

Planning Board, Town of Windham, NH

Windham Master Plan Community Visioning Workshop

July 16, 2014 Public Workshop Summary

Held at Searles School and Chapel, Chapel Road, Windham, NH 03087

Workshop Resident Attendees

Alan Carpenter	James Fricchione
Betty Dunn	Joel Desilets
Bill Schroeder	Karl Dubay
Bob Beal	Kathleen DiFruscia
Bob Coole	Kelly Gallagher
Brenda Behling	Ken Eyring
Caren Rifbin	Kristi St. Laurent
Charles McMahan	Lee Maloney
Dan Guttman	Lee Walter
David Demers	Lois Bates
David Howard	Marion Dinsmore
David Oliver	Mark Samsel
Diane Carpenter	Miane Caysende
Donna Markham	Michael Mazalewski
Eileen Mashimo	Mike Oldenburg
Emma Martsulf	Pam Skinner
Ginny Campiola	Paul Gosselin
Grelob Rodfnt	Peter Griffin
Heath Partington	Ralph Valentine
Ross McLeod	Steve Rifbin
Ruth-Ellen Post	Susan Denopoulous
Shaulyn Bailey	Tom Linoam
Shelagh Demers	U. Roche
Sheldon Wolf	Vanessa Nysten
Siri Wilbur	Wayne Morris

Workshop NonResident Attendees

Corinne Holroyd
Barbara O'Brien, Pelham-Windham News

Town Staff

Laura Scott, Community Development Director
Julie Suech, Planning Assistant
Dave Sullivan, Town Administrator
Dana Call, Assist Town Admin/Finance Director
Tom McPherson, Fire Chief
Nicole Bottai, Town Clerk
Dick Gregory, Code Enforcement Administrator
Steve Keach, KNA Associates (Town Engineer)

SNHPC Staff

David Preece, Executive Director
Jack Munn, Chief Planner
Karen Mattor, Senior Planner
Adam Hlasny, Transportation Planner
John Balfe, Intern

Welcome and Introductions

Kristi St. Laurent, Planning Board Chair, welcomed everyone to the workshop and described the Planning Board's Master Plan and the update to the plan. She introduced David Preece, Executive Director of the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC), which is assisting the Planning Board with the Master Plan update. David thanked everyone for attending and explained how important the visioning process and the master plan are for the community.

Jack Munn, Chief Planner with SNHPC, provided a brief overview of the master plan update project and schedule, and reviewed the agenda and purpose of tonight's workshop. He indicated that participants will be able to join small group discussions centered around six topic areas and that two discussion rounds would be held with a wrap up and report out at the end. The six topic areas include:

- Natural and Cultural Resources
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Housing
- Community Facilities and Utilities
- Recreation

Jack also noted there is a facilitator and recorder for each of the six discussion topic groups and each facilitator will ask two questions during each of the two discussion rounds:

1. What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?
2. What can be improved upon now and in the future?

Topic Group Discussions as Recorded on Flip Charts

Natural and Cultural Resources

Discussion Round 1

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Offers something for every age
- Using conservation funds strategically for purchases
- Purchased Campbell Farm
- Use of lakes, rail trails, Griffin Park – great locations
- Many historical facilities – maintenance
- Wetland and surface water protection
- Lake protection – assets to town/access to lakes
- Ordinances in town to protect water
- General atmosphere/general respect of citizens
- “Small town” feel – charming
- Maintenance of Searles School/Chapel

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Not done enough to preserve historic homes – have chosen to tear down too quickly (Range Road) and other locations
- Other towns have done a better to preserve the community
- Options for developers are too quick
- Take an old home and utilize it for a restaurant or shop
- Education about protection – awareness – should be part of the solution
- Increase funding for cultural resources – for example replacing windows
- Communications with Pond Associations – town can take a role – feels separate. Better coordination needed
- Strengthen regulations for cultural resources (preserving)
- Work together – stand by mission
- Can't get to Griffin Park/Town Beach on foot/bike etc., only by car (limited access)
- Developers pay for sidewalks when doing projects
- No incentives for encouraging historic properties
- Developers saving money instead of restoring historic properties
- A lot of “red tape” for historic buildings
- Reusable use: example Bed & Breakfast for weddings at Searles
- Too many houses being torn down because of convenience
- Developers are too quick to act before any decisions are made
- Planning Board should provide incentives – saving a house instead of tearing it down
- Discussion between Federal/State regulations
- No town water – septic system “too expensive” for builder
- Need expertise/knowledge for historic buildings
- Town needs to be more proactive for these incentives
- Continue Conservation Commission and preservation

