

Minutes Comprehensive Plan Committee March 25, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm by Kathy Landry, honorary Chair, so termed because the Committee has been formally disbanded by the Select Board and the prior membership reconvened under a new direction.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the honorary Chair.

Roll Call of Members: Al Bozelli, Chad Casey, Susan Goulet, Kathy Landry, Cathy Lowe, Lee Holman, Margaret (Peggy) Matthews, Anthony (Tony) Pirruccello, Ken Violette, Rebecca Elsmann, Thomas Rodrigue.

Absent: Daryl Boness, Bim McNeil.

Pending: member from the Budget Committee.

Dismissed: Bailey Roe Johnson has declined to sit on the Committee; Lianne Bedard was eliminated from the Committee due to a provision in the Administrative Ordinance allowing only town residents to sit on Select Board designated committees.

It was moved by Ken to accept the officers designated from the previous update committee to remain the officers of the reformulated committee. This was approved by a show of hands. An alternate move by Lee to elect new officers intervened prior to that vote and was not seconded.

Secretary's Report: The Minutes of the February 25, 2025 meeting had been emailed to all members. Rebecca corrected that she did not receive a letter from Lianne, recognized as a comment not a correction of the minutes.

The Secretary noted that a discussion from the prior session focused on the possibility that Hartford's next Comprehensive Plan could avoid having any "designated growth zones" due to not having a town center or similar neighborhood community. It was found in the Chapter 2008 Rules enacting the original legislation to develop comprehensive plans when it was under the State Planning Office, that this is only possible if in the prior 10 years it can be demonstrated the municipality has had no significant growth, which would seemingly not apply to Hartford. Now that plans are under DACF, this needs to be clarified as this document is not linked on the DACF website.

The Chair noted that growth zones should not be in watersheds.

The rest of the meeting was used to review the questionnaire used for the 2008 comprehensive plan. Many of the discussions were about how we should craft goals and implementation means to address concerns, which the Secretary noted should be

addressed under review of content areas in actual development of the new plan. She will make a listing of these under the appropriate areas for review when applicable.

Significant comments:

In 2008 the survey had a 20% return rate on mailed surveys. There was a higher rate in 1990 as they were delivered door to door. (Of 420 surveys, 245 reviewed, return rate of 58.2%.)ⁱ

Character of Hartford

Why Hartford? List overall accepted. No comments on ownership. Voter Registration, mentioned should not be an issue since can register at Town Meeting to vote. (Perhaps this question is getting at seasonal residents who are registered to vote elsewhere. Might be important to see how many of our tax payers do not have the voting franchise in town.)ⁱⁱ

High speed internet. Not yet installed along Main St, but FirstLight does have the funding and plans to install for all of Hartford. The plan was discussed as to why the business decided to start and complete the job in the way it has been done as the Town Office got high speed, also on Main St, several years ago, but not the rest of the street.ⁱⁱⁱ

Public property. What is the status of the ball fields? Who is using them? No current community teams, perhaps open the fields to surrounding communities to have inter municipal teams. It takes a lot of effort to organize softball, etc. The back right field is mowed irregularly and is frequently submerged with standing water, so not usable.

New Structures. Discussion of growth management, used to have a growth ordinance. Maybe we don't want to allow for growth, have no growth zones. Our building permit fee is very low compared to surrounding communities. Should allow for tiny homes (our building permit does not prohibit them as there is no minimum square foot requirement for residences as we have "camps" with no plumbing.)^{iv} The fee should take into consideration impact on the community or we should have an impact fee, considering the burden of costs like trash, roads and schools on the community as it grows. Maybe we should have an electrical permit for buildings, but there is no one able to issue one in town.

Residential development. Should we increase minimum lot size to 5 or 10 areas to preserve the rural character? Maybe in certain areas if we choose to have zoning (aside from mandatory shoreland zoning)^v. How to prevent unsightly development, special concern is junk yards, soon to be addressed with an updated junkyard ordinance. Concern expressed over junkyard pollution affecting neighboring wells. We should preserve our forests and farms. Acreage of farms and forest and change since 2000 will be part of our collected data.

Our land is too steep in areas but a developer could buy one of our 300+ acre lots and apply for a subdivision with 3 acre lots. We have changed from economic concerns

being local employment in the 1992 plan to becoming a bedroom community in 2008, and the states general planning has more focus on designating area service centers, that trend may be continuing. Maybe we should have regional planning in some areas. (Read AVCOG regional plans.^{vi})

Can we have facilities for aging? More age 60+ people are moving into town^{vii}. The data we review should give us a better idea how true that may be. Could we support elderly housing or healthcare facility?

Commercial development. Do we even want this? A site plan review ordinance was recommended in the 1992 and 2008 plan, Sumner has one, the Planning Board is now allowed to review any commercial applications with recommendations for the CEO as a transitional control over commercial development until which time the town does have a site plan ordinance. We can use zoning to limit where certain kinds of developments may occur, but there has been resistance to zoning.

