

Craftsbury Town Planning Commission
Meeting Notes from February 19th 2015

Members Present: Farley Brown, Chair, Tim Patterson (Acting Secretary), Annie Rowell, Emily Maclure, Tony Jones, Dave Rowell,

Absent: Sharon Moffat (sunny Arizona), Gordy Waterhouse,

Guests Present: Four Sterling College students, and Allison Low

Farley Brown called the meeting to order at 7:04 pm in the Craftsbury Town Hall. Farley went over the agenda for the meeting, and the Commission approved the minutes from the meeting of January 18th, 2015.

The guests introduced themselves and shared the aspects of the Town Plan that interest them – Carly, interested in forestry, Sarah, interested in agriculture and Land Trusts, David, interested in affordable housing, and Lance, interested in recreation.

Commission members checked in about the Town Plan sections discussed at the last meeting – Land Use (Farley will contact Dave Rowell after the meeting), Recreation, and Agriculture.

Emily spoke to the **Cultural Aspect** section of the Plan. 2011 plan, which noted the legacy of Craftsbury Academy, and the important role it plays in the cultural fabric, and emphasized the large number of talented local musicians. Demographics may be included in this section – with more nuance than just the population number. Allison emphasized the importance of including demographic information, which can be found in the American Community Survey 5-year averages.

Allison also mentioned Census on the Map, which she can e-mail to the Commission, and is also accessible via the NVDA website, a tool that tracks where people live relative to where they work. Farley noted that historically, in the 19th century, Craftsbury was a thriving town, with more local jobs and a larger population. Fewer local jobs these days mean more people have to travel for work, changing the cultural dynamic of the community. There is not much in the 2011 plan about history, and historical trends, and adding more history can inform various sections of the plan.

Emily went over the emphasis on the 5 libraries in town in the cultural section of the 2011 plan, and asked for updates about how the libraries are doing to include in the new plan. Much is going on at the Craftsbury Public Library, and key statistics about all the libraries should be included in the updated plan.

Summer camps and activities are described in the 2011 plan, including Hosmer Point (actually in Albany) and Camp Hazon (defunct). Churches were mentioned in

the 2011, but no other spiritual organizations – Emily suggested listing the closest temples, mosques, Quaker meetings, and other places of worships for various denominations and faiths. The Commission agreed that this is a good idea.

Clubs are listed, including the Ladies Union, but there are probably many more than are listed, including book clubs. Allison noted that book clubs are generally about the wine. Dave mentioned the snowmobile club. Tim noted that many of the Recreation aspects of the plan are also relevant for cultural aspects.

The 2011 plan talks about Stardust Books, and The Common Place, but these are no longer in place. The Art House, currently on the Common, will be moving to the Village.

Other organizations – Chamber Players, including Sunday concerts on the Common, and the Music Box, a local concert venue. Other events – Antiques & Uniques, Community Care Center programs, Craftsbury Farmer’s Market, Old Home Day. Annie made sure Emily wouldn’t forget the 2nd Annual Craftsbury Block Party.

Childcare centers and daycare availability are mentioned in the 2011 plan, and will need to be updated. Allison will point Emily to a useful directory of Vermont daycare facilities.

Accomplishments in the Cultural Aspects section need to be updated to reflect recent additions:

Sterling lecture series
Village Block Party
Common Days
Anti-hunger initiatives
Weekly suppers at the stores
Excellent collaboration between businesses

Brainstorming more of these accomplishments will be good for the survey.

Additional things that could be addressed --- availability of support groups, grieving groups? Role of Sterling in bringing diversity to the community? Language classes?

Tim spoke of the need for explicit language about how Craftsbury welcomes people of all backgrounds – cultural, racial/ethnic, LGBTQ, etc...and the Commission discussed the need to recognize and celebrate diversity, including the presence of migrant farmworkers, etc.

Ongoing questions - - - any demographics whose needs are not being met? Study the possibility of a performance space for the community? Gym access?

