

Minutes Comprehensive Plan Committee May 2, 2025
Rescheduled from April 29, 2025

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm by Kathy Landry, Chair.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by the Chair.

Members Present: Al Bozelli (late), Chad Casey, Kathy Landry, Margaret (Peggy) Matthews (late), Anthony (Tony) Pirruccello, Ken Violette, Thomas Rodrigue, Daryl Boness, Bim McNeil.

Absent: Susan Goulet, Cathy Lowe, Lee Holman, Rebecca Elsman

Pending: member from the Budget Committee.

Secretary's Report: The Minutes of the March 25, 2025 meeting had been emailed to all members. Due to the Secretary's late arrival, this was reported by Daryl concerning the previous meeting's minutes:

“A motion was made by Ken Violette to accept the minutes with a caveat about a section regarding population growth and growth zone exemption. The motion was seconded and there was discussion about whether some components regarding the requirements about population growth and whether growth zone exemption would be allowed. After that discussion it was determined that the minutes did accurately reflect the discussion at the prior meeting. The motion to accept the minutes was modified to drop the caveat and it passed with two abstentions (from members who had not been at the last meeting).”

Daryl presented his research on the population growth in Hartford in graph form from data collected using US Census records. The growth rate has been less than 2% a year. As the town has no town center and the growth rate is less than 10% over the past decade, Hartford should meet the statutory exemption from the requirement to provide designated growth areas in the comprehensive plan. He acknowledged there is no way to account for error in the population growth estimates but overall there has been no significant growth in contrast to past eras in Hartford.

Peggy clarified the rules that implement the statute state:

07 EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT 105 STATE PLANNING OFFICE Chapter 208:
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW CRITERIA RULE

CC. Minimal residential development: “Minimal residential development” means that residential development in the community is characterized by: (1) Less than five (5) percent population growth over the previous ten (10) years; and (2) Less than fifty (50)

units of residential housing, including apartment, condominium, and seasonal units, constructed over previous ten (10) years.

Taken from 07-105 Chapter 208 page 7. “ In 2012 the State Planning Office was eliminated. However, this Chapter of state law remains, and is currently being administered by the Municipal Planning Assistance Program in the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. “

Peggy reported that from the 2024 Hartford Housing Data Profile provided by AVCOG, the link to which is listed on the Comprehensive Plan Table of Contents, it is stated:

Population Projections from the Maine State Economist
Observed Population 2010 1,184
Observed Population 2020 1,203
Projected Population 2030 1,220

Data Source: ACS 2022 5-YR ESTIMATE Table S0101
Data Source: Maine State Economist

Peggy further discussed that this shows an estimated 1.4% predicted growth. Another element to look at for validation is the natural growth as reported in the Annual Town Reports. Perhaps the number of building permits for new residences may also show a different pattern but it was suggested current residents may be just building new homes and not increasing the population. There has also been the phenomenon of people wanting to escape from urban areas during and after the pandemic that have been buying up properties in Maine and that may have affected Hartford some. Other committee members did not think that had been evident in Hartford.

The letter from Erica Bufkins from AVCOG pertaining to various comprehensive plan elements was reviewed where it was stated provisions in statutes to not have growth zones in a plan but added the caveat:

“ The only piece I question is whether the growth areas will still be recognized by the State (and thus legally in relation to LD2003) if the town chooses to have a vote on the repeal of the plan. While I agree with the implications you’ve mentioned at the town level in relation to ordinances, I’m not sure if repealing the plan would also repeal the growth areas recognized in the previous consistency finding.”

The Secretary will follow up on this issue with Erica Bufkins and the State.

The question was raised if we could allow for a commercial growth zone if we do not have a designated growth zone? It is a possibility, Peggy suggested looking at all the various types of growth zones found in other communities, like in Turner found on that town’s website. Driving down Route 219 various properties have oversized garages to accommodate commercial vehicles. It is in fact happening without any zoning to allow or disallow. In attempts to limit such development that may not fit in with the overall character of the town, the Planning Board requested and was granted permission to

review all building permit applications pertaining to commercial development which is essentially for any non residential buildings excepting one or two dwellings on a lot (according to the recommendations from the State in the Site Plan Review Handbook) to advise the CEO prior to issuing a building permit so that all the necessary particulars may be considered. Both the 1992 and 2008 Comprehensive Plans recommended having a Site Plan Review Ordinance, as in Sumner accessible via their town website, that considers such aspects as parking and traffic impacts, stormwater runoff, lighting, visual screening and potential waste and noise pollution, etc.

It was suggested by Ken to allow home businesses. Peggy pointed out that is already happening and is not prohibited and is even allowed in the Shoreland Zone, the only zoning ordinance the town does have.

Peggy noted another consideration in terms of growth is seasonal residents which were addressed in the 1992 Plan but not in the 2008 Plan. They affect the town but do not have voting rights and make up a significant portion of the tax base.

The decision as to whether to allow growth zones was moved to a vote by Al and seconded by Ken. Aside from one abstention, Bim, there was unanimous approval to not include grow zones in the plan.

The Chair questioned the difference between the survey questionnaire that was worked on at the previous meeting and the document sent with the email containing the March minutes Comprehensive Plan Minimal Analysis and Key Issues. The Secretary explained the survey concerns questions to residents as to how they would like to see their town and the other document is a guide to the plan committee as to what their work is, what they have to review and update in terms of data to prepare a plan to submit to the state. These are the content requirements for a plan to be accepted as meeting state goals. If read and reviewed, it can be clearly seen that the format of the 2008 plan follows these guidelines.

To limit the duration of the meeting, the Chair wanted to look further at the requirement list and solicited members to take on the various topic areas. Peggy reported it was decided at the prior meeting that she and Lee would work on the historical and archeological topic and is working on the scenic areas listed in both plans and due to being away recently, she is not yet ready to present the material.

Daryl wanted to continue researching population and demographics. Chad volunteered to work on water resources. The Chair commended that we don't have any transportation so do not have to look at that area. Peggy noted that roads and related issues are considered under the heading of transportation and also traffic counts at various locations on the town roads are used to guide decisions.

As there were no other volunteers for the other topic areas, it was decided to start a general review of all the topic areas commencing with water resources at the next meeting. All are to review the questions and consider providing appropriate data updates.

The Chair asked if the Committee wanted to meet over the summer. It was discussed that as this was a reschedule of the April meeting, another meeting in May should be held and was scheduled for May 30th at 6 pm, and the June meeting is to be on the 24th at 6 pm.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 7:34 PM.