

3/9/04 draft

Town of Waldoboro
Land Use Committee Organizational Meeting
March 8, 2004

The organizational meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. by Planning Board chairman John Morris. About 35 people attended.

Board of Selectmen: Steve Cartwright, Gordon Webster

Planning Board: Charles Campbell, Terry Gifford, Edward Karkow, John Morris, JoAnn Myers, Bo Yerxa

Other former Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee members: Bill Blodgett, Dana Dow, Lee Smith

Town officials: Lee Smith, John Black

Waldoboro residents: Elaine Abel, Frank Abel, Charles Begley, Bill Branigan, David Cole, Sue Cole, Alan Eastman, Charles Flint, Donald Frazier, Ronnie Frazier, Norm Golden, Bob Jewett, Elaine Johnston, Ralph Johnston, Kimberly Leary, Peter Leary, James Mahan, George Seaver, Grant Sorterup, Sandy Webster

Robert Faunce, planning consultant

Morris welcomed the group to the organizational meeting of the Land Use Committee. The Selectmen have agreed to re-activate the Committee in response to a citizen petition asking them to appoint a committee to revise the September 2002 draft Land Use Ordinance to make it acceptable to townspeople and present a revised draft ordinance for town vote. Members of the Land Use Committee will be appointed at the March 9 Selectmen's meeting. Six people have indicated interest in serving on the Committee. Others interested in serving should contact Lee Smith or John Black. Monday nights are suggested as the regular meeting night, so as not to conflict with Selectmen's meetings (Tuesday night) and Planning Board meetings (Wednesday night). The Committee will have around 15 members. Those appointed are asked to read the Comprehensive Plan and the September 2002 draft Land Use Ordinance before the next Committee meeting, Monday March 29. Morris said persons serving on the Land Use Committee should have a positive, constructive attitude and a desire to see the land use ordinance passed, rather than seeking to block passage.

One of the Committee's first tasks will be to try to determine reasons for the rejection of the 2002 draft land use ordinance. Was it lack of familiarity with the ordinance, poor communication between the Committee and the public, or objections to specific ordinance provisions; if so, which? The Committee needs to do a much better job of familiarizing residents with the provisions of the ordinance and indicating which provisions are mandated by the State and which are local options. Some of the objections voiced by residents at previous public hearings and at tonight's meeting are about provisions of the 1998 Comprehensive Plan rather than the draft land use ordinances that implement the Comprehensive Plan. Morris said the Land Use Committee's purpose is not to revise the Comprehensive Plan but to revise the ordinances that will implement the Plan. It is possible also to amend the Comprehensive Plan. The previous ordinance revision committee has already recommended certain changes to the Comprehensive Plan to make it consistent with the 2002 draft Land Use Ordinance.

Planning consultant Bob Faunce will assist the Committee. He showed maps of the location of buildings in Waldoboro in 1913, 1939, 1973, and 2001. In the last 28 year the number of buildings outside the downtown area has almost doubled. If the same level of growth continues for the next 28 years, there will be 952 new buildings in Waldoboro. These structures can go anywhere in town according to current ordinances. The purpose of a comprehensive plan is to guide future growth in order to keep down the cost of providing municipal services and preserve a rural atmosphere. Without ordinance provisions to implement the comprehensive plan, unplanned growth ("sprawl") will increase the cost of municipal services and increase the likelihood of conflicts between adjacent land uses. Waldoboro residents should consider how to add 952 new structures over the next 28 years without changing the character of the town. Three-quarters of all new homes go on individual lots and do not require Planning Board review. We cannot rely on a lack of good buildable land to restrict development. Increasing population

growth will lead to development of steep and rocky areas previously considered unsuitable for building.

The 1998 Comprehensive Plan establishes land use districts (rural, residential, village, historic business, industrial, Route 1). The 2002 draft Land Use Ordinance proposed changes in certain land use districts, to separate Route 1 Rural from Route 1 Urban and create a new Historic Village district in addition to the downtown business district. The purpose of land use districts is to avoid conflicts and prevent incompatible land uses. If there are uses that people would rather not have as their neighbor in a residential area, such uses can be prohibited in certain land use districts. The alternative is to allow most land uses anywhere in town but require them to meet specific performance standards, as in Waldoboro's current land use ordinances.

Faunce showed a typical subdivision plan and listed State requirements for local review of subdivisions. Only about 25% of lots in a town are part of a subdivision reviewed by the Planning Board. All commercial development must be reviewed by the Planning Board, including new uses for existing buildings. Site plan review involves such things as street access, parking, storm runoff, landscaping, lighting, paving, traffic safety, hours of operation, and noise.