Education. Perhaps we should table this until we see what evolves from Buckfield's recent plan to make a school district with just Sumner and Hartford, like previous to the current RSU 10, had been MSAD 39. The new school in Mexico is slated to have 1200 students. There already is an issue locally with portable classrooms.

Waste Management. Towns can have mandatory recycling in clear plastic bags. Some areas have recycling for all types of plastic waste so there is less sorting, more recycled. Could charge per bag for trash but have to publicize that months in advance. Could we have a transfer station again?

Public facilities. School board should not be included as it is an elected position. Maybe the list of future services may change with demographic change, fewer school aged children^{viii}.

Transportation. With increasing elderly population, here is difficulty with address to doctors. Perhaps volunteers for three town area to set up a program, like Community Concepts^{ix}. This should be asked in survey, if in general Hartford should look more into tri-town or regional organization for our services. Buckfield once wanted Hartford to join then for summer roads.

Land use. No comments.

Historical and Cultural. Hartford Historical & Improvement Society-School House no longer exists. The building was given to the town. Perhaps it could be moved closer to the center of town (of the town that does not have a town center?) Cemeteries are part of cultural heritage. No real budget for cemeteries, funded in other ways, except for mowing.

Recreational resources. Add ATV trails. Joke recreational development: zip line from Bear Mountain and a tubing pak. Peggy is reviewing the list of scenic areas with a view to which are publicly available besides just driving on the roads of town.

Town Government. Add personnel constable and maintenance to paid officers. Should we have a town manager? To committees add recreation committee.

Peggy is reviewing the list of historical properties from the 1992 and 2008 Plans with a view to which may be preserved and will do an inventory of other buildings that could be included and she is reviewing the list of scenic areas listed in both plans with a view as to which are publicly available. She has volunteered to work on these two topic areas for the Committee with Lee.

The next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 29, 2025 at the Hartford Town Hall. Lee and Peggy will be absent, will need an alternate to take notes and write minutes.

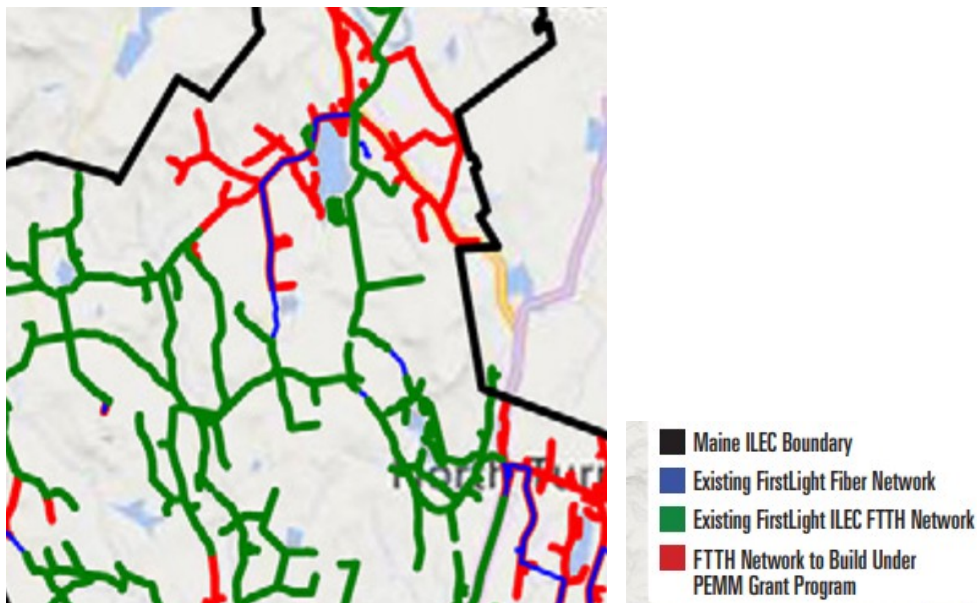
The Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:50 PM.

ⁱ [1990 Community Survey Analysis](#)

ⁱⁱ Secretary comment.

ⁱⁱⁱ FirstLight Fiber Map

<https://firstlight-maine.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FirstLight-ME-network-Oct2024.pdf>



^{iv} Verified as per Scott Mills, CEO, 3/28/25 via email.

^v Secretary comment.

^{vi} [https://www.avcog.org/DocumentCenter/View/4841/AVCOG-Regional-Strategic-Investments---](https://www.avcog.org/DocumentCenter/View/4841/AVCOG-Regional-Strategic-Investments---2022?bidId=)
[http://www.avcog.org/DocumentCenter/View/2792/CEDS-2018-final-with-](http://www.avcog.org/DocumentCenter/View/2792/CEDS-2018-final-with-appendices?bidId)
[appendices?bidId](#)

vii https://drive.google.com/file/d/1wIAKxXCKsSNfNxbIKI6TxjIPaL_F-a_/view Over age 60 34.5%
2022; age 5-18 18.2%, larger than surrounding communities.

viii <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/oxfordcountymaine/PST045223> under age 18 17.5%
Oxford County vs

ix See transportation plans for region at <https://www.avcog.org/DocumentCenter/View/4841/AVCOG-Regional-Strategic-Investments---2022?bidId=>