plan Update meetings.

Chair Darcy asked if the referenced items have been discussed at previous School Board meetings to which Shawn responded that they have discussed the Comprehensive Plan Update generally in regards to participation, but not specific items from the 2008 Plan. Matt Panfil explained the Comprehensive Plan Update to Shawn in more detail, and Chair Darcy provided an estimated project timeline of each of the three (3) phases of the update process. It was agreed that the School Board would make a decision on Community Survey questions as quickly as possible and Shawn would work with staff over the next few weeks to respond to the incomplete action items.

Councilor Watkinson asked if it was realistic for the School Board to make a decision regarding the inclusion of questions on the Community Survey at their next meeting. Shawn responded that the topic could be put on the next meeting's agenda.

Fred Koerber asked if the School Department could provide an idea as to the future of the location of the REAL School. Shawn responded that he did not have an immediate answer, but there will be a conversation amongst the Board regarding the matter.

At the request of Chair Darcy, Matt provided a status update for the 2008 Comprehensive Plan Update Report. Matt stated that he was beginning to format a draft of the report and that he had fallen behind schedule and anticipated the report being completed at the end of December instead of mid-December as initially indicated.

Jacqueline Sartoris asked if the School Board will be reviewing the 2008 Plan Policy Area 1 action items. Shawn responded that the School Board will decide on the issue of the Community Survey questions, but that the School Department administration will be providing the data for the action item status updates. Jacqueline suggested that at the very least, the School Board should have access to the 2008 Plan to familiarize themselves with how it relates to their organization. Jacqueline stated that she wants to make sure that all of the other Town's boards and committees are aware of the ongoing Comprehensive Plan Update process and review the status of the action items from the 2008 Plan. Matt stated that he will be spending time in January attending board and committee meetings to provide an update and inform them of the upcoming events. Chair Darcy added that as the new update is prepared, the boards and committees will have further opportunity to meet with the Steering Committee to provide new objectives and action items and to review action items that should be carried over from the 2008 Plan into the new update. Jacqueline asked that the website and social media information be shared with all of the Town boards and committees.

Catherine Ferdinand asked about staff's plan for the updating of inventories required by the State. Matt stated that for some of the inventories the State data is incomplete and it will be necessary for staff to do further research and analysis. He continued that in some cases, staff will use the State inventories and provide analysis, but not much additional research will be required.

Chair Darcy moved to the next item on the agenda and solicited input from the Steering Committee about the Community Survey. Alison Harris stated that Questions 58 and 59 were duplicate and she provided other edits to the cover letter and survey.

Elizabeth Kohler suggested that the demographic questions be relocated from the beginning of the survey to the end.

Jacqueline asked to make sure it was clear that responses to the demographic questions were optional for respondents. Councilor Watkinson mentioned that there is a statement in the letter regarding skipping questions, but agreed it would be helpful to include a reminder on the survey document. Jacqueline also asked for clarification as to whether or not the survey was intended just for residents or if people who work in Brunswick would also have an opportunity to respond. Matt stated that the mailed paper survey would only go to Brunswick residents because the survey pool included only Brunswick addresses, but anyone, resident or not, would be able to respond to the digital survey. Jacqueline provided some additional edits that would clarify the issue. Alison and Elizabeth recommended that an option for “not applicable” be added to Question 5.

Catherine suggested that Question 48 be relocated to be with the demographic questions. She mentioned that the word “feelings” is used quite often in the survey and suggested that it be replaced with a word such as “opinions.” She suggested that a change be made to Question 49 because “recreational facilities” and “parks and open space” can have quite different meanings. She also recommended that Question 58 be reworded to better frame the question to try to get more information from the respondent. Multiple Steering Committee members agreed that questions pertaining to Brunswick Landing should try to get input that will help the Comprehensive Plan Update make recommendations to better integrate the Landing into the community. It was decided that there would be questions about Brunswick Landing pertaining to respondents’ knowledge of the Landing, how frequently they may visit it, and how they perceive its physical and urban design characteristics. Catherine asked the Steering Committee for their opinions on including questions regarding potential future Town facilities. Matt stated that it may be difficult and that he worried that including potential facilities that have yet to be thoroughly discussed by the Town Council may mislead respondents into thinking that there are concrete plans for potential projects.

Jacqueline suggested a question be added to the survey regarding vehicular traffic. Matt agreed to draft a question pertaining to how traffic has changed since the 2008 Plan. Elizabeth suggested an edit for Question 5 pertaining to working outside the home and asked the purpose of including the question. Matt responded that the question is helpful in identifying commuting patterns that ultimately may be helpful for planning public transportation and how people view their investment in time to be able to live in the Town.

Marcy McGuire suggested that the questions pertaining to bicyclist and pedestrian safety should be edited to ask about the perception of safety separately for the Rural and Growth areas as the type of biking and pedestrian activities varies greatly in each area. Matt stated

that he has already made those changes to the digital survey and he will update the paper survey accordingly.

Elizabeth suggested clarifying what the term “new Mainers” means in Question 54. Matt agreed that a change was necessary as he was informed by someone at the Launch Party that it is viewed by some as a negative term. Several suggestions were made to clarify the intent of the question. Elizabeth also suggested edits to the question pertaining to the American with Disabilities Act as respondents may not be too familiar with the technicalities of the Act, but would be able to respond to their perception of how easy or difficult it is for a person with a physical disability to move about the Town.

