

Knightsville Fore and Aft

Minutes
July 19, 2018

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee

Present

Peter Stanton, Chair

Councilor Sue Henderson

Bland Banwell

Caroline Hendry

Mitchell Sturgeon

Bob Foster

Tom Ainsworth

Bill Mann

Susanne Conley

Troy Chase

Tom Falby

Phil Notis

Barbara Psychos

Kip Reynolds

Adele Edelma

1. Welcome

The following documents were provided: the agenda, minutes from the 6/21/18 meeting, a Land Use Map dated 7/14/18, Zoning Subcommittee notes dated 7/9/18, and a Forecaster ad for the Forum.

2. Adoption of Minutes

Bob Foster motioned to adopt the June 21, 2018, minutes. Caroline Hendry seconded; unanimous approval.

3. Knightsville Inventory

Tex said showed the Land Use Map and explained that he and Joe Brown translated what Buzzy made into a GIS map. They made choices relative to buildings with different uses on different floors. Along Ocean, for example, they used the color code for what was on the second floor or above. They included the number of units where they could. He explained the general categories. He noted that they included the flats that CMP owns; he thinks you could create a wharf that would cover the area that could support buildings or recreation here.

Councilor Henderson asked where the shoreline is in relation to the black space. **Tex** showed this.

Councilor Henderson asked about the open space at the end of E Street. It's currently a garden and then rocks that go down to the water. If it's marked here, C and D should have it too. She wouldn't count it. **Tex** said it is non-usable open space. It's questionable. Public park areas include Thomas Knight Park and Mill Creek. If a parking lot was standalone with no building, they called it a private parking lot, like the one on C Street. The big parking area for Shaw's is shown. They didn't show public parking on Waterman but should have. He said if there are things to be added or changed, to let him know. They will try to get the multi-family areas in. He asked if doing this exercise has made anyone come to new ideas or if it confirms what they already knew.

Peter said it's been good for him since he doesn't know the area as well as some others. **Susanne** said it's great to have it to look at. She said she'd like to see the flagpoles have flags flying and she'd like to see more flowers in the area.

Adele asked if parking should be included at Hannaford. **Tex** said yes.

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Mitch said it will be a good reference document; well done.

Caroline asked what the purpose of it is. **Tex** said there was previous discussion about having something like this and how it would be helpful as a basis. You could also use the zoning map, available online.

Adele asked what the grocery is next to the auto parts store on the map. **Peter** said it's CVS and **Tex** said it's misleading.

Councilor Henderson mentioned the green space next to sewage treatment plant. She also suggested to shrink the map or border a little. She believes people in Mill Creek will want to migrate into Knightsville. **Tex** said they can do that.

Susanne would like to see bike racks, trash cans, and benches, including on Waterman Drive.

Peter said there was a proposal for Waterman Drive that got taken out of the budget and he wondered about the status. **Tex** said they were looking at Waterman from E to Broadway—adding bike lanes, green space, esplanades, and parking. It took a back burner to the improvements on the bridge—adding banners—and refocusing projects like that to Cottage Road.

Peter thinks as they look at green space, they should think about how to tie things together and to think of Waterman Drive.

Caroline said on the Reconfiguration Committee for Waterman Drive, they put in trees, narrowed Waterman, and removed old lighting. The neighborhood did a lot of work on the reconfiguration. She watches people sit on the benches there.

Peter reminded the committee that they will get to infrastructure in a future meeting.

Tom A. asked about the CMP proposal update. He can't think of a worse place to put it. The bridge is a targeted zone; to strengthen a generating facility in an already targeted zone according to fed government defies logic to him.

Peter said the room was against the proposal as they've put forward due to a number of things included security, sea level, storm surge issues, and overall appearance.

Tom A. wants to get on the positive side; possibly to do some sort of partnership with CMP and exchanging of land. **Peter** said that was talked about and thinks that discussion is underway. He heard a lot from the City that they would like to explore something in a different spot.

Tex said that he's been aware of a PUC case; the first part was running a power line to Boothbay. Some people put together an entity called GridSolar and made a pitch for an alternative that was less expensive, more reliable, more environmentally friendly. It has proceed on a pilot basis and seems successful. Part two is the Portland Loop, or Brightline project. When it was clear they were done with Boothbay and moving here, he got approval to intervene. They are now a participant aligned with GridSolar to force

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CMP to use non-transmission alternatives instead of some of the things they're proposing. He's skeptical that it will work as an alternative. Trying to find a site location alternative seems important.

