

Comprehensive Planning Committee Zoom meeting June 18, 2020

Attending:

Drew Landry, Jeff Levin, Nate Rudy, Maggie Warren, Matt Cease, Julie Horn, Matt Rolnick, Ryan Gordon, Matt Radasch, Lisa Harvey-McPherson, Robyn Wardell, Rosemary Presnar, John Bastey.

Introductions:

Nate Rudy introduced Robyn Wardell, who is working on a masters degree in City & Regional Planning at Cornell University. She is staying with family in Hallowell for the summer while doing an internship in Portland.

Housekeeping:

Public Comment:

Jeff opened the meeting with a request for any public comments.

Maggie Warren, a member of the public and a member of Bike Maine, says there will be forthcoming suggested changes for Water Street relating to bicycle safety. Jim Tasse and Eliza Cress of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine will be meeting with MDOT and participated in a walk through yesterday (June 17th) of downtown organized by Vision Hallowell. Also attending were Maggie Warren, Mayor Walker, Deb Fahy, John Bastey, Ryan Gordon, Karen Tucker and Bill Allen. Bastey sent the Comp Plan Transportation file to the Bicycle Coalition of Maine by email after that meeting to give them a background of what the city is planning. Ryan Gordon, another member of the public, is a year-round bike rider, to and from Greenville St. to work daily, says he uses the railroad bed and the rail trail and sometimes uses Second St. An idea discussed at the walkthrough was to use the railroad bed as the connector for the Kennebec Rail Trail through Hallowell. In the meantime, Second street can be used as a throughway. BCM's Jim Tasse recommended we get those ideas into the Comp Plan.

Nate explains that he and Pat Adams at MDOT talked about a plan using Greenville Street and working on the sidewalk so it can be used better and Second street as well. The idea is to make a bike friendly bike/pedestrian corridor, ideally on Second St.

Julie says we need some bike racks in town too and that needs to be part of the plan as well. Could be a good public art piece. We could make beautiful stops along the way.

Ryan says more connectivity to other places in town, like Stevens Complex, and over the hill is needed. There are pathways behind the Elementary School that can be ways to get across the city. Jeff says leading people up to Second street with good signage will help as well, and that improving Steven Complex access is very important, the sidewalks are terrible. DOT generally won't pay for sidewalks.

Nate explains that Hallowell has had a longstanding discussion with MDOT and especially going out to ward 5. It is an important quality of life issue.

Outreach Since Last Meeting

In terms of outreach, we will know more in a month, but it is time to begin planning on how we will get comments from the general public.

Old Business - Economy Section

The next item is changes in the Economy section. The businesses section has been updated. It will always be shifting, but now it is up to date. Jeff made other updates as well, and it has a good list of employers now.

Julie wants to know where retirees come in and unemployment since we have a large retired group here, (Jeff discusses further minor changes and updates to the plan). She also says it is important to pay attention to the Augusta and Gardiner area as they grow and add entertainment. She was also surprised to see there was a section in the TIF ordinance for arts. That can be a side conference.

Julie says on page 8 that it isn't clear why wages have almost tripled from 2010. Jeff responds the jobs doubled and the wages tripled. Maybe the level of education is a factor.

Rosemary talks about the TIF policy being posted in the Google Docs. She just wanted to post it to explain what a TIF was, there is a simple document there. Deb Fahy was also interested, she added.

Julie asks if businesses can put themselves in more than one classification. Jeff says these are NAIS classifications and you can't be more than one. Several businesses downtown would call themselves as entertainment as well as food.

Julie shares that 1/3 of the state economy is creative economic effort. Can we see what that is for Hallowell? It might be a lot of work, but Hallowell says we are an arts and cultural destination. Julie will send data collected by the Maine Arts Commission on to Jeff.

Lisa supports the arts and culture part and wants to know how much goes to the state and how much stays in Hallowell. While it contributes to our culture, there is an expense to the city to maintain the areas. Jeff says many benefits are indirect and difficult to measure. There is a benefit, but it is hard to quantify.

