



WASHINGTON COUNTY  
COMMUNITY GUIDED PLANNING and  
ZONING PROCESS

Public Outreach Meeting Minutes  
**BIG LAKE / BROOKTON / FOREST CITY /  
LAMBERT LAKE**  
6-8 PM August 29, 2016



**Woodie Wheaton Land Trust Center - Forest City**

**Attendees:**

<b>Community Participants</b> <i>(from sign-in sheet; apologies for misspellings)</i> Mike Thomas Ernie and Bev Grohs Truman Parker Pamela Taylor Georgie Wheaton Allan and Jean Swanson Art Wheaton Doris Wheaton	<b>Convenors/Facilitators</b> Judy East, Washington County Council of Governments Sarah Strickland, Strategic Wisdom Partners Dr. Tora Johnson, University of Maine at Machias GIS Service Center and Laboratory
	<b>Land Use Planning Commission Staff</b> Stacie Beyer, Land Use Planning Commission – Chief Planner, Bangor
	<b>UT Planning Committee Members</b> John & Marie Dudley, Town of Alexander Susan Hatton, Sunrise County Economic Council Betsy Fitzgerald, Washington County Manager Dean Preston, Supervisor, Unorganized Territories

**Meeting Purposes** – from Powerpoint Presentation posted on Community Outreach website page:  
<http://www.wccog.net/community-outreach.htm>:

**For the Planning Committee/LUPC:**

- Understand each community’s vision for future development.

**For Community Participants:**

- Understand what exists & the types of zoning tools available
- To be heard & to participate in a meaningful way

**Introductions – who is in the room from the communities?**

<b>All Attendees</b>	
Forest City: 6 Big Lake: 2 Lambert Lake: 0 Brookton: 0 UT Planning Committee: 5 LUPC Staff: 1 Conveners/Consultants: 3	
<b>Forest City Attendees:</b>	<b>Big Lake Attendees:</b>
Property owners in Forest City: 6 Full time residents in: Forest City 2 Seasonal residents in Forest City: 5 Business owners in Forest City: 0	Property owners in Big Lake: 2 Full time residents in: Big Lake: 2 Business Owners in Big Lake: 2

Everyone introduced themselves and the composition of the group was captured above.

In response to the question of *Why did you come to the meeting this evening*, responses included:

- To hear the presentation and learn what is going on
- To ask questions
- Concern about what will happen with any new regulations that may result from the change from the reorganization from the former LURC to the LUPC
- To let the conveners know that the efforts to reach residents were insufficient, did not reach people in Forest City and Brookton, and are the reason for poor attendance at the meeting

The efforts to reach property owners included 2 direct mailings to all UT property owners in September of 2015 and July of 2016; 6 advertisements in the local newspapers (3 in each of The Quoddy Tides and the Calais Advertiser), hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of public meetings during the summer (rather than the fall as in 2015), the web presence, a full page article in the Bangor Daily News with a map last fall, and regular e-mail notices to the 115 members of the stakeholders e-mail list.

The problems with mailings and outreach not reaching residents encountered may have included:

- the mailing list provided by Maine Revenue Services (that sends the tax bills) was purged of duplicates and appears to have deleted some residents in Forest City
- the mailing was at a non-profit rate and may have received less attention by some postal services and/or patrons
- some residents do not use or have access to e-mail

While the efforts to reach residents remain unsatisfactory to one resident, another expressed appreciation that the meeting was held in Forest City. We concluded the discussion with the possibility of holding another meeting in Forest City if requested/needed by the community and if budget and time allow.

After the meeting Betsy Fitzgerald asked whether a “robo call” approach might help with reaching residents; Judy will look into the cost and range of access to this idea.

### **Presentation and Discussion**

Judy provided a description of the overall project to conduct Community Guided Planning & Zoning in the Washington County Unorganized Territories and Plantations including where we are in the overall process and how to get more information on the web site. See the Powerpoint presentation on the Community Outreach Page (link above).

At several points during the presentation (of meeting purposes, when defining Community Guided Planning and Zoning, and the zoning tools under consideration by the Planning Committee) *the audience expressed a similar sentiment in multiple ways. Namely, that the property owners in Forest City have had and will be given little or no say in decisions that affect the community and region given a history of decision overrides by state and federal authorities and large corporations.* These larger decisions and actions include (please note that some of the details provided below also stem from a follow up conversation Judy had the following morning with the owner of Wheaton’s Lodge, Pat Patterson):

