



WASHINGTON COUNTY
COMMUNITY GUIDED PLANNING and
ZONING PROCESS

Planning Committee Meeting Minutes and
Follow Up "to dos"
5-7 PM May 23, 2016



Torrey Hall Room 228 University of Maine at Machias - Machias, Maine

Attendees:

Judy East, Washington County Council of Governments
John Bryant, American Forest Management
John & Marie Dudley, Town of Alexander
David Bell, Cherryfield Foods, ME Wild Blueberries
Jacob Van De Sande, Maine Coast Heritage Trust
Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager
Sarah Strickland, Strategic Wisdom Partners
John Hough, Edmunds Twp
Samantha Horn Olsen, Land Use Planning Commission
Karen Bolstridge, Land Use Planning Commission
Stacie Beyer, Land Use Planning Commission
Crystal Hitchings, Washington County Council of Governments, Downeast&Acadia Regional Tourism
Heron Weston, Interim Supervisor Washington County UT
Charles Rudelitch, Sunrise County Economic Council
Diane Griffith, Trescott Twp
Al May, Maine CDC/Trescott resident
Tora Johnson, University of Maine GIS Service Center and Laboratory
Susan Hatton, Sunrise County Economic Council
James Martini, Marion Twp
Virginia Wilde, Marion Twp

Regrets:

Heather Almeda, St Croix International Waterway Commission
Dwayne Shaw, Downeast Salmon Federation
Travis Howard, land manager – Wagner Forestry

Meeting Goals: a) familiarize ourselves with the LUPC zoning districts we will use to define prospective zones, and b) refine ranking input suitability analyses and use outputs of the models to draft prospective zones

Introductions, agenda review

Judy provided a short Powerpoint to describe where we are in the planning process, its timeline, and the status of draft chapters. It also described decisions to date on where we will conduct prospective zoning and briefly described the 4 suitability analyses to be reviewed and refined at the meeting. Powerpoint posted on the Planning Committee section of the website.

<http://www.wccog.net/planning-committee.htm>

Existing Zoning Districts presentation – Stacie Beyer

Stacie provided a presentation of the existing zones in the Washington County UT that we are likely to use when conducting prospective zoning. Her slides described the purposes, allowable uses and some dimensional standards, as well as images of what development in each zone commonly looks like. Her presentation and handouts are posted on the Planning Committee website.

Stacie provided a chart describing the size and location factors for a Rural Business Development (D-RB) zone, created during the Community Guided Planning and Zoning process in Aroostook County, and newly adopted by the LUPC. It is reproduced below.

| Factors | Category 1 | Category 2 | Category 3 |
|-----------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| Size | Up to 4,000 sq ft gross floor area; 3 acres site area | Up to 2,500 sq ft gross floor area for commercial activities | Up to 20,000 sq ft gross floor area |
| Distance from a public road | 1 mile | ¼ mile | ½ mile |

Note that the D-RB is an allowable “floating” zone in approximately 11 of the many UTs in Aroostook County. We have already indicated it would be appropriate in all of the UTs and Plantations that are in our 3 tiers of focus for prospective zoning. We would need to define the size and location factors for its use in Washington County.

Decision: Judy will send out a survey to the Planning Committee before the June meeting to get input on how the Rural Business Development zone can be used/adapted for Washington County.

Stacie also described a new/potential Development zone called Recreational Support Business. It does not currently exist but has been under discussion by LUPC staff for awhile. It could provide a zone that allows small commercial activities near recreation assets, eg. sandwich shops, kayak rental, bike shop rental/repair etc. Currently these activities are not allowed except in a Commercial Industrial Development (D-CI) district. D-CI districts are not common near our recreational assets and, if present, would also allow considerably more intense, and not likely appropriate, development near recreation assets. Washington County could create this new prospective zone in our work for use in Washington County and other parts of the LUPC jurisdiction. If we did so we would need to identify where it could be located, the types of allowable businesses/activities, its dimensional characteristics and how it would function as a Development SubDistrict.

