

City of Ellsworth
Planning Board Workshop Minutes
Wednesday, February 15, 2023 5:30 PM

Chair John DeLeo, Vice-Chair Rick Lyles, Member Marc Rich, and Member Molly Friedland attended the special meeting of the Ellsworth Planning Board. Secretary Nelson Geel and Alternate Members Mike Hange and Patrick Lyons were absent.

Four board members present

City Planner Matthew Williams and Assistant City Planner Elizabeth Littlefield attended the meeting.

Two staff members present

1.) Call to Order

Call to Order

Chair DeLeo called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

City Planner Williams went through the process for the evening. Each applicant will have a few minutes to present their qualifications, then the Planning Board will ask any questions they may have. The Board will then go into executive session to discuss who they would like to appoint.

2.) Review of Applications to join the Ellsworth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Review of Applications

Applicant 1: Nick Turner

Mr. Turner is an Ellsworth resident and has been for 6 years now. He is the executive director of The Grand. He feels that he has the passion and enthusiasm to help formulate and Comprehensive Plan. Has some experience with research into the State's Comprehensive plan and would love the opportunity to be on the Committee.

Vice Chair Lyles asked what unique viewpoint to the process. Mr. Turner said that he would bring a focus on the arts and education and how they fit into the Comprehensive Plan for Ellsworth. He is also on the Board of the Chamber of Commerce. He has unique perspectives of how the arts fit in with the well-being and the economic outlook of the community which is often overlooked.

Vice Chair Lyles made a comment to the group that there are many different opportunities for involvement in the Comprehensive Plan even if applicants are not selected for the Steering Committee. There will be several subcommittees and he hopes that everyone will participate even if not selected this evening. Chair DeLeo reiterated that hope and said it will be a long process and the Planning Board will need a lot of help along the way.

Applicant 2: Leslie Harlow

Ms. Harlow was not present. City Planner Williams went through the application with the Board.

Ms. Harlow is interested in joining the Committee to work with residents and creating a future path going forward. Ms. Harlow writes that the lack of a current Comprehensive Plan is a hindrance on the progress of Ellsworth. Ms. Harlow writes that she has the

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experience as a downtown business owner and can bring that experience to the Steering Committee to help create the future plans for the City.

Applicant 3: Ed MacLeod

Mr. MacLeod is a Trenton resident for 13 years and is semi-retired. He has many technical skills and is an engineer. He has experience with running his own business and has knowledge of solar, wind, waterfront, and air travel.

Member Friedland asked why Mr. MacLeod indicated on his application that he was not willing to take the required ethics course. Mr. MacLeod replied that he is an incredibly honest person and has participated in many trainings on ethics. Mr. MacLeod indicated that he does not see that there are any benefits to those trainings, however, if it is required he will take it.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked if it was required by statute that there needs to be an ethics course. City Manager Williams said that there is no legal requirement, however the City has an ethics course that most other committees must follow which is why they are requiring it for this Committee. Member Rich asked if he is committing to taking it. Mr. MacLeod said that he would if forced, however he does not think it will be necessary.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked Mr. MacLeod to expand on his experience with volunteering at the Union River Center for Innovation. Mr. MacLeod said he was not very involved, however would go in and meet with the residents to give inspiration. He is an inventor with a few patents.

Applicant 4: John Lindquist

Mr. Lindquist is the Executive Director of Friends in Action. He is not an Ellsworth resident, he resides on Mount Desert. Prior to his position at Friends in Action, he worked in the Army as a Transportation Corps officer. He has experience in many different kinds of transportation. After that, he worked in information security and worked with many organizations and agencies. He said he is comfortable working in groups and understands the dynamic. He owns a tech company and says that gives him knowledge of communication needs. Mr. Lindquist said that Ellsworth is an aging City and, through his position at Friends in Action, can bring the perspective of that portion of the citizenry.

The Board had no questions. Vice-Chair Lyles clarified that a lack of questions should not be indicative of their opinion on a particular applicant.

Applicant 5: Paul Markosian

Mr. Markosian moved to Ellsworth in 2006 after living in Sullivan for 20 years. He has been a member of the Ellsworth School Board for 9 years and has just begun his fourth term. He believes he has demonstrated, through his role on the school board that he can work with the City and collaborate with people. He mentioned that he was a founding Board Member of Heart of Ellsworth. Mr. Markosian loves Ellsworth and is committed to the City. He owns a business in the City and his family intends on living there for the remainder of their lives. He feels he can offer hard work and insight on the school age

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population and the issues that surround that portion of the community. Mr. Markosian mentioned that school age children are increasing and that brings difficulties to the school system, he believes he can bring those concerns to the Steering Committee so that the Comprehensive Plan can help to find solutions.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked if Mr. Markosian felt that he was able to achieve the goals of inclusivity and collaboration that he set out when he joined the school board. Mr. Markosian spoke about the adoption of policies surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic and the controversies surrounding them. He said that he and the school board tried to give everyone a voice in the discussion and extensive opportunity for public comment. Mr. Markosian felt that he was able to engage with the public in such a way that everyone felt that they were heard. He said that there has been some healing in the school community since then and he feels that he played a role in that.

Chair DeLeo commended Mr. Markosian on how long he has served on the school board. Mr. Markosian said that he enjoys serving the community and working with the community. He said that he prepares fully for all school board meetings and he gives everything it takes to do a job successfully.

Applicant 6: Jennifer Sala

Ms. Sala grew up in Ellsworth and moved down South with the intention of becoming a teacher. After realizing that she wanted something different, she moved around a little before moving back to Maine 9 years ago. She works at the Ellsworth American and is the Vice President and Outreach Coordinator with the Historical Society. She has been working a lot on community involvement and believes working with the Ellsworth American has given her insight into the needs of the community.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked Ms. Sala to expand on her experience with organic farming. Ms. Sala said that she wanted to learn more about agriculture so she went to a State organization which connected her with Triple Chick Farm where she worked there for two years. She was laid off due to COVID, however she really enjoyed the job.

Member Friedland asked why Ms. Sala moved back to Maine. Ms. Sala said that she wanted more nature and outdoor activities. She moved back to Maine for the summer and realized that she wanted to stay. She loves the community atmosphere and how friendly people are. She wants to nurture that atmosphere and help grow the City into everything it can be.

Applicant 7: Tracy Scheckel

Ms. Scheckel has been in Southern Maine since 2007 and moved to Ellsworth two years ago. She is involved in economic development in every community she has been a part of. She is on the board of directors for Heart of Ellsworth and works in advertising for the Ellsworth American. She has low vision and is unable to drive, she feels that gives her a unique perspective on transportation and the needs of those who are unable to drive. Ms. Scheckel said that walkability and transportation are the things she is passionate about. She said that through her job in marketing, she has a lot of experience and passion for community outreach.

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The Board had no questions.

Applicant 8: Brian Langley

Mr. Langley is an Ellsworth resident and owns the Union River Lobster Pot. He taught in the Ellsworth school system for 27 years and worked in the State legislature for 10 years working on several committees. He believes that all of his experience has given