- US Homeland Security agencies locating communication towers in locations opposed by property owners, in contravention of private conservation easements, and not providing any benefit (with respect to connectivity) to the community in the process.
- “the Governor gives the Feds *carte blanche* to do what ever they want”
- Recent insistence by Canadian authorities in Ontario to enforce a 2011 law that defines the international boundary in Spednic and East Grand Lakes such that Maine Guides must call a 800# whenever they cross it, obtain a clearance #, and then provide it to RCMP officers patrolling the lakes; in addition, enforcement of rules restrict access to fishing in certain areas

and can require patrons of the Maine Guides to report to a Canadian Border station a considerable (and at times unsafe) distance away; the net effect of this enforcement is to chill the interest of US patrons in fishing the waters that Maine Guides have provided them access to for 40+ years

- Lack of assistance from Maine's Congressional Delegation, who are the only ones authorized to speak to Canadian authorities, to address these problems
- Allowance by other jurisdictions who share the lakes (organized Maine towns and Canadian municipalities) to activities on the shore and in the water at an intensity of use that is detrimental to water quality and to quality of life in the region that would not be allowed in the Unorganized Territories
- Installation of wind turbines along ridges that are visible and detrimental to the scenic quality of the region contrary to the rules restricting scenic impacts; related to this, promises of financial benefits from the TIF funds that do not materialize
- Preference given in the Maine Legislature and among Maine Commissions to the lobster fishery over the inland fishing economy when deciding upon whether to remove dams and allow fish passage of Alewives

As a result of this history the primary purpose of CGP&Z – *to bring decision making to the local level* - is not trusted at best. At worst, it is perceived as pacifying property owners into thinking they will have a say in their communities while larger and more significant decisions are made without, or in direct opposition to, their input.

One of the tools described in the presentation is the “floating zone” concept now adopted for Rural Business Development in Aroostook County. Audience members uniformly agreed that there was no need for any of the 3 Categories of rural businesses in Forest City or in Big Lake. Several comments were expressed in opposition to the concept including that:

- there is no need for any more development over what is present now
- all 3 categories are too intense
- we like peace and quiet; that is why we live here

In the review of the concept of a floating Recreational Services Business zone comments were less intensely opposed but still negative including that:

- the idea was less distasteful than Rural Business; scale make more sense
- the idea could not be supported due to poor economic conditions (so why bother)
- building encroachment is occurring on the lakes in organized towns – and – the rules are too fierce here now
- it would lead to too many businesses that ruin the area in which they are located (eg as in Lake Tahoe)
- is no different than a variance, merely imposes another layer of government regulation, and we have too many rules now

Sarah redirected the conversation to the Vision Questions but asked them in somewhat different ways than in the Handout, asking first:

***What Do you Value Most about Your Community?***

(From Flip chart and written notes):

- It is God's country
- The peace and serenity
- There are few people on the lake
- Remoteness

***Sarah then asked – What do you want for your community?***

- We resent rules and regulations but also recognize their importance
- Would like to have an attitude from regulators of “how can we help with this?”
- We want services for the taxes we are paying
- We want to be consulted
- Floating zone concept is an overreach of authority
- The Border Patrol personnel and facility need to understand and accommodate the fact that emergency response and medical care for Forest City residents relies on hospital facilities in Canada (McLean Memorial Hospital in Macadam NB is closest)

*What should remain the same for the benefit of future generations?*

- No change
- Our kids love it

*What should change for the benefit of future generations?*

- Just what they have now
- Kids are outside, unplugged, playing, swimming, fishing

*Is there any need for economic development?*

- No; population is too small (year round about a dozen; summertime about 5 times that)
- There are only 4 sporting camps in Forest City – that is all we need and can support
- We need a clearer definition of medical need in an emergency so that the border does not inhibit getting access to care
- In Big Lake we rely in Indian Township for emergency response
- Access to services is our greatest need and concern
- We have Class A waters; this is very important and we are conscious of protecting it; the same rules do not apply in organized towns as we have to follow

