

**TOWN OF JACKSON
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE MEETING
FEBRUARY 27, 2024**

The Town of Jackson Comprehensive Plan Committee held a working meeting on February 27, 2024 at the Town Hall at 6:30 pm with the following people in attendance:

Committee Members:

Erik Vandenberg

Mark Mahoney

Jennifer VanDeWater

Molly Dixson

Travis Rea [entered at 7:03 pm]

Others present:

Lewis Steele

Erik Vandenberg, who is spearheading the initiative to draft the Plan, opened the working meeting with an explanation of what the Committee is aiming to do. He stated that the goal is to map how we move forward as a Town through the language of a Comprehensive Plan, a living document that proactively addresses the character and growth of the community. The idea will be to add to the 2014 draft of the Comprehensive Plan and update anything that needs to be updated, as well as create an overall vision of where the Town wants to be in 10 years.

The Committee members discussed the following ideas/questions in regards to what could be incorporated into the Town Comprehensive Plan, and what issues could be addressed:

- Renewable energy sources such as solar, wind and battery storage could be addressed, as they are a more recent concern for rural communities that have come forward in the past ten years.
- The rural character of Jackson is our biggest asset and the most valuable to the overall vision. How do we incorporate language into the Plan that encourages us to stay rural without discussing zoning?
- The Amish families in the Town have increased significantly in the last ten years. They contribute to the general character of the Town by continuing to use the land for agricultural purposes. How do we address the rising population of Amish families and concerns with their darkly lit buggies on the roads? Could more signs be implemented to mitigate this?
- The Town has less active dairy farms than they did 10 years ago when the earlier draft of the Plan was created. What can we do to encourage agriculture in the Town? Committee members discussed incorporating an agricultural exemption for real property assessment through the Town, separate from the exemption that is currently offered through the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance. We could explore enacting an exemption for smaller scale agricultural operations.
- The Town has an aging population with little influx in younger generations buying land and starting families here. How do we encourage growth for future generations while still maintaining the Town's culture?
- Lack of cellphone service and broadband connectivity is still a concern for many residents. There should be a plan in place that addresses and aims to resolve this within the next five-ten years.
- Speeding on Town roads remains an issue. Planning to lower the speed limit in certain areas would maintain the overall safety and welfare of the Town.

- There is little business in the Town and certainly less than there was ten years ago. How do we encourage certain businesses to start up in the Town that contribute to the tax base, while still keeping Jackson rural and bucolic?
- Transportation here can be a problem, as residents here typically need to travel a distance for work or any personal needs. Can we address this concern in the Comprehensive Plan? Vermont has bus routes that travel through rural areas. Is this something we could plan for in the Town?
- The Town has 5 lakes and access to the Battenkill river; these are some of our greatest assets. Recreational programs involving the lakes such as fishing, swimming, kayaking and more should be encouraged and included in the Plan.
- Could we offer more scenic routes for cyclists and encourage more bike races to run through the Town? Could we offer more hiking routes in the summertime, possibly on snowmobile trails?
- There are many dirt roads in the Town. Should we consider paving these? Is it necessary?
- Salem has the Georgi, a recreational park situated on the Battenkill that is open to the public and holds many public events. Is this something that could be considered for the Town of Jackson? Is there state land that could be donated or a grant we could apply for to purchase land for this purpose?
- We are in need of a grant writer to ensure the wellbeing of the Town through applying for any feasible grant opportunities. How do we incorporate this idea in the Plan and create this position within the Town?
- How do we instill more community involvement projects? Committee members discussed annual garbage cleanup days based in the community.
- Committee members agreed that surveying other towns that do not have zoning would help to form ideas throughout the drafting process by seeing how these towns are able to preserve the character of their communities.

Committee members agreed that the next step should be looking into all actionable items of discussion and how to move forward. After the minutes are drafted up, an email will be sent out where each committee member can choose to tackle which idea they will research. Erik VandenBerg stated we will organize a time for the next working meeting via email as well, prior to notice being put in the newspaper.

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Molly Dixon
Town Clerk/Planning Board Clerk