Discussion Round 2

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Lakes – preserve quality
- Promote Windham as a destination (character of town – cultural quality)
- Visual “clues” to our past – historical buildings – Castle, Searles School
- Proximity Robert Frost Farm – beautiful forests, ponds, sties, rail trail
- Members of families that founded the town – ties to the past
- Different cultural gatherings to keep history alive
- Commercial development – encourage developers to have their own “master plan” so community is in the know
- Restoring more buildings/historical mostly
- Ordinance Cobbetts Pond and Canobie Watershed
- ZBA/PB other committees on the same page
- Set of ordinances/incentives encouraging historic structures
- What can be improved upon now and in the future?

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Rail Trail – utilize more frequently – example of points of reference – Caboose
- Community development approach land owners – be proactive about natural resources and preserving land and property
- Windham is distinct and charming
- Incorporate historic/regular houses and reuse as commercial/small business usage
- Prevent deliberate neglect of properties/land etc.
- Sidewalks in Windham to walk within town to other locations
- Don’t want to lose history – senior housing that is affordable – utilize and reuse other buildings
- Keeping Windham the same – no commercial/limited development
- Appreciation of conservation and the historic factors in town
- Doesn’t envision retail environment in Windham
- Use any and all space in buildings
- Limited town water and sewer system
- Prepare areas that are targeted for development
- Utilize buildings for small restaurants, etc.
- Communication with and education for the community

Economic Development

Discussion Round 1

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Regional outreach in attracting companies – businesses; high tech
- Learn from surrounding communities – successful stories/best practices/lessons learned
- How to balance maintaining town’s quality of life with economic development
- Need for protecting property values

- Windham needs destination businesses that promote quality of life – family life
- Identify the areas to best locate businesses with little impact on town infrastructure and municipal services
- Businesses that retain property values should be target/focus
- Quality of life impact
- Development types will vary depending on locations in town
- Water and sewer is needed for certain types of development – cost and needs
- Do not want box stores and large retail
- How do we get local residents to support/shop at local businesses
- Where are we – status before deciding changes – zoning
- Look at current zoning
- International student attraction – can pay tuition – help with local business development
- Locate along major roadways
- Be business friendly – town should make business to want to be here
- Relax regulations

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Town helps subsidize failing businesses?
- Create plan with goals and measurements
- Regulations have protected town and help to set us apart
- Who knows what to change unless talk about them?
- How to follow-up when we hear feedback?
- Step by step regulations/rules for local businesses/develop that want to come
- Businesses need to know vision
- What don't we want?
- Want more educational facilities – high paying jobs

Discussion Round 2

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- What are the needs in town and then target – town to initiate
- Cluster/target industry analysis
- Change/adjust zoning
- Too many non-residential zones – too confusing – simplicity needed
- Analysis of what is good for each zone
- Create performance incentives in overlay zones to meet purpose and have high quality economic development
- Public water and sewer
- Form based zoning – flexibility
- Bedford – town center – yes; develop water/sewer – no
- New England feel – Bedford town center – walking retail district; create community economic development scale

- Live, Work, and Play
- Interconnectivity between parcels will build economic development
- Main Street, Andover, MA – Market Street, Lynnfield, MA
- Gather data on businesses that we are in a position to attract before making change
- Focus on economic development that leverages cultural and historic resources
- We have: rail trail, Griffin Park, Johnson Farm, Apple Acres