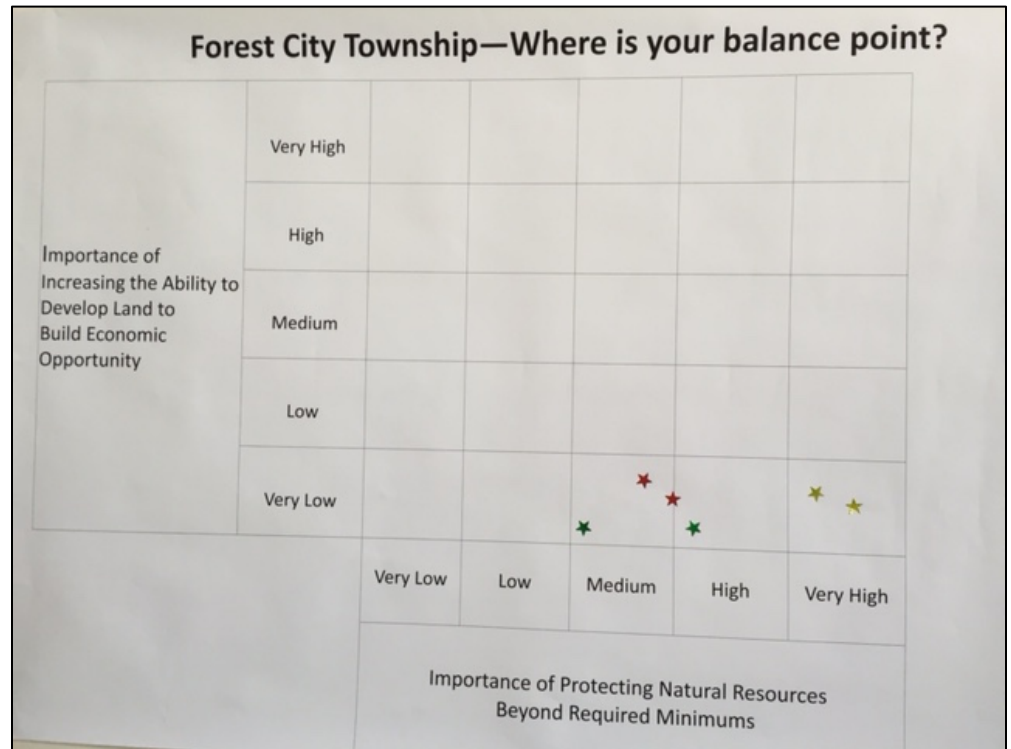
*Sarah asked – what would help sell a property (a lodge is for sale now); what would need to change to help with economic development?*

- In Forest City:
  - A better education system
  - Better health care, especially elder care
  - Better emergency response
  - Internet connectivity to attract visitors allow telecommuting and next generation families
  - Access to the fiber that the Border Facility uses
  - Reliable land lines for telephone (did not work reliably all summer)
  - Maybe subdivision
  - Suggesting subdivision goes “over the edge”; why can’t we have the option to allow a cluster of cabins for family members?
  - You won’t have development unless you have garbage collection; development follows services and infrastructure; we don’t have either; we have high transportation and food costs; places grow when they are near population and infrastructure; Forest City has none of that
  - Need to attract young families (Island Institute has examples of approaches to attract and retain young families)
  - We need the arts, community, an emphasis on education
  - We are not just about natural resources; we need connectivity to the outside world via high speed Internet;
  - We want to allow adding buildings on existing lots like for a family compound
- In Big Lake
  - Reliable lake levels; they were the lowest they have been in years (drought and low snow pack) no fishing,
  - Dam regulation essential for lake property values in many areas of the UT

There were then several question related to specific properties, existing zoning, and allowable uses – Judy provided contact information for Karen Bolstridge – please note this was an error; the LUPC staff person who reviews permits for this region is Marc Russell in East Millinocket 20-746-2244.

Participants did a “walk- around” to view the maps on the wall and to place a star on the matrix that asks where the balance point was in their response to the following 2 questions:

- Along the bottom – indicate the level of importance you place (from very low to very high) on the Importance of Protecting Natural Resources Beyond Required Minimums
- Along the vertical - indicate the level of importance you place (from very low to very high) on the Importance of Increasing the Ability to Develop Land to Build Economic Opportunity



It appears that the “star” placed by participants from Big Lake was added to the matrix for Forest City; the overall sentiments appear to be similar.

Given the near complete lack of interest, enthusiasm and belief in the viability of future development among this group - We did not ask those present to place dots on the map in answer to the next 3 vision questions:

What locations do you think would be best for more:

- Commercial development? (pink dot)
- Residential development? (orange dot)
- Recreational development? (green dot)

Participants were asked if they felt that we/ the met the original purposes of the meeting (to understand existing zoning and future zoning tools; and to be heard in a meaningful way) and they indicated that they did.

Tora Johnson then provided a demonstration of the 4 GIS suitability analysis models that will be used to evaluate the suitability of any development that is proposed in any of the UTs or Plantations. These included:

- Development Suitability Analysis
- Resource Dependent industries suitability analysis
- Recreation suitability analysis
- Conservation suitability analysis

Each were viewed using Forest City and Big Lake as the base map.

Several property specific questions asked (some answered; some referred to LUPC staffer Karen Bolstridge – as noted above should have been Marc Russell 207-746-2244; and measurements were provided.

NOTE – we will be recording a YouTube video of the presentation on how the 4 GIS mapping analyses operate, the assumptions behind the models, the data used in each model, and how the outputs will be used by the Planning Committee to make recommendations on where any development should take place as a result of the community visioning input.

Respectfully Submitted  
Judy East