



Your Regional Plan

Municipal Meetings

Cornish, NH
Cornish Town Hall
September 25, 2013

Attending:

Mike Sutherland – Town of Plainfield (PB)
Heidi Jaarsma – Town of Cornish (PB, Treasurer)
Jim Barker – Town of Cornish (CC)
Merilynn Bourne – Town of Cornish (SB)
Bill Gallagher – Town of Cornish (CC)

UVLSRPC Staff:

Pat Crocker
Mike McCrory
Quinn Molloy

The meeting began promptly at 6:00

Mike McCrory gave an introduction of the agenda for the evening and provided an overview of the work that the Commission has completed to date on behalf of the communities in the region to complete the regional plan. Public feedback and research included:

- Online Feedback received through the Regional Forum on the Future
- Analysis completed on all 27 Master Plans within the region
- Public feedback received from 14 communities events around the region
- Independent phone survey results
- Existing conditions and current trends within the region

The Commission then asked for input from the attendees about what was happening within their communities. The following list was compiled:

- ✓ Plainfield has been working to address energy efficiency for Town Facilities and the Elementary School.
- ✓ Cornish is looking to maintain the Town Buildings to improve efficiency, and maintain them as historic and ongoing community assets.
- ✓ New subdivisions and managing infrastructure to and within those new developments is a concern.
- ✓ Road maintenance and costs, particularly with bridges on Town roads, is an issue. The cost of maintaining paved roads is very high and the cost is increasing.
- ✓ Cornish Conservation Commission is considering, after completion of the Natural Resource Inventory, developing a water resources management plan.

- ✓ The towns have restricted budgets to complete the work that they want to do and maintain a reasonable level of service to residents.
 - [Comment during discussion: There is an apparent growing economic disparity among residents where the ‘middle income’ gap is growing bigger with increasing numbers of lower and higher income residents.]
 - [Comment during discussion: Differing resource use ideology between new/old residents – attendees noted that the land and rural character is treated differently by long-term residents and newly arrived residents. This may have an impact on how the land is treated into the future.]
- ✓ Solid Waste Plan – Regional solid waste collection is an important issue with the consideration of the Cornish transfer station. What opportunities are there for a regional materials recovery facility?
- ✓ There is a clear relationship between property taxes and services and infrastructure needs – as taxes increase to maintain the services and infrastructure, lower income residents are driven out of the community.
- ✓ Municipal budgets will need to be managed to include infrastructure maintenance/improvement cuts & school costs.

After a short break the group reconvened and discussed what they valued about the region.

- ✓ Keep Cornish the way it is! “Shangri-La”
- ✓ “Ideal” Preserve School
- ✓ Young Families Access
- ✓ Values to community Life
- ✓ Small town with good people-Project scales need to be realistic
- ✓ School wood pellet eat project was successful, most of town was on board
- ✓ Natural Resources School
- ✓ Plainfield-Changed Suburb
- ✓ Managing Change??
- ✓ Quality Life
- ✓ Raising Families
- ✓ Recreation

The group was asked about what projects and initiatives they felt were important to be represented in the Regional Plan. The group had a long conversation about the regional quality of life and importance of rural areas in the region. The following bullets summarize topics discussed during this portion of the meeting:

- Keeping the status quo in Cornish

Important to maintain the sense of community in Cornish – the undeveloped landscape is a very important, but there is the challenge of experiencing a declining population and school enrollment. What opportunities are there to introduce more families in the town and maintain the rural quality and culture. One significant challenge is maintaining town landmarks and community centers. One example: the loss of the General Store translated to the loss of a village center/meeting place. The cost of living threatens the demographic diversity in the rural towns; wages are not keeping pace w/housing and other costs (including taxes). The rural character of Cornish and Plainfield are necessary in the region (rural/urban interdependency). Can there be a village space for new development with smaller lot sizes and infrastructure?

- Maintaining viable community schools with declining enrollments

The loss of student enrollment threatens the loss of the Elementary School – will there be need to find cooperative agreements among neighboring towns to maintain a school? This may need to start with a brainstorm session among municipal/state/regional officials to decide what to do with

schools. Consolidation of schools could mean loss of local facilities and jobs, particularly administrative staff and faculty.

- Rural economic development – value-added products

There are many opportunities to take local agricultural and forestry products and produce products in niche markets as has been seen in past businesses. There are opportunities to expand upon trade crafts and arts as an economic development engine. Rural commercial development – consistent with the scale of the community – would help support the tax base. Rural broadband is in Cornish and Plainfield and, for the most part, serves the population that needs/wants the service.

- Municipal shared resources

Ongoing inter-municipal agreements will help manage costs including emergency response, infrastructure maintenance, developing local gravel sources to manage material and hauling costs.

