

Town of Chebeague Planning Board meeting minutes

September 20, 2007 at the Hall

All members present.

Next meeting, Thursday October.18th.

Distributions: Chebeague Island Long Range Plan, a list of individuals who worked on the Chebeague Island Long Range Plan and statement of the goals of the Chebeague Island Long Range Plan.

Prior distributions from Beth, via mail and/or e-mail, of minutes of the 8/23/07 meeting and of a draft of the Administrative Procedures have not yet been fully reviewed by Planning Board members. We agreed to table the matter of voting to accept the minutes and approve, or amend, the Administrative Procedures document.

Beth spoke about comprehensive planning and gave an overview and brief history of the subject, discussed Chebeague's present Comprehensive Plan and presented the State's new guidelines for Comprehensive Plans. Since zoning was upheld as constitutional by the Supreme Court in 1926, comprehensive planning has been undertaken by a growing number of communities spurred on by the prevalence of "sprawl". Laws passed by Vermont and Oregon have become models for other states.

Todd raised the question of whether Comprehensive Plans are mandated by the State of Maine. Beth explained that to legally adopt zoning ordinances, (other than to adopt the state's mandatory Shoreland Zoning) a town has to have a Comprehensive Plan.

The State of Maine's goals for development were mentioned and briefly discussed. Ernie noted that at some times, and in some ways, goals can conflict with other goals.

Everyone will get an invitation from the town to participate in the development of our Comprehensive Plan. Ernie noted difficulties encountered by Islesboro and the time it took them to get through their planning process.

Our attention was directed to page 7 of the current Chebeague Island Long Range Plan where Part C, "The Central Dilemma" discusses the competing objectives of economic growth, preservation of the lifestyle that is unique to the community and the desire to preserve the island's rural character.

While the Chebeague Island Long Range Plan articulates the competing objectives, it lacks a resolution, or a means to resolution of the question of how to balance them. One mechanism for achieving "balance" might be land trusts and these were briefly discussed as an illustration of the difficulties of balancing the competing objectives as follows: land trusts created to preserve rural character leading to reduction in inventory of available land, leading to higher prices on remaining land for development, leading to developments that are less harmonious with the original objective

which was to preserve rural character. Mabel mentioned paper streets as another “mechanism” for influencing future land use and Ernie noted increasing numbers of moorings and how they have forced a change of use in the waters just off the shoreline from fishing to recreational use just by their overwhelming numbers. It was generally agreed that mechanisms for maintaining the balance between competing objectives exist, but determining just what is the right balance is an ongoing question.

In the context of all of this discussion of achieving balance in our future growth there was specific mention of our responsibility to find the right balance for all the islands that are part of the Town of Chebeague, and not just Chebeague Island.

Beth pointed out that many of Chebeague’s most notable successes as a community have involved a high degree of participation by volunteers. The car-crushing-and-removal project and fuel spill remediation projects were noted.

We looked at the Chebeague Island Long Range Plan Goals distributed at the beginning of the meeting. Beth noted that, of the stated goals, we have made the most progress on groundwater protection and affordable housing and some progress on open space preservation largely through action by the land trust.

Goals of the plan that remain to be achieved include wetlands protection (we still need a wetlands map) and preserving the island economy, health welfare and safety.

Beth passed out a Status Report On The Chebeague Comprehensive Plan which articulates a “Vision for Chebeague” and “Threats to Achieving the Vision” and gives a short description of the status of work on each of the Chebeague Island Long Range Plan Goals. We discussed some specific local issues (e.g. clamming, Stone Pier drainage and parking) in terms of how we would pursue those issues if we were operating with a Comprehensive Plan and how we might pursue them without a plan.

The new state regulations which actually went into effect today were reviewed. The State of Maine has offered to share data with us about our community. While there was general skepticism about what the State could tell us about ourselves that we don’t already know, we seemed to agree that we might as well see what they have. Beth pointed out that the tables at the back of the guidelines may help us to think of matters we might otherwise overlook.

Beth advised us that previous planning in Chebeague has at least started to address the State’s questions regarding “Economy”, “Housing”, “Recreation and Open Space”, “Marine Resources” and “Critical Natural Resources”. Less has been done on “Historic and Archeological Resources”, “Agriculture”, “Public Facilities and Services”, “Fiscal Capacity” and “Land Use”.

There is a Comprehensive Planning Manual geared to the collection and use of data. It was developed specifically for use under the old state regulations, and so may, in some ways, be out-of-date. Nevertheless, we have 2 copies and Beth will leave one at the library for our reference.

The Selectmen, working with Ron Grenier, will form the Comprehensive Planning Committee but they are asking for our input on all aspects including the size of the committee and how to ensure that it is representative of the community's interests and make-up.

Beth has drafted a Request For Proposals to use to solicit proposals from consultants to help Chebeague with its Comprehensive Plan; she distributed the RFP and requested comments and suggestions, before she finalizes it.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Adams