


MEMORANDUM

TO: Amanda Lessard, Planner

CC: Tony Plante, Town Manager
Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC)

From: Ben Smith, AICP, North Star Planning 

RE: LRPC Recommendations – Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Date: September 19, 2018

The LRPC is requesting authorization to proceed with work to implement portions of the Comprehensive Plan Update by undertaking a zoning ordinance update for the Farm and Farm Residential Zoning District, develop an Open Space Plan, and to draft ordinance language for an Open Space Impact Fee. These efforts all focus on growth issues in Rural Windham. The LRPC also seeks Council approval at this time to develop a district plan for South Windham to look at zoning, transportation and infrastructure issues in South Windham, though this would follow work on the Rural Area issues as time allows.

Overview

Following discussion of the trends and implications of growth in the Rural Areas identified in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan at the Town Council meeting on September 18, the LRPC has further refined its recommended work plan for Council consideration.

The LRPC would like to request authorization from the Council to commence work on the following projects. Authorization would mean agreement on the need for this work and to further develop timelines, public participation plans and expected outcomes and deliverables for Council consideration, the authorization to convene public meetings on behalf of the town and ultimately it would mean a reasonable commitment on the Council's part to discuss and implement key recommendations of this work and direct other responsible parties to do the same.

Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map amendments for the Farm and Farm Residential Zoning Districts.

These two zoning districts generally correspond to the Rural Area of Windham identified in the Future Land Use Map. A thorough review of dimensional standards, permitted uses and performance standards in light of development trends is an important step in moving toward the vision described in the Comprehensive Plan.

This will be a difficult and demanding undertaking with a high level of public interest. It will have direct implications on about 65% of Windham's land area and where the vast majority of Windham residents live. Though the scope of work and public participation plan will need to be developed at the start of this process, it is likely a recommended timeline will involve multiple public meetings over a period of 9-12 months before it is ready for Council action.

Open Space Plan for Windham

The purpose of this effort will be to identify the properties and areas of Windham that should be targeted for protection or acquisition. This plan will help the Town with proactive efforts with individual landowners and 3rd party partners in conservation and will assist the Town to take advantage of opportunities when they are presented. Even though this effort will likely include a review of properties that are outside of the identified Rural Areas, most of the focus should be on directing growth away from Rural Windham and to preserve important places with high scenic, historic, environmental or potential recreational value.

The recommended timeline for this major planning effort will involve several public meetings and coordination with outside stakeholders over a period of perhaps 6-9 months.

Recommendations on Impact Fees for Open Space and Schools.

The LRPC would like to look further into what these impact fees would look like, from the a technical standpoint of the ordinance language and the formulas to calculate fees, but also from the standpoint of making judgements on what reasonable needs are and to develop a closer relationship between the Town and the RSU regarding facilities planning and budgeting.

An Open Space impact fee should be relatively simple to develop over a period of 2-3 months, while a School impact fee will require more coordination with the RSU on facilities planning and might take 3-5 months to bring back to the Council.

District plan focusing on land use, transportation and economic development for South Windham.

Finally, this planning effort is included because even though it does not appear to currently be a high Council priority, this effort might reasonably be able to commence this fiscal year depending on progress and actual authorization for the recommended work above.

This effort could be thought of as a 21st Century Plan for South Windham. A district plan for this important Growth Area from the Comprehensive Plan would represent the first focused planning effort for this part of town since the Revitalization Plan for South Windham and Little Falls in 1998. The expected outcomes of this district plan would be specific zoning recommendations along with transportation and other infrastructure improvements to improve the quality of place, increase the number of jobs based in the area and increase and diversify the number of housing options available in South Windham. Other individual ongoing town efforts, like sewer and road improvements, reuse of public structures and properties and setting the stage for the eventual redevelopment of the Keddy Mill site would be wrapped into the integrated planning effort.

This important planning effort would certainly involve multiple public meetings, perhaps over about 9 months.