

approved
Town of Raymond
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE MINUTES
Monday, December 9, 2002

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jim Stephenson, Chairman; Ben Levy; Charlie Turner; Harold Burnham; Greg Foster; Denis Morse; Louise Lester; Charlie Leavitt; Charlotte Lester; Jean Carter; Brad McCurtain; Priscilla Rand; and Chris McClellan

STAFF PRESENT: Rich Rothe, Planner; Amanda L. Simpson, Secretary

1. **Call to Order:** Jim Stephenson called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM
2. **Minutes:** It was noted that there are several sets of minutes outstanding. Approval of minutes was postponed to allow for the guest speaker to begin.
3. **Discussion on Municipal Finance:**

J. Stephenson opened the discussion by explaining that Don Willard, Town Manager was here to discuss municipal finances. He then turned the meeting over to R. Rothe.

R. Rothe gave some background on the chapter. He explained that the background data had been sent out some months ago and at the last meeting the Committee had received the Fiscal section from the 1991 plan with his comments and suggestions.

D. Willard apologized for his absence at the other two meetings, explaining that he was ill for the first scheduled meeting and was mistaken about the day of the week for the last meeting. He thanked the Committee for their patience and for the opportunity to discuss the town's finances. Presently the town is in good financial shape. There is a strong undesignated fund balance at present.

D. Willard continued that, despite the fluctuations in the economy, there has not been any significant drop in town revenues. In fact, new car registrations are up as well as a dramatic increase in property values and sales. The last full revaluation was completed in the mid-80s. It is clear that a revaluation is long overdue. The school budget continues to grow and town services are low compared to other surrounding communities, operating on a shoestring and with low staff support. D. Willard shared his experience in Rockport, where property became more and more valuable, was purchased by outside interests and the result was a loss in rural character, change in demographics, and an increase demand in services as the population grew. Raymond is on the fringe of land consumption, with high growth pressure as communities closer to Portland become saturated. He feels strongly that we should look to the future, invest in resources now, and be prepared for change.

J. Stephenson asked about regional planning. D. Willard responded that, through the LRDC (Lake Region Development Council), the towns of Raymond, Bridgton, Casco,

Harrison, and Naples are evaluating the hiring of a regional planner. Different options for use of the planner would be to have them address regional issues, such as impact fees, growth areas, economic development, natural resource protection, and transportation. The members discussed the aspects of a regional planner.

D. Willard stated that another growth area in Town Hall is increasing staff time for Code Enforcement. The discussion resumed about valuation and taxation, including equalization ratios, distribution of values, and equitable payment. C. Leavitt remarked that much of the difficulty is the long time that the town has waited to do a revaluation. In the future he would hope that the town would have a trigger for an update.

Committee members discussed the public perspectives that as values go up, taxes go up. D. Willard explained that theoretically the opportunity to raise taxes is greater but it is always dependent on the size of the budget and the demand for services. As demographics change, with incomes increasing, the demand for services increases. Typically, after a revaluation you see 1/3 of properties with a tax decrease, 1/3 stay the same, and 1/3 go up. Members expressed their concerns about proper planning to mediate the changes that can and may occur.

J. Stephenson asked that the discussion move on to the specific goals, policies and strategies. R. Rothe directed the committee to the draft. After considerable discussion the goal statement was amended to read: “Provide for a responsible system of municipal revenue collection and expenditures which provides an appropriate level of town services.”

The Committee reviewed the policy statements. [Policy document attached to these minutes.]

#1 R. Rothe went over his comments: a. a Budget/Finance Committee has been formed and he is recommending that the policy be amended to recognize the continued work of that committee.; b. the Budget and Finance Committees have been combined; b. should be removed.; and c. this policy is very unclear, In order to remove property from the tax rolls it would need to be purchased by the town or become exempt under state law. After a great deal of discussion on item d., the Committee agreed to create a new policy #2 to address cooperation and coordination of services and resources within the community and with other communities. Under this new policy there will be three strategies. The first is to address cooperation among town departments, the second to address regional cooperation, and the third to address evaluating any state incentives to regional cooperation.

MOTION: L. Lester moved to adopt the above actions with a second by C. McClellan. **Motion passed unanimously.** [R. Rothe will prepare the amended documents for final consideration by the Committee.]

#2 (old numbering) The Committee reviewed the policy regarding capital planning. D. Willard offered that the town has moved to a five year plan as a ten year

plan is too far out to be realistic. After considerable discussion about the need to facilitate coordination of the town budget with the school budget, the strategy statement a. was amended to be adopted as recommended with the addition to the end as follows: "... including the school department."

#3 (old numbering) The Committee had a lengthy discussion regarding the development and use of reserve funds. D. Willard stated that many communities are moving away from reserve funds for major capital projects, the philosophy being that those who have benefit of the purchases should pay for them, therefore they should be financed.

MOTION: J. Stephenson moved to adopt the following changes to policy #3 and the related strategies: Amend the policy to read: "Evaluate the use of specific reserve funds which would be added to annually to meet future needs." Amend strategy a. to "Establish reserve funds where appropriate for capital equipment, natural resource protection, and town facilities." Amend strategy b. to read: "Create and encourage mechanisms to receive charitable contributions for general or specific use by the town. Motion was seconded by L. Lester. **Motion passed 6-2.**

#4 (old numbering)

MOTION: J. Carter moved to keep item 4 as written, with a second by L. Lester. **Motion passed 7-1.**

B. McCurtain discussed with the committee the recent development of a group of representatives from area town that are working on their comprehensive plans. Ten towns were represented at their first meeting in Bridgton. As a result of the meeting the group identified eleven topics to be considered for regional workshops to encourage cooperation. Topics include regional services, transportation, natural resources, legal advice on growth issues, economic development, grants and funding, rural character, and education.

The next meeting will be Thursday, January 2, 2003 at a location yet to be determined. A workshop on transportation is being planned for either January 8 or 15 at the Naples School.

Based on the date for the regional transportation workshop, the committee agreed to switch the topics for the January 13 meeting to Historic and Archeological Resources and the January 28 meeting to Transportation. Both meetings will be at

MOTION: The Committee adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

NOTE: The January 13 and 28 meetings will be at Jordan-Small Meeting Room