Planning Committee discussion on creating a Recreation Support Business prospective zone: John Dudley asked if it would allow the kind of development in Twp 22 (in Hancock County) with

overnight lodging, ATC rental and a restaurant. Stacie said that would more likely fall under the existing Recreation Facility Development zone. John Bryant said it could be an important and useful zone that could provide necessary services near recreation access points. John Hough said he could think of a few locations already where it would make sense in Edmunds and Grand Lake Stream. Diane Griffith suggested that such a use could be allowed in the existing zones by variance or Special Permit. Several noted that a Special Permit was possible but a new Recreational Support Business zone makes an affirmative statement of what is desired rather than creating a hurdle to obtaining such a permit. David Bell asked for more detail on the purpose of a Recreational Support Business zone and whether such things are allowable already under General Management; is its purpose to foster this business development or to exclude incompatible uses? Samantha noted that 68% of Washington County is in General Management (D-GN) and that D-GN allows some recreation lodging but does not allow a non-lodging related business such as a sandwich shop or kayak rental. Samantha noted that in western Maine new zones were created so that businesses could locate near other related businesses and create a critical mass or hub of activity.

Samantha also clarified that the difference between a DRB and D-CI is that D-CI is geographically designated and allows large, intensive uses eg. a pellet mill; whereas D-RB is a “floating” zone that allows much less intense, often home-based businesses in certain UTs and in areas that meet certain conditions (eg. distance from a public road). A landowner still needs a zone change and a permit but there is a presumption that you have met basic thresholds and you do not need to meet adjacency requirements that are far more stringent (and often the grounds for denial of a zone change). LUPC still has review authority. Note that a Recreational Business Support zone can be either a geographically designated zone (like D-CI) and or it could be a “floating” zone, like the D-RB.

Decision: There was general agreement that we should pursue the idea of a Recreational Support Business zone. Judy will send around a survey before the June meeting to gather Planning Committee input on specifics for discussion/refinement at the June meeting.

Review suitability analysis model output; refine weighting/ranking criteria

Tora described the 4 GIS Suitability Analyses:

- Development – proximity to services/infrastructure; low density development soils
- Development – resource dependent development: agriculture forestland, shellfish harvesting
- Conservation - critical habitats, wetlands, conserved lands
- Recreation – cluster analysis: access, recreation assets

The models are decision support tools that produce visual pictures/maps of places where development should or could take place and where it should or could not be located. They do this with 4 types of analysis:

- Proximity to things that support development.
- The presence or absence of factors that support or inhibit development.
- The presence or absence of things where conservation is needed/desired to protect important natural features or ecosystem function (this can sometimes necessitate establishment of buffers between the feature and future development).
- In some cases, weighting of the importance of each factor, a value judgment.

Tora first showed us the results of the survey, completed by the Planning Committee in February, which established the relative importance of the factors on which each model is based. She also showed us the flow charts that demonstrate how the models incorporate the 4 types of analysis above. We then saw the mapped results of the models. These survey results, flow charts, and model outputs will be described in the Contemplation and Consensus chapters.

For the **Development suitability model** Tora described how she had revised some of the distances in the model based on input from the Planning Committee in April.

John Hough asked if she had performed a sensitivity analysis – which determines how much the output changes with small changes to inputs. Tora does this as a customary last step but did not have time to do this before the meeting but will so do before we use the models for decision support in June. Al observed that there was minimal distinction between the influences of different types of roads.

Decisions/still to do – development suitability model: Complete interpretation of soils for low density development suitability for the entire county; review the model for road class and/or jurisdiction and see if any refinements are necessary; finalize output with a sensitivity analysis.

This was the Planning Committee's first view of the **Conservation suitability model**. We discussed things that are missing (marine habitats); things that may be overemphasized (water systems/habitats vs. individual species); the fact that the survey had a limited sample size (12 Planning Committee members and 11 stakeholders); the limitations of ranking in general (forced ranking, inability to see impact of varying ranking choices (would take a day-long retreat to see dynamic change as variables are changed or a month of work to depict using snap shots of outputs); and that we may be asking too much of the model. We concluded that the output is sufficient to initiate the conversations and make adjustments based on the discussion. We also observed that when we use the output within an individual UT we would be able to drill down into the factors that generate the model output and continue to make judgment calls at that time.

Decisions – conservation suitability model: add marine habitats back into model; add the output of Jeremy Gabrielson's work on salt marsh migration associated with sea level rise; run the model to show output in June meeting with existing rankings and with no rankings at all to see if there is much difference.