Jacqueline suggested that Questions 28 through 34 be edited as it groups trails and other human-centered recreation with habitat preservation when there is a notable difference and some people may feel there is sufficient trails, but not enough habitat preservation. Catherine pointed out that these questions were from the survey conducted in 2008 and one of staff’s goals was to maintain some of the same questions in order to be able to track changes in public opinion over time. Jacqueline suggested that a statement or question could be placed in front of those questions to address her concerns. Matt stated that he was having a hard time coming up with new language on the spot, but he would incorporate any changes if someone could assist in drafting the language. Jacqueline added that Question 48 should also recognize the difference between recreational opportunities and intact natural resources. Matt noted that he would make a change.

Catherine suggested adding “agriculture” or “agriculture and forestry” as an option for Question 49.

Chair Darcy suggested staff evaluate whether or not starting questions on a negative to positive spectrum is a best practice for a survey. Matt noted that he would consult with other staff members regarding any potential negative / positive bias as a result of the sequence of potential responses.

Matt encouraged Steering Committee members to email him if anyone had specific language they had in mind for any of their suggestions.

The Steering Committee proceeded on to discussing upcoming community workshops and events at the Morrell Meeting Room at Curtis Memorial Library in February. Matt stated that he has confirmed the availability of Craig Freshley from Good Group Decisions to facilitate two (2) community workshops in February. Prior to the community workshops, Craig has suggested that he meet with the Steering Committee to discuss their expectations for the workshops. Matt asked the Steering Committee if they would prefer to meet with Craig at their next regularly scheduled meeting or in a separate special meeting of a time, date, and place to be determined. He added that he scheduled two (2) separate workshops, one on a weeknight and the other on a weekend, in order to accommodate residents’ busy schedules. The same material will be covered at each workshop, but residents will have an option as to which workshop they would like to attend. Craig is temporarily holding Saturday, February 8, 2020 for the weekend event. Matt asked the Steering Committee for

feedback on that specific date and for a preferred time and location for February 8 as well as a preferred weeknight date. Matt suggested the Brunswick High School (BHS) cafeteria for one of the meetings based on previous positive input he has received about the quality of the acoustics, but requested input from the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee agreed that they preferred Wednesday, February 5 or Thursday, February 6 for the weeknight meeting and that the BHS cafeteria would be an acceptable location. The other location recommended by the Steering Committee was the Recreation Center at Brunswick Landing for the Saturday, February 8 workshop. It was agreed that the preferred hours for the weeknight were from 6:00 – 9:00 PM and 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM on the weekend. If the Recreation Center is unavailable on Saturday, February 8, backup locations include reusing the BHS cafeteria or St. John's Community Center.

Catherine suggested that the workshops be recorded for TV3.

Fred suggested that staff check to make sure that there are no other conflicting events at BHS near the time of the workshop.

Matt then summarized the Steering Committee's use of the Morrell Meeting Room in February 2020. Unfortunately, the Collaboratory was unavailable, but the Steering Committee will be able to place exhibits on the walls of the meeting room for the month and also host three (3) presentations on the evenings of February 5, 19, and 20 from 6:00 – 7:30 PM. Matt stated that he and Chair Darcy had a chance to briefly discuss potential topics and suggested an overview of Plan Brunswick, climate change, and housing for the three (3) different nights. The thinking behind the suggestions was that based on initial input from the public, climate change and housing are two (2) of their most important priorities.

Elizabeth asked for the overall goal of the presentations. Matt answered that there are multiple ways that these presentations can be organized. One is to identify an expert or interesting speaker to give a presentation followed by time for questions and answers and another option is to have a panel discussion that allows for a back and forth between the panel and guests. Alison suggested that the climate change presentation include Bowdoin College and other municipalities that have already prepared climate action plans. Councilor Watkinson suggested including local business owners that incorporate sustainable business practices. Jacqueline stated her concern that climate change is being lumped in with other environmental protection issues and it is not recognized as also being a land use issue. Focusing on climate change as an energy issue alone ignores the bigger picture that climate change issues are driven by land use decisions so that should be represented in the presentation. Catherine added that the Steering Commission should be cautious in stating there are clear specific priorities already as they may change as the update process continues.

Jacqueline asked for the data as to how many people attended the Launch Party and how many households will be mailed the survey. Matt responded that the survey will be mailed to 1,500 households and Laurel Margerum stated that approximately 500 people participated in the priority voting exhibit at the Launch Party. Chair Darcy stated that

based on the survey response deadline, there should be more public opinion data available prior to the community workshops.

In addition to the presentations, Matt mentioned the possibility of recruiting student volunteers that can be at the library at certain times to explain to people the exhibits on display in the meeting room.

Chair Darcy stated how pleased she was with the turnout and level of participation at the Launch Party on November 5. She asked Laurel to provide an update on the data gathered from the event. Referencing a handout, Laurel summarized that the topic priority “dot voting” results and comments from the idea board revealed that environmental protection issues were first, followed by bicycle and pedestrian issues, growth and character of development, and housing. A more detailed analysis of popular subtopics is included in the document. Laurel also identified the specific topics pertaining to land use issues. Jacqueline asked for the data and analysis to be posted to the website as soon as possible. Matt stated that he hoped to update the website by the end of the week. Several members of the Steering Committee expressed their pleasure at how many residents attended and actively participated in the event.

Chair Darcy opened the meeting for public comment. There was no public comment.

In regards to meeting summaries, Matt stated that moving forward he will include a “Draft 1” in the packet for members to review and provide comments to him and he will then make changes and provide a “Draft 2” document for the Steering Committee to vote. As such, there were no meeting summaries ready for a vote at the meeting.

Under other business, Alison announced that there would be a climate change rally Friday, December 6, at 12:00 PM at the Town Mall.

Councilor Watkinson asked for the next Steering Committee meeting date. Chair Darcy responded the next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, January 7, 2020 at 6:30 PM in the Town Hall Council Chambers.

Chair Darcy adjourned the meeting at 8:45 PM.