New Business - Transportation Section

Jeff - Infrastructure is the first issue from which I broke parking and other modes. Really looking at mobility. Biking might be the changes we need to add.

Bastey asks if Age Friendly survey was part of the drafting? Yes, Jeff says. I got it early on and it was helpful especially on sidewalks and accessibility. I knew I would have to update those parts.

Julie asks about emergency traffic management. Jeff will add that idea. There are two arteries out of town, Winthrop St. and 201. Greenville is a pass-through street for 201 because if there is a problem on 201 gets all the traffic. Nate says the emergency management plan has been recently updated.

Lisa wants to add a section about the recent investment in Water Street made by the city of Hallowell and MDOT. Jeff agrees and will get the data from Nate.

Jeff - Hallowell doesn't have a design standard for road acceptance plan, something you might want to add to your approval process. Downtown parking is an issue here, but, there isn't a huge shortage in downtown. The new parking area is probably enough for now. People will never feel there is enough parking.

Ryan says as the PUC lot changes ownership the next owner may not be as free with letting people use the parking lot after hours. The lot behind the PUC on the tracks isn't there anymore but was useful during the Water Street reconstruction. Nate explains DOT would not let that lot stay. Lisa says parking was increased with the lot behind the Liberal Cup. Nate adds there were 22 new spots there and they need to be paved and stripped. He also talks about the plan for a pocket park on the corner of Water and Central that would reduce parking somewhat.

Rosemary says the Central St. parking lot should not just be paved. We should add into that area other things that will help downtown. Hallowell lost tree canopy when we moved the Dummer house. She suggested we take some time and work with Vision Hallowell, write some grants and do it well the first

time. If we just pave it, it becomes a “hot spot” for the city. Drew says there was landscaping in the plan.

Matt Rolnick adds that the Boat Launch needs mention in this section too. The land is owned by the state a, but it has become a well used community asset as park space. Augusta and Gardiner have boat launches for big boats. We might want to make ours for small boats. We need a vision laid out in the comp plan of what we want to boat launch to look like.

Car counts seen as high on some streets are because of the road work project over 2 years shifting how people travelled to avoid the construction. There were always 50 or 60 empty parking places even during the crown work.

Rosemary says on page 9 implies the Rail Trail connects to Front Street, it doesn't currently because only the first half of Front Street is city owned. The rest is privately owned and is not a public way. The Rail Trail connection is via Water Street.

Bastey says the transportation part about the buses is mostly wrong. The bus doesn't go to the Cotton Mill anymore. Nate explains that the bus has changed its whole routing. Maggie says that they say they go to the Cotton Mill 4 times a day now. It has changed and needs to be updated, Jeff says.

Drew says state policy says electric vehicles are the way the state wants to go and there will be growth in that area. We will need to have public charging stations somewhere. Also, if there is an opportunity for more public transport we can make it easier, maybe a couple of runs in the morning.

If we talk about transportation, that will impact development, which is tending to move to the outer areas of Hallowell. The Net Zero house you have to drive to is an irony.

Julie says taking care of sidewalks on Greenville St. is important and is about safety.

Nate says there are two sections to the plan, where we are and where we are headed. If you want to have multimodal transportation put it in the plan. Put in the plan what you want and what you need. The model for public transport has been point to point. Getting rides by ride sharing or Uber seems to work. Routes don't work in the 21st Century. Point to point does. Is it Uber service or sharing or partnering with KVCAP? John says we just don't have the population density to support a bus service.

Rosemary says we need a Ride Bank as something to think about in the future and volunteers might be able run the program. Rosemary points out that there are several recreation areas that are not mentioned in the plan. Vaughan woods is not the only recreational area, and that isn't owned by the city. We need to include the other areas in the planning process.

Nate closes with a discussion of what we want and what we can afford. What makes Hallowell what it is also can be expensive so it's important to keep cost in mind.

Other Items/Adjournment

Last session of Build Maine is Thursday next week.
Brownfield's advisory Committee noon on July 9th.

Notes submitted by John Bastey, with final edits by Deb Fahy.