

Workshop Summary

Town of Easton Comprehensive Plan Update Burton Hall, February 4th, 2023 10:00-12:00 am

Comprehensive Plan Committee: Justin Sievers, Planning Board; Scott Brownell, Town Board; Michelle Skiff, Planning Board; Kevin Schwenzfeier, Senior Planner, Laberge Group; Snehal Chavan, Planner, Laberge Group; Dan Shaw, Town Supervisor; Margaret Brand, Planning Board

Attendees: 25-30 community members

Discussion

- Bulson Road near Fort Miller and other small roads need to have restricted traffic in the town.
- If there is an increase in development near Route 29 which will negatively affect Fort Miller, speed limits restriction may be required.
- Discussion on new housing residents who feel the nuisance of trucks.
- Increased residential through upper-floor apartments in mixed-use buildings has come across as an issue to the town.
- Discussion on how the comprehensive plan process could lead to standalone regulations such as a solar law which will assist to find better suitability, and limitations on tree clearing.
- Pamela Landi (from the county) added that there has been a meeting with Airbnb that people could attend. There is a Cornell University collaboration series of webinars scheduled in February on Agrivoltaics, which refers to the hybrid use of farmland for agriculture and solar-energy collection; it is a relatively new concept that aims to mitigate the spatial impact of solar energy development.
- Discussion on avoiding the term “Solar Farm” and calling them power plants. Town restrictions on such power plants are required. When writing a law on renewable energy, it is important that the town creates stricter definitions for solar. The residents are okay if the solar farm comes to a landfill.
- The number of solar projects has been restricted to get on the state’s allocation list each year, so now they try to rush to get the funding.
- Michelle Skiff confirms that the town does not have any laws yet to restrict any large development or solar/renewable energy.
- There is a collective opinion that Easton does not need Zoning, but needs regulation for site plan review.
- The last plan is a good foundation to work on, but updates are very much required. For example, the old plan states no more roads need to be paved, which is outdated.

Town of Easton Comprehensive Plan Update – Stakeholder Meeting 1 Summary

- Discussion on how in the future, all single-family houses are to be electrically heated, the attendees wanted a law for burning wood or freedom to heat however they wish. The committee explained that the town law can be stricter than the state, but not weaker.
- Airbnb is not a nuisance now but could become one in the future. Airbnb can become a nuisance with trash and noise, therefore increased building inspections and code enforcement could be required. In Saratoga County, a wedding venue is situated within 100 feet of a residential property. The residents of this property have issues with high noise and constant people. Easton did have some complaints regarding Airbnb, but not many.
- Site plan review was explained to the attendees. For instance, a site plan review gives direction on the percent of impervious surface allowed per site, but not restricting uses, structures are sited to best work with the existing site. Some site plans are as small as 3 pages, with just a checklist, while others are hundreds of pages.
- Once the visioning report is prepared, solar regulation and subdivision law can be written side by side.
- Under the section on recreation, the comprehensive plan can discuss widening the lanes on Route 40 where many cyclists ride and sometimes can get dangerous.
- Attendees discussed the use of the existing private boat launch to be opened to the public of Easton.
- The comprehensive plan is funded by greenway and smart growth grants; therefore, it is crucial to talk about and plan for parks and recreation amenities in the plan.

Summary

There is cohesive support from the town's stakeholders and residents that the town needs to focus on developing three types of land use regulations:

- Renewable Energy
- Site Plan Review
- Subdivision Revisions