Councilor Henderson asked how it relates.

Tex said this is part of the City's climate action planning process where it's related but different. They're working with Portland and have agreed to work with GridSolar on a project that still awaits grant funding to happen. It goes along the premise that if you want to pursue aggressive goals for reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, you have to do it on a distribution line—you have to know how the energy system is set up. Most of us have little idea but this joint project would bring in experts and they would understand the grid for Portland and South Portland. They would know what's possible to try to reach their goals.

Councilor Henderson said they did not seem to be aware of this last night. They didn't mention any case. **Tex** said it's not in their interest. **Peter** said they need to pull resources together to make sure when they sit with the City again that they understand as much as they can.

Councilor Henderson asked if the case is going on and if the substation will happen or not dependent on the case. **Tex** said that chances are that the substation is so critical to our system that some combination of non-transmission alternative won't work. It may be that something like building Phase 2 of the solar farm on the landfill might work. It's a case that has to be resolved before CMP can move forward. It is in the interest of South Portland to put resources into it and see how far they can go.

Peter said his argument is if it's critical, they shouldn't invest in that location given its closeness of sea level, terrorism, and storm surge. Make the investment in another location. **Tex** said they could increase the size at Hinckley and put the lines underground.

Tom A. said he hopes they will keep all options open, including trading the position with the Hinckley facility to get them to move. He would like to get them on the side of generating so they have an ownership in that piece. He has no idea about the grid piece. It might not be one solution fixes all concerns, but a partnership could work.

Bill said he was at the meeting and they had a similar experience in Saco. He asked them for historic demand, size, what is the cost anticipated, projected demand, where will power go, what are alternatives. They took a sense of room and it was civil but direct. They appreciated it was the first visit but the general consensus is it's not a welcome idea and they'd like to continue the conversation. They did agree to do to that. He expects they expected what they got but didn't expect it to be as unified as it was. He thinks that surprised them and those concerns were well communicated.

Caroline said it's an impediment to growth. It's an eyesore. **Peter** said arguing it as an eyesore doesn't put us in the best light. You want to argue about capacity and resilience. If you'd like it out of Knightville, there's a good argument that it's not a safe place. You want to think of what will move the wheels of government.

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Councilor Henderson said it's interesting; she asked if Tom A. talked to Peter Stocks. It was said it's an unsafe place because of terrorism. She walks her dog down there and it's isolated. The substation was built before terrorism. After 9/11, she remembers seeing two police cars in the area when the bridge would go up. She thinks it's an important point that it's not a safe place.

Peter talked about *Portland Press Herald* comments. You want to make those people answer about security. **Tom A.** spoke about terrorism maps from the airport, oil tank farm, and utilities. This is in it. Every square inch under the bridge is monitored by a multitude of cameras. No one does anything in that park that isn't supervised. If you get the federal government to throw the snowball, they can throw it more effectively. They have overlapping security information that will make it obvious to even those at CMP that this may not be the best plan.

Tex said there is another side relevant to committee—if they win, what happens there? They want to maintain marina operations. He suggests they probably want to do more. It represents a significant opportunity for the City.

Adele asked what the next steps are with regard to this topic. More meetings? City plan? **Bill** said yes.

Kip asked about status of CMP's investing \$3 million into a tower in the area at the end of this year. **Tex** said there's a site plan application.

Kip said if you talk about burying in the future, this should be put on hold. Power should come from underground—it's safest. **Peter** said it's important to know they're investing money because it's worth asking what the rush is on the tower. **Tex** said he's not sure if there's a way to slow it down. **Tom** suggested asking homeland security.

The Committee talked about burying lines and using TIF money for something like this.

Peter thinks this topic is something that they need to work on, either in a wording group or structuring it into an agenda.

4. Survey Update/Business Retention and Attraction

Bill gave a summary of the Knightville survey. 197 people replied and the majority were visitors. Comments included parking being a problem and a desire to have more bike trails. For business services, comments included no desire for no "big box" store, more local Maine and arts-focused businesses. Suggestions included keeping existing green space and more Farmers' Market promotion.