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Sense of place and regional focus to bring people
- Destination business/area
- Tying local businesses/attractions together
- Sense of community/New England charm/unique – bring people in to create buzz
- Connect points of interest in town/region
- Create bike lanes
- Sustainability of community by existing residents – we live here
- Reduce regulations on local businesses
- Vision of town to attract business – with regulations that match
- Take action on vision
- Attract younger people – what are we doing?
- No night life – businesses with young employees do not locate here
- More businesses along Rt. 111
- More business friendly zoning regulations
- Vision is not provided in zoning
- Walkability
- Griffin Park – need to drive there, no sidewalks
- Cultural capital/events attraction to town
- Incubator space
- Micro pod housing/work/studio space

Transportation

Discussion Round 1

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Park and Ride/Van-share
- Good network of roads – hierarchy
- Facilitate Rail-Trail expansion – commuting to Derry
- High level maintenance on roads
- Lowell Rd. shoulder – good for bikes
- London Bridge Rd. Connector

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Manchester Airport Shuttle

- Park & Ride at Exit 3
- Addition of sidewalk/shoulder into town center
- Roundabout on Rte. 111
- Roadside tree/shrub maintenance – improve vision
- Continue to maintain roads
- More rumble strips/road striping
- Widen roads without sidewalks
- Add Bike Lanes

Discussion Round 2

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Median vegetation is well-maintained
- Snow removal is good
- High standards for road construction
- Good maintenance w/no increase taxes
- Shoulders on Rte. 111 are good
- Rail-Trail for commuters

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Eco-friendly sand in winters
- Early season street sweeping
- More modes of transportation – be more competitive with neighbor towns – bus, rail taxi
- Timing of lights on Rte. 111 – especially at N. Lowell Rd.
- State Greenway Project/111 corridor on 10-year plan
- Improve safety at Depot and Ralston Rd. – lower speed/Cobbett’s Pond Rd.
- Improve old railroad beds
- Widen shoulders on Range Rd. – near Griffin Park to Exit 3
- Better maintain and advertise for trails, bike paths, opportunities – public announcement/publication – trail maps

Housing

Discussion Round 1

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Prices going up/recovering (more equity)
- Less inventory = higher prices
- Negative = too many people in town, not enough schools
- Really big expensive houses = better taxing
- Good quality homes
- Range Rd. – appreciate historic homes - improves images with beautiful, large lots
- Neutral population cap and what is it?
- Safe, small town charm

- Closed drainage/underground utilities
- Some the rebuilds (houses) on ponds
- Sceptics around the ponds

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- 2-acre building
- Fewer lots w/big lawns, yards
- Zoning changes for lot size
- Lawns are unsustainable
- Should be other types of housing – i.e. 1 bedroom (vibrant villages, sophisticated homes without age restrictions)
- More diversified housing
- No areas for young professionals
- Transitional homes both ways (young and old)
- How we make this happen and still have it be Special
- School crowding due to zoning
- Mixed use housing
- Live, work, play Windham
- Tax credits for historical home preservation/renovations

Discussion Round 2

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Large lots – Range Rd.
- Control water source/well
- Individual septic systems
- No public water/sewer
- No large apartment buildings
- Beautiful communities in town
- Single Family housing
- Downtown area/village center
- This process is good

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Reverse a lot of multi-family housing (middle of town) – 2x12 units 24 units in center of town?
- Zoning areas should have more diverse areas, mixed-use areas
- Don't care for the colors... they are too restricted
- Should be fewer restrictions on parking for commercial zoning
- No restrictions on how commercial parking should be set
- Too many regulations on housing properties
- Limit impervious surfaces (in favor)
- More of an education piece on (e.g. restrictive) covenants

- Should be fewer restrictions on accessory apartments
- Feedback solicited on permitting process/survey
- Soil based lot sizing
- Explore commercial zoning – increase
- Develop the commercial land we have

Community Facilities and Utilities

Discussion Round 1

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Rail Trail
- Missing Town Hall on survey
- Keep buildings up
- Paid off – keep taxes flat
- New England style/architecture
- Griffin Park – Asset
- Pre-planning financing – no bonds for years (not including schools)
- Managing growth – community facilities (population growth 25% - tax rate stable)
- Strong events at Town Hall – more space
- Positive – no municipal water and sewer – helps maintain growth and keeps growth down
- High school is great for community events

