



WASHINGTON COUNTY  
COMMUNITY GUIDED PLANNING and  
ZONING PROCESS

Planning Committee Meeting Minutes and  
Follow Up "to dos"  
5-7 PM June 21, 2016



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

**Attendees:**

Judy East, Washington County Council of Governments

John & Marie Dudley, Town of Alexander

David Bell, Cherryfield Foods, ME Wild Blueberries

Betsy Fitzgerald, County Manager

Sarah Strickland, Strategic Wisdom Partners

Samantha Horn Olsen, Land Use Planning Commission

Karen Bolstridge, Land Use Planning Commission

Stacie Beyer, Land Use Planning Commission

Heron Weston, Interim Supervisor Washington County UT

Diane Griffith, Trescott Twp

Tora Johnson, University of Maine GIS Service Center and Laboratory

Susan Hatton, Sunrise County Economic Council

James Martini, Marion Twp

Virginia Wilde, Marion Twp

Travis Howard, land manager – Wagner Forestry

**Guest:**

Noel Musson, Musson Group – working with Grand Lake Stream Plantation

**Regrets:**

Heather Almeda, St Croix International Waterway Commission

Dwayne Shaw, Downeast Salmon Federation

John Bryant, American Forest Management

Al May, Maine CDC/Trescott resident

**Meeting Goals:** a) review survey input on "floating" development zones; decide on proceeding with them, and b) draft prospective zones using order of public meetings scheduled for summer and fall

Introductions, agenda review – added public outreach schedule and postcard

All but one of one of 6 public meetings is now scheduled. Diane noticed one correction to the list handed out (switching Edmunds and Trescott in Aug and Sept); that is now fixed on the web site and on the updated list is reproduced here:

- Wednesday July 20<sup>th</sup> — Town Office — James Brite School 15 Water St. Grand Lake Stream — **Grand Lake Stream prospective zoning focus**

- Thursday July 28: Dennysville/Edmonds Snowmobile/ATV Club 24 Milwaukee Rd (just off Rt. 86) Dennysville — **Marion/Cathance prospective zoning focus**
- Monday August 29: Wheaton's Lodge, 22 Grove Road, Forest City — **Forest City, Lambert Lake, Brookton, Big Lake prospective zoning focus**
- Wednesday August 31: Dennysville/Edmonds Snowmobile/ATV Club (see address above) — **Edmunds prospective zoning focus**
- Tuesday September 20: location TBD — Whiting Community Center, Route 1, Whiting — **Trescott prospective zoning focus**
- TBD September — **Baring Plantation prospective zoning focus**

**Planning Committee members are encouraged to attend at least one public meeting, more than one if possible.**

A draft post card providing notice of the public meetings and a link to the web site for more information was circulated. It will be sent to all property owners within a week so it reaches people in early July. Draft language will change given discussion (below) of approach to public meetings that developed as we reviewed tools for preparing prospective zoning. Received suggestions from Sarah and John D.

Judy provided a short Powerpoint to describe the survey input on the NEW Rural Business Districts (Development – Rural Business, Development – Recreational Services Business).

There were 25 respondents (14 stakeholders, 7 Planning Committee; 1 Process Committee, 3 other); all generally favor allowing more rural business options with one expressing disfavor unless it is very minimal in scope. There were 14 comments (5 from small business owners; 8 from those who are not small business owners) providing insights on rural business; they are reproduced below:

- The economy here is so depressed and anything that can help would be great!
- I live in Bancroft in Aroostook county. 8 miles from Danforth. I have a shop that sell yarn / products from our sheep. I also sell gifts made in Maine. There needs to be more communication between businesses and we need to promote one another.
- Is this all small businesses and if so, how small is small? Will this be managed by categories?
- Need more information on the scope of your proposals before I can offer any insights. Looking forward to learning more details.
- Ran a small business and felt most things were allowed. One problem was frost heaves interfered with spring delivery of delicate equipment by truck.
- Access to affordable high-speed internet access is increasingly important to businesses and individuals.
- The county as a whole could use a few more attorneys, accountants, auto repair body shops. Sure there are more currently existing businesses with aging owners getting ready to close up shop, not necessarily in UT, that could be replaced and located in those parts of the UT that are accessible to service center hubs.
- Maintaining inherent unorganized township integrity.
- Rural enterprise in Maine is a heavy lift because of inadequate infrastructure (slow internet, poor roads), lack of supporting services (reliable tradesmen are difficult to find), and a marginal labor pool.
- I would be interested in development programs for Internet based businesses, which is one area without competitive disadvantages for rural folks