Faunce noted that neither the existing ordinance nor the proposed draft land use ordinance encourages developers to locate new subdivisions adjacent to developed areas. Without such incentives, developers will tend to locate new development on less expensive land further away from municipal services. This produces sprawl and progressive loss of the rural atmosphere local residents value so highly.

Faunce commented that with the exception of coastal towns, real estate taxes have gone up the most in towns with the most commercial development. A town should look closely at proposed commercial development to ensure that it makes use of existing infrastructure as much as possible. Unplanned, sprawling growth, both residential and commercial, increases the cost of municipal services and requires new roads, more frequent road repairs, more snow plowing, more police and fire protection, and more municipal employees. These increased costs are financed by raising property taxes.

Faunce commented that affordable housing commonly involves developing less expensive land in rural parts of town, thus increasing sprawl. Compact development in village centers increases the cost of the average lot. Morris said the expensive part of affordable housing is the cost of the structure. It is difficult to build for less than \$110 per square foot. The median cost to build a house today is \$154,000, plus \$30,000-50,000 for land and site development. He said wages are rising in the midcoast, and this will help more people to be able to afford houses.

Comments, Feedback

Morris said the Committee needs to develop a way to get feedback from townspeople as well as committee members. All interested citizens are invited to attend committee meetings. Agendas and minutes will be sent to people on request. They are also posted on the Town web site. Copies of the Comprehensive Plan and 2002 draft Land Use Ordinance are available at the Town Office and at the public library.

Terry Gifford suggested that State-mandated requirements should be shown in the draft ordinance text in a different type face, so that people can understand what is required by State law. Morris said this would be very hard to do typographically, but Faunce can explain to the Committee and the public what parts of the ordinance are State requirements. Bo Yerxa agreed that much of what people objected to in the 2002 draft ordinance is either a State mandate or something from the Comprehensive Plan approved in 1998. The existing land use ordinances are inconsistent. He said the draft ordinance revision should show what changes are being made to address inconsistencies from one ordinance to another.

Elaine Abel asked if the Committee plans to survey townspeople to find out what they want and do not want in the ordinance. George Seaver said people voted against the ordinance either because they oppose a specific provision (either because they did not understand it or felt it would affect

their use of their property) or they oppose any ordinance telling them what they can do with their land. Seaver suggested asking people to write short notes identifying areas of particular concern. Ed Karkow endorsed asking people to put their objections in writing. John Morris said people can also talk with the Town Manager to express concerns.

Dana Dow said it was a communication problem that defeated the ordinance. The committee was not able to communicate the benefits of the revised ordinance. People did not understand the revised ordinance, and people vote against what they do not understand. Chuck Flint said many people who work at home thought the revised ordinance would affect home occupations. John Morris recommended much better press coverage of the ordinance content. Elaine Abel suggested holding separate meetings devoted to single issues, such as the Village District or the sign ordinance.

Chuck Begley suggested voting separately on separate sections of the land use ordinance, so that the whole ordinance is not rejected because of opposition to certain parts. Lee Smith said the various ordinances (subdivision, site review, etc.) could be voted on separately. One reason they were combined was to avoid having to repeat definitions in each ordinance. John Morris agreed that there are many good features about having all the ordinances in one document to avoid redundancy.

George Seaver said that when people at a public hearing raise specific concerns about specific language in the ordinance, the Committee should either address the problem or delete the language before town vote. Do not tell people that they should vote to approve the ordinance and problem areas will be fixed by amending the ordinance later.

Norm Golden suggested re-surveying townspeople to see what they want. Lee Smith said the last survey was done in 1995, three years before the Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Two hundred replies were received out of 1600 households.

Elaine Abel asked whether there is a list of people who spoke against the draft ordinance revision at public hearings. She recommended that these people should be contacted personally.

Abel said a group of people gave written objection to having two land use districts on Gross Neck. Part is in the Rural District, the rest in Residential. Morris said those district boundaries are unchanged from the 1998 Comprehensive Plan. George Seaver and Chuck Flint suggested revisiting the Comprehensive Plan. Morris agreed that if land use districts on Gross Neck are an issue, that can be addressed and remedied. The Comprehensive Plan can be revised if people agree this is what they want.

Steve Cartwright said updated land use ordinances will give the town much better protection in case of a proposed land use such as the controversial mine proposed in Warren.

Next Meeting: Monday, March 29, 7:00 p.m.

At the next meeting Faunce will ask people what they want to hear that was not discussed at tonight's meeting. People were asked to make up a list of questions and bring them to the next meeting. Morris thanked everyone for attending and expressed the hope that outstanding issues can be identified and addressed, to arrive at a land use ordinance that works for the Town as a whole.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan S. R. Alexander
Secretary