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Rt. 111 Greenway – lack of maintenance of green space – did not happen
- Too many traffic lights
- No Community Center – Fellows Rd.
- Center of town – 58 acres
- More recreation – falls on schools – stage, basketball, events
- Approval of high density housing in center of town – negatively affect future
- Poor electric service – long power outages
- Restrictive zoning that prevents real and effective community development
- Lack of green space in town center – town hall
- Lack of connectivity
- Lack of sidewalks
- Maintenance of school buildings

Discussion Round 2

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Employ good people
- Safety (police & fire)
- Historical sites
- High School

- Library
- Museum (historical)
- Griffin Park – sports complex
- Rail Trail
- Website

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Town relies on volunteer organizations
- Not enough meeting spaces
- Lack of community center (physical space) – high school is not enough
- Planning Department building in poor shape
- Poor maintenance of existing buildings – not enough funds allocated
- Schools other than high school (physical plant)
- Monopoly on cable
- More community presence -- fire & police interaction
- Supporting things created thru volunteer network (i.e. rail trail)
- Town assets recognized by tax rate – larger budget for maintenance/upkeep of facilities
- Unsustainable formula for population growth
- Transfer station hours are appalling – should be open on Mondays
- Longer hours would increase recycling
- Purchase Union Hall
- Campbell Farm – deal with farmhouse – plan for utilization – master plan
- Moeckel Pond Dam – needs broader community support – public access, restoring groundwater, preservation
- Seales School/Chapel needs broader community support
- Funding to maintain buildings should not be optional
- Maintain community assets – greater part of fixed operational budget

Recreation

Discussion Round 1

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Windham Rail Trail
- Griffin Park
- Recreation Director

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Add parking for Rail Trail @ Rt. 28
- Address parking issues along Ralston Rd.
- Additional spaces for handicap access
- Add amphitheater @ Griffin Park
- Practice golf range – 30 ft. x 60 ft. space between tennis court and ball field

- Additional ¼ mile track in area of skate board area
- Try to accommodate as much of higher ranking (priority) survey questions
- Chip/putt golf area
- Better market town forest area
- Increase awareness on rules of hunting in certain areas
- Evaluate future use of the I-93 n/b lane
- Enhance outreach for tennis lessons and other recreation programs
- Better use of social media outlets
- Enhance partnerships with vendors for recreational programs
- Paddle boarding program
- Enhance enforcement of swimming rules on Canobie Lake
- Life ring at Griffin Park and Pond

Discussion Round 2

Question 1: What is the Town of Windham doing right in this area?

- Recreation coordination
- Being inclusive with various programs
- Daddy/daughter dance
- Having sufficient funds
- Maintaining town fields
- Taking advantage of Windham High School for various town events
- Rail Trail
- Better (e.g. improved) coordination
- Community gardens
- Lights at Griffin Park both for fields and parking

Question 2: What can be improved upon now and in the future?

- Enhance PSAs on what town offers for various recreation activities
- Enhancement of bike path
- Expand outreach programs to residents
- Cost/benefit analysis for turf field
- Outdoor craft/art shows
- Ultimate Frisbee
- Track/field
- Joint efforts between town/school to enhance sports field
- Badminton
- Enhance First Aid equipment @ fields
- Update recreation master plan
- Enhance emergency notification system @ fields
- Enhance local community television to watch more sports activities
- Add additional field off Nashua Rd. and expand parking
- Centralize recreation

- Summer theater
- Look at Campbell Farm for various activities
- Review our seasonal activities that the town currently offers
- Establish “Swap Shop”
- Grant opportunities
- Enhance open communication with State of NH

Next Steps

Kristi St. Laurent, Planning Board Chair, and David Preece, SNHPC, thanked everyone for their participation at the visioning workshop. Mr. Munn reminded everyone of the master plan schedule and thanked town staff and the group facilitators and recorders for their work tonight. He also noted that a copy of the visioning workshop summary would be prepared and posted on the town website. In addition, the workshop summary, a summary report of the community master plan survey, and draft vision and goals will be presented to the Windham Planning Board at their **July 30, 2014** meeting for continued public review and discussion.

The July 16, 2014 visioning workshop adjourned at 9:00 pm.