Dave briefed the Commission on the **Economy** section of the Plan. The Economy sub-committee met. The 2011 plan lists many local businesses, most of which are thriving. Some have closed, and some new businesses (tattoo parlor!) have opened. The Craftsbury Outdoor Center plays an important role in keeping Craftsbury a 4-season destination. The Academy is doing well, and the tax rate is falling, and Sterling College is strong, and on the rise. Overall, the economic picture is positive, with a good buzz about town.

The agricultural sector of the town economy is changing, from dairy to more diversified farms. There are just as many cows as ever, but on fewer farms. Farm to Plate and the regional food system plan can continue to inform the local agricultural economy.

Since the downturn of 2008, both Inns have closed. The number of bed and breakfasts has fallen, but the sharing economy is growing, with services like AirBnb. This is a drastic change in the last 5 years, and the new plan is a good place to include language about how the town wants to approach the sharing economy.

In 2004, two-thirds of residents felt there were not adequate job opportunities in town. This is likely to have changed for the better, and would be an important survey question – it could also include information from Census on the Map and the LOADS (sp) survey that Allison referenced. Fascinating.

It is very important to address broadband and cell service. Fairpoint is a disaster, and cell service is very spotty at best. Microcell towers work, and information could be provided on the website.

How many residents are self-employed? How many are employed by Craftsbury organizations and businesses?

Allison suggested including a town vision for economic expansion. What goes where? What is appropriate?

Emily noted that community events that drum up business throughout town are important --- opportunity to emphasize the interconnectedness among other towns and area businesses. There may be opportunity to do a study of the impact of shopping locally. Costco run to save money? Or local stores? A value-based survey that asks what informs purchasing patterns could be useful – Allison can share some general approaches.

The Commission paused to gossip about Albany, and to appreciate how lucky we are to be in Craftsbury.

Allison spoke about approaches to data collection – what are the most burning questions? How to plan a Public Survey? David, Sterling student, spoke about his experience with surveys – asking for conversations, not answers. Some questions

might try to pin down consumer patterns, and issues of diversity. In terms of data collection, we could use ACS data, but for more accurate data we could do our own survey – ask Pete, ask Sterling, ask the Center, etc.

Housing – Tim Emily and Dave

Tim led the discussion on housing, and so Emily took notes:

2 sections of town plan-

1. demographics, median home price- use the affordable housing index. 812.00 was the amount listed for threshold. Provide info such as energy efficiency, rebates Facts and figure

2. type of housing we want to see in Craftsbury- home share, perma culture, eco village

informal housing- ask outdoor center for listings- is this the type of setting we want to encourage, tiny housing, yurts

elder care facilities- number of seniors that are living alone- what does that mean for our town- we have the cccc's,
-meals on wheels as a resource

Rental units in town and are at capacity – what does the landscape look like for this type of housing. Do we want a 12 unit building?

Cul de sac communities, or mobile home parks- Is this something we want to consider

How many ppl live in craftsbury in mobile homes?

Objectives-

Encourage housing for residents at all levels of economy.

Explore the availability of affordable housing

Seems to be less of a need for having a resource in town

Educating ppl about tax incentives, tax credits, grants etc

The Commission took on a discussion of elder care – as an area of special focus in the Town Plan. How to help elders stay in their home? How to make sure their needs are met? Love Is...is a local business focused on this issue.

Farley noted that there is not much more time to do research for each section of the plan, and so we should be gathering facts and figures now. Allison will send info and resources to everyone via e-mail.

Farley moved the Commission to a discussion of Town Meeting. The Commission will not do anything for Town Meeting this year.

Farley brought up the Commission's mail. We have a large amount of mail, regarding Act 250 issues, septic issues, sub-division notifications, etc. If anything important comes up, we can talk about them. For now, Farley recommends keeping the letters and notifications in the Planning Commission files. One of the letters refers to Sterling College's solar project. The committee discussed the updated project plans, and went through the rest of the mail.

At 8:48 the Commission adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Patterson