The majority of respondents visit the area a few times a week, next most popular was visiting daily. Most people drive, the second most popular mode of transportation is walking, then biking. No one said they use public transit.

Responses about prompts to visit the area were the post office, local businesses, the gym, and boating. Responses about their favorite part of Knightville included its walkability, convenience, pace of life, and neighborhood feeling. Recommendations for improvements included cleanliness, maintaining the park, and concerns about parking once it becomes more popular.

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When asked why the area was chosen for a business, responses included the location/proximity to Portland, availability, building a community, rent, uniqueness of the area, and the potential for a vibrant residential and community life. When asked about the best part of doing business in the area, responses included the community/supportiveness, that it's an "up and coming area," the great feel, accessibility for clients, and the residential neighbors. Challenges included getting traffic in the area, staying within the zoning ordinances, vendor drop off/pick up, parking, and overcoming the neighbors' resistance to change. Suggested improvements included signage, residents having power, and putting up more holiday decorations. For those looking to invest, most responses to what is preventing them from doing so was money or financing.

Comments about historic parts of Knightsville included the train tracks, the old bridge ramp, and Mill Creek Park.

For the survey he sent out to the group regarding businesses wanted, there were 12 responses. Answers were all over the place but it was clear there's no desire for check cashing or pawn shops.

He has been working with the Economic Development Committee and they will visit businesses in the area to interview them about what the City could do to help them improve or grow and what businesses would want to change/complaints/concerns. The second phase of this will be a link to a survey with 35 questions or so.

Tom A. asked who will talk to the City. City is the biggest business—they have a spot in this area with parking, it's close to parks, and could be an ideal campus for a care facility for young or old. They should talk to the City about who to partner with for a new City Hall. This is an idea to get them to think outside of the box. Mill Creek and the long term need to be kept in mind.

Peter said there was a point about Mahoney as something the City had its eye on for a new City Hall. That is a great building, is well located, and has great parking. It would accommodate the City. **Tom A.** said it would function better—it's more central, has parking, and has all the features. It can be made to function more as a City hall.

Tex said there was an architect who the City commissioned who did a redesign for City Hall but City Council ultimately decided they didn't want to go ahead with the project. In the process of his work, he fell in love with the area and he felt that the CMP site would make a wonderful performing arts facility.

Susanne said she went to a concert in Old Orchard at their performing arts center. The venue was amazing and the concerts stop at 9PM.

Tex said they should also think about cultural facilities.

5. Zoning Subcommittee Update

Tex said the Zoning Subcommittee met and discussed potential changes to zoning. He reviewed items discussed and referred the Committee to notes from the meeting.

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Caroline said it's amazing that a City that comes out 100% wonderful for walkability and has constant parking problems. The Parking Committee engineer said Knightsville is small enough so that you're only six minutes away from Ocean Street. It's a perception that parking is a problem but she doesn't think it is. It's a matter of walking.

Barbara said they paid money for a survey and there's plenty of parking in Knightsville. You just can't be right in front of the shop.

Susanne said her concern is when Babe's is up and running. They designated so many spots for employees but patrons that come to the building will park all over the streets. She works early in the morning and doesn't want to hear people at night. She'd like to see marked spaces on the street.

Bland said they've talked about having residential parking after a certain time.

Adele agrees with Barbara about the perception. When she walks, there isn't a car parked on Ocean at this time of day. She thinks people will park on Ocean before the side streets. She thinks if people want a community that's vibrant, they can't make it look like they live with nothing around them. She thinks they have to be balanced about what they want.

Barbara said they're becoming an urban center. They're not a village anymore. These are the things that come with it.

Phil said they were more urban in the 40's and 50's. There were businesses lined on both sides all the way down the street. Residents lived in what was the G zone. He doesn't think they've had it as quiet as they have it now—it's quiet at 6 PM. They have buildings that need to be rebuilt, there's vacant lot and interest in the property. Parking is an issue, as is sunlight and building height. Issues need to be put on the table and they need to come up with zoning that addresses as much as possible. He will work towards accommodating as much as possible while on the subcommittee. When they get to a business being a problem because it's utilizing street parking, they need to decide if they want that business or not. They need to talk this through. He believes there's not enough parking to accommodate everyone—they have to watch how many businesses they put in. He said that residential accommodates everything on site.