Tora then showed us the merged output of the Development suitability and Conservation suitability models. The assumption in such a merger is that high conservation value is not suitable for development. Thus the merger subtracts conservation valued from development values to yield a final output. This gives us a picture of those areas that are best suited for development and also those to stay away from in order to protect the highest conservation values.

This was also the Planning Committee's first view of the **Resource Dependent Industries suitability model**. Some data is still missing including the waterfront access information; Judy will get the Island

Institute database of public and private wharves and access points to Tora. David Bell noted that the prime agricultural soils are not necessarily those that support blueberries. Tora is using both soils and land cover data for land in blueberry production with a threshold of greater than 40 acres in blueberry production. We looked at the attribute information and David noted that the soils that support blueberries are mapped where those blueberry lands are located. Tora can run a statistical analysis on which soils are associated with the land in blueberry production and then predict blueberry production lands (whether currently in production for blueberries or not) from that output. Soils ratings for forestland productivity are also available in the NRCS publication (see reference in following paragraph). John Bryant did not feel that running that analysis would add significantly to our understanding of forest products industry issues.

For everyone's reference: The ratings of soils for various uses come from a 1997 publication by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRSC Orono, ME – Soil Survey Data for Growth Management in Washington County, Maine, 1997). The Soil Survey handbook includes many tables that interpret the suitability of different soils for agricultural production, woodland productivity, erodability and low density development¹ (used in the development suitability model).

Decisions – resource dependent industries model: add marine (working waterfront) access points; run statistical analysis on soils that are associated with the blueberry lands greater than 40 acres to generate prediction of land with viable blueberry production potential.

We then saw the output of the **Recreation Suitability Model**. This is entirely a proximity to recreation assets model. Proximity is described in concentric rings of 5 or 10 miles from the feature in question. Heron added the campsite and boat launch data in the upper St Croix. These additions increased the intensity of recreation assets (darker color model output) in Forest City from the earlier model output. Heron removed guide services because their base of operations (often in a nearby service center like Machias) is not indicative of the recreational asset. Sportsfishing was not included because it is prevalent everywhere and boat launches provide the access point to that opportunity. When the individual point data is turned on in the view of model output the map lights up with recreational opportunities – the “fun county”. No changes to the recreation model are anticipated.

Use Map App drawing tool to draft prospective zones. Final demonstration was to see Ben Noeske's app that we will use to draw prospective zones within individual UTs. Currently the application loads each of the 4 sub-regions (Coastal, Western, Lakes, Northern) and the user sees the existing LUPC zones overlaid on a base map showing municipal line divisions, property line, roads and any variety of

¹ To determine suitability for low density development soil potentials are referenced to an individual soil within the county that has the fewest limitations to development (depth to water table, bedrock etc.). This reference soil is given a value of 100 points. Costs that are incurred to overcome limitations to development are developed for all other soils. These costs, as well as costs associated with environmental constraints and long term maintenance, are converted to index points that are subtracted from the reference soil. The result is a comparative evaluation of development costs for the soils in the county. The overall range is large with values between 0 and 100. These numerical ratings are separated into Soil Potential Rating Classes of very low to very high. Thus a soil with a Very High rating has very good potential for development.

base maps (topo, aerial, street view etc.). An edit tool allows the user to open a list of the existing LUPC zones, pick one (like D-CI), and then draw a prospective zone on the map, save it, make notes, and print. Once the suitability models are finalized they can be shown as a layer in the map app tool so we will have the benefit of the output from the merged Development/Conservation, Resource Dependent Industries, and Recreation Proximity models to inform where we place any prospective zones.

Discussion: lines are customarily drawn along property lines, roads, municipal division lines however they may or may not include an entire parcel. Protection zones in particular can be portions of properties.

Final Thoughts: We could invite residents to the June meeting to gain insights from their direct experience. However, everyone agreed that there was a considerable learning curve associated with understanding the model output and then using it to draw prospective zones. We have a lot of momentum now, particularly with such great attendance at the May meeting, to get the drafting done as a committee in June. There will be plenty of opportunity to involve residents and landowners in the 2nd round of public meetings. Many are looking forward to “zooming in” and seeing the information in particular UTs and Plantations and to make use of the tools being created. Those of us doing the work are very appreciative of the committee engagement, participation and thoughtful input.

Next meeting: Tuesday June 21 5-7PM
Room 228 Torrey Hall University of Maine at Machias

Respectfully Submitted
Judy East