- My wife Wesla and I would like to build and operate an RV park/ campground in Big Lake Township.
- Cultivate cottage industries as has been done in Canada - had a very positive experience with that model on Prince Edward Island. Small industries on PEI were assisted in their development through government \$\$ which would not happen on a large scale here in Wash. Cty.
- Internet speed is the primary limiting factor to my business. Symmetrical 10/10, or faster, would make a HUGE difference. The environmental impacts of eg. fiber are minimal since we already have utility poles. Through the air - towers - is more problematic.
- Washington County certainly needs more opportunities for business development. This zoning process is a needed first step but I would also like to see some type of business development training and education/awareness for residents in these UTs who could take advantage of this new opportunity. I also think that there needs to be some balance when considering this zoning of existing cultures and practices. For example at a recent meeting, folks from Grand Lake Stream were upset because one of the newer lodges wanted to offer kayak fishing but the traditional fishing is from the GLS guides and uses the traditional canoe. Traditions and local culture are to be honored but some type of education showing the benefits of some change may also be needed for the community to benefit.

The next 3 questions were structured with some ambiguity and so yielded mixed results. In response to the question over agreement/disagreement with the Planning Committees' choice of the 10 UTs & Plantations in which to allow the rural business sub-district respondents were generally in favor but needed more information to answer.

The next question about agreement/disagreement with 4 categories of business also yielded ambiguous results. Respondents wanted to choose more than one response (but couldn't) and answer options mixed up agreement with what their agreement depended on (location and intensity of use). Note: this question was intended to gather input on the 3 Categories of use already described in the Development – Rural Business district and then it added the Development – Recreational Services Business sub-district – but it pretty much missed the mark (~sigh~).

The next question sought input on where the sub-districts would be allowed within a UT or Plantation. There was general agreement on locating these districts within one mile of a public road, less agreement on extending it beyond one mile to address site issues and (somewhat more tepid agreement) on locating rural business within ½ mile of existing power lines; there was strong agreement on staying away from high value natural resources; and clear agreement on keeping more intensive uses near similarly intensive uses. Comments included:

- Who would maintain the road between the business district and the existing public road? What say would other property owners have in the process of deciding? This isn't at all clear from your choices. Without clarity of these, I strongly disagree with the extension beyond 1 mile.
- It would be preferable to concentrate systems that discharge wastes, increase commercial traffic, and are visually out of place in Washington County, but those communities/residents impacted will bear a greater burden.

The final set of questions sought input on specific standards in rural business districts. Conclusions from highest numbers of respondents included: locating the larger scale commercial category or rural business away from existing residences; locating recreational services businesses close to the resource they support/use; clustering moderate-scale (retail, restaurant, offices) uses close to similar development; and buffering large scale commercials for noise.

**Discussion:** While there was ambiguity in some responses the survey did provide stakeholders with information about the kinds of rural business districts that the Planning Committee is considering and comments (reproduced above) provide us with some useful insights. We did not learn too much that was new; broad conclusions are already known, i.e. that roads and broadband infrastructure are perceived as limiting factors to rural business; that recreation services should be located near recreation assets; that larger scale commercial facilities should be located away from residences, and that it is desirable to cluster services with similar development for moderate-scale business.

**Decision – RE Development – Rural Business:** at public meetings – provide a summary (like Stacy provided at the May meeting – reproduced in tabular format below) and ask those present if they agree in concept with the 3 Categories of use, the distance from a public road criterion for each and the size/scale within each category.

Rural Business Development (D-RB) zone, created during the Community Guided Planning and Zoning process in Aroostook County, an allowable “floating” zone in approximately 11 of the many UTs in Aroostook County; and newly adopted by the LUPC			
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

The Planning Committee will take up the discussion of where a D-RB should be allowed in Washington County after public meeting input; note that we have tentatively agreed that it would be allowed in all 10 of the UTs and Plantations that are in our 3 tiers of focus for prospective zoning. We may choose a sub-set of those 10 for the more intensive Category 3 uses. Other considerations: scenic byway, determine Washington County distance, scale and size limits (does not have to be the same as Aroostook).

**Discussion RE: Development – Recreational Services Business:** This district is wholly new so we do not have the model from another region as a starting point. As with the D-RB sub-district we will seek input at the public meetings and will use the following concepts on which to determine agreement/disagreement (some were suggested in the Powerpoint; some from our discussion):

- Also a “floating” zone and allowed within ¼ mile of recreational assets (1/4 mile is the standard used for “walking distance” in other parts of the LUPC rules)

- Even though a “floating” sub-district, it could also be structured so that once it is used for one (or 2, or 3) permits/businesses in a particular UT/Plantation, then the option for another permit/business is no longer available
- Even though a “floating” sub-district, it could also be tightly bound to an area once one permit/business is allowed
- Planning Committee will use the Recreation GIS model to choose UTs/Plantations where it would apply (this would be good to do at our July meeting)
- Discuss *intensity of footprint*: gross floor area, distance from other uses,
- Discuss *intensity of use*– eg bike/kayak rental & repair but not manufacture; food and drink but not lodging; fuel for vehicles, off-raid, boats (yes, no, if yes, single pump vs. large service station?)
- Discuss *standards*: on-site parking, lighting, noise, provision of sanitary facilities, hours of operation, trucks and deliveries.

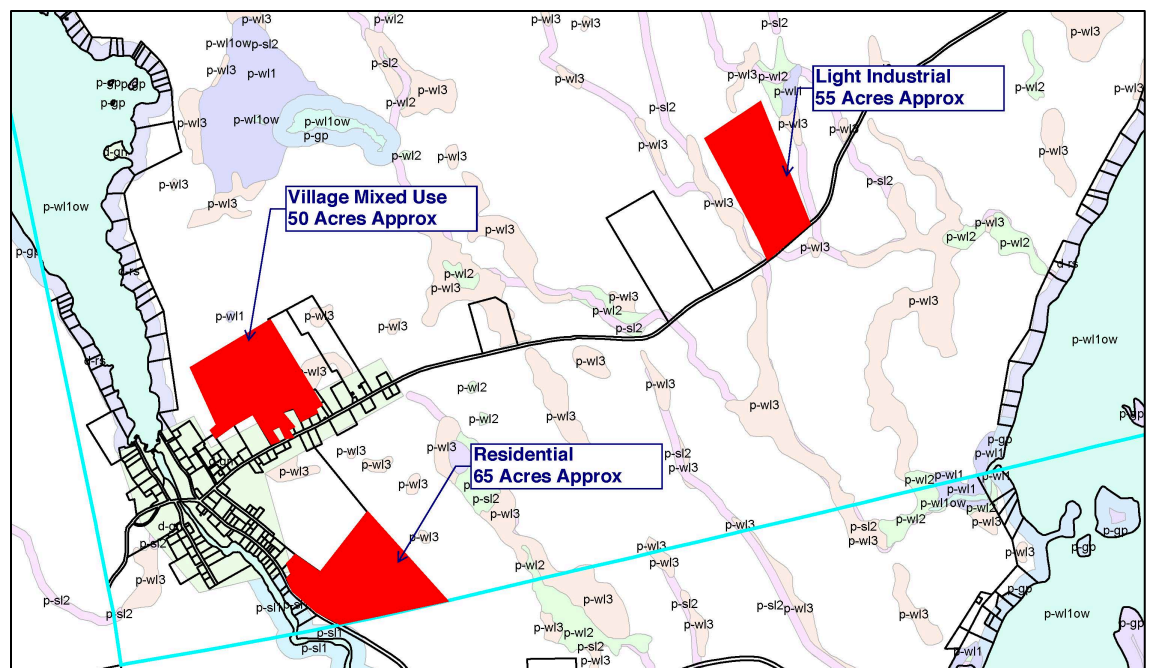
Drafting prospective zones.

We started the prospective zoning conversation in the order of the public meetings that are now scheduled so we are ready for each meeting. That order is:

- Grand Lake Stream
- Marion and Cathance
- Forest City, Lambert Lake, Brookton, Big Lake
- Edmunds
- Trescott
- Baring

Noel Musson, who is working with Grand Lake Stream, joined the Planning Committee meeting and described their project: Grand Lake Stream has received a grant of \$600,000 as part of a New Markets Tax Credit purchase of land to be used for sustainable forestry and conservation. The grant is

associated with 3 parcels of land, also given to Grand Lake Stream, that are the focus of planning for community and economic development. They are depicted in the map at right including size and prospective use:



Tora showed the Planning Committee the most recent iterations of the GIS suitability models (Development, Resource Dependent Industries, Conservation, Recreation) as layers that can be turned on and off underneath a UT/Plantation within each of the 4 sub-regions. We could also see all of the many, many layers of data that feed into the GIS models if/when we wish to see or show specific factors contributing to a “hot spot” for recreation, conservation and so on. Note: we are not yet able to see the maps in ArcGIS online due to the multiple layers of detail. So we were looking at the output from Tora’s computer. We will be able to post draft maps on the web site in PDF format for public viewing while the online capacity is developed.

We displayed the existing zoning and observed that some of the proposed developments in the Grand Lake Stream map above would not be allowed under current zoning. The 65 acres proposed for residential (with senior and affordable housing elements to be refined) is in a General Management zone and would need to change to Development - Residential; the 55 acres proposed for light industrial is also in General Management and would need to change to Development – Commercial Industrial; some of the 50 acres proposed for Mixed Use is in a combination of General Management and General Development. So some could proceed with mixed use development and some would need a zone change. All 4 GIS suitability models indicate that all 3 areas are suitable for the uses proposed.

**Discussion:** Grand Lake Stream is unique among the 10 UTs/Plantations where we will focus in that it has a specific, and large, area where zone changes are currently under serious consideration. The other UTs/Plantations do not have specific proposals that we are aware of yet. We looked at various layers and outputs in Grand Lake Stream and then moved to Marion/Cathance and also to Edmunds/Trescott. The conversation revolved around how to present the work we have done at the public meetings; what types of handouts and printed maps to use; how to customize each meeting to each locale; how to approach what is being drafted/proposed and by whom; and additional information to gather ahead of time. The following notes follow these subject areas.

**How to present the work we have done at the public meetings:**

- Keep description of overall Planning Committee process to a very basic minimum – have information available if asked but keep focus on the specific locale
- Start with what is allowed under current zoning (this will be easiest in GLS; more general in other locales)
- Describe what the changes might be with:
  - Prospective zoning (the 7 zones we would use)
  - Floating zones (the 2 under consideration)
- Ask strategic questions about the community’s vision for its future (Judy and Sarah to work more on these) keep them straightforward, big picture, mini-vision
- More in next section on handouts...

**What types of handouts and printed maps to use:**

- Prepare large poster-format map of individual UT/Plantation under consideration; include current zoning, public facilities, infrastructure and conservation land (Judy & Tora to work out so we have a map with enough information but not too busy)

- Have post-it notes and markers to mark up the map with possibilities
- Have GIS mapping tool running to describe analysis and provide the detail to discuss options
- Have a hand-out or very large print (or both) poster for reference on:
  - existing zones: names, acronym, very brief description of allowable uses (specific to each locale)
  - prospective zones: names, acronym, very brief description of allowable uses (7-8 possible choices)
  - “floating” zones: names, acronym, very brief description of allowable uses
  - describe distinction/difference between zones rooted to one geographic location and those that “float”
- Have some examples (visual) of what prospective zones would look like (Stacie had good slides for this)
- Have some examples (visual) of what the “floating” zones would look like on a map/on the ground

#### **How to customize each meeting to each locale:**

For each – get most recent permit activity from Karen: types, any problems encountered; zone changes needed to achieve various goals

- Grand Lake Stream
  - Assessors have standing under LUPC rules to petition directly to LUPC for zone changes
  - our role is to provide them with our work, data, analysis to aid in whatever they choose to do; (bureaucratic factoid: in fact if we were to recommend the changes we would have to change the currently adopted Process Document)
  - All of the GIS suitability models support the 3 proposed developments
  - We can provide additional information if they wish/choose to do prospective zones elsewhere in Grand Lake Stream
- Cathance/Marion
  - GIS model output indicates considerably more variability in what areas are suitable for development
  - Ask for vision as noted above
  - Will the “floating” zones be sufficient given the lack of any center for commercial or additional development?
  - Are there particular aspirations from some of the large landowners?
- Edmunds
  - Ask if there are specific areas/location where expansion of existing activities is desired
  - Draw a circle on the poster map of areas with existing concentrations of development to focus discussion
  - Include Maritime Activities district in conversation and handouts
- Trescott and others...

Conversation to be continued at July 25<sup>th</sup> Planning Committee meeting after first Public Meeting

#### **How to approach what is being drafted/proposed and by whom**

- In Plantations – provide data, facilitated discussion; any petition for prospective zoning to LUPC comes from them

- In UTs – seek aspirations of community and large landowners
- Provide focus areas (circle on big maps) that the data suggest are suitable for growth/prospective zones
- Describe “floating” zone concept; seek input on scale, intensity, standards
- Recognize that we do not have time or budget to do a third round of public meetings; therefore use results of 6 Public Meetings to draft recommended prospective or “floating” zones to County Commissioners and LUPC
- Be clear that what we draft as a result of the meetings will be open for public comment:
  - when in front of the County Commissioner and
  - again when proposed to the LUPC

**Additional information to gather ahead of time:**

- Lake Management Classes (from Chapter 10 Appendices or in GIS layer) as they affect what prospective zones are allowed (especially relevant to Cathance)
- Get metadata on shellfish layers – is it all habitat or only harvested areas?
- Complete Resource Dependent Industries model – updated layers? Working waterfront

**Final thoughts:**

Prior to GLS public meeting Judy to coordinate with:

- Sarah (process; strategic questions);
- Noel (GLS discussion of goals);
- Tora (further model inputs and meeting maps);
- Stacie (visual examples of development);
- Karen (recent permit history);
- Samantha (Lake Management data to Tora)
- All of the above - questions to elicit input from public on “floating” zone concept

Judy will also share the slides to be used at the GLS meeting with the Planning Committee.

**Next meeting: Monday July 25 5-7PM**

Room **226** (next door to our usual room) Torrey Hall University of Maine at Machias

Respectfully Submitted

Judy East