Councilor Henderson said when people say parking is a problem, it might be something to drill down to. Shopping on Ocean is like a downtown where you parallel park versus Hannaford where there's a lot that's plowed and sanded. You push a cart and put your groceries in the car. There are shops in the area where people carry heavy things and it's difficult if you can't park close. That is an issue. Frail people use beauty shops and they complain about parking because some people can't walk. Maybe they have to think about wanting vibrant businesses and how to help.

Bland said people who go to Babe's will want to park on C because they will come off bridge that way. **Troy** said he lives on A and for a long time he wanted to see the Foulmouthed Lot redeveloped. Now that it has been, they do not have an adequate amount of parking. Patrons park on his street and he's lost the ability to park on the street from 3 PM on. People go down the street the wrong way and park on the side streets. They sometimes park in front of his driveway. The Committee has to do this right; bring in the right type of business and be careful with parking.

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Phil agrees that diagonal parking is easier. Two-way traffic has made the area congested. If they need to revisit the issue of diagonal parking it's not off the table.

Susanne said right now there isn't as much of a problem. When Babe's is up and coming, it will be popular. When it gets popular, people will come and check it out. She's happy for the owners of the business, but not for herself. She's not against businesses in the area. She spoke about marking out parking spaces. She knows there will be so many people—what do they do?

Tex felt that marking spaces was a potential solution. His dream for Knightsville/Mill Creek was that people could drive in golf carts.

Tom F. asked where Babe's would go.

Peter said form based zoning (FBZ) had been discussed before and Buzzy talked about the number of units. He's not sure he cares how many units but he cares what the building looks like. Maybe there's reason to care. He thinks they need to confront that. What the neighborhood looks like comes first.

Tom F. said that looking at the map, residential housing outnumbers commercial spaces 3 to 1. If that strip is just the business strip, everything else is residential; you're just talking about residential zoning and zoning the middle part as business. He explained the way FBZ is set up on India Street with corner priorities. He thinks it would be good because you write it how you want it to look. Their intent was similar to here—a historic area with walking access.

Phil said FBZ on India Street gets a mixed reaction. Most people here think it's not a good thing. He thinks it's disjointed. FBZ worked there because they developed buildings with 30 units on lots that are the size of Big Babe's. If you want FBZ, they need the right numbers and height. They have to make sure there's enough parking.

Peter asked if it matters—is there a downside to having more people in smaller units in buildings?

Bland said it matters having height. She would hate tall buildings around her house.

Peter noted that there are people who want to live without cars.

Tex said that formal FBZ has a certain program and is complicated and expensive to go through. An intermediate thing that you could call a FBZ hybrid is to look at doing drawings for blocks the Committee is interested in to get agreement on what they want the buildings to look like and translate it into design standards.

Tom A. said at one time they had a conversation about different heights of buildings the further you got back from the water. This plays into parking—a bigger building gets height and parking problems. A condition would be to put some parking underground. It's a tradeoff—it's expensive to put underground but it could give height. At some point it becomes a wash. Parking issues shouldn't be viewed as just surface parking. This concept can make residential and give demand for life services to build true a

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community where people live, shop, and maybe work. He spoke about the concept of a bench with a bike rack designed into it where people can endorse it. These things are not separate.

Adele said walkability is the major attraction. You couldn't have designed a better service system. She suggested talking to Yankee Ford about a car rental service. Tom F. talked about the idea of car rentals from residential properties.

6. Public Forum

No discussion

7. Comments from the Public

None

8. Round Robin

Councilor Henderson said looking to the future, she thinks they will have communities with stores among residential dwelling units in close proximity and hopefully open space. They need sociability. She suggested a book called *With a Little Help from Our Friends*—people want to live in communities where they can walk. People are lonely.

Troy said the Skate Park Committee will be chosen on August 4th.

Susanne said she learns something every time she comes here.

Caroline said they have to keep in mind that they live in a mixed-use community and they need to balance the needs of business—parking—with the needs of residents. That's difficult. People in the suburbs don't have to worry about these issues.

Phil said he likes the idea of getting a water tower as a marker for Knightsville with the name painted on it.

Bill said it was a nice engagement.

Tex mentioned golf carts.

10. Adjournment

Respectfully submitted,
Dana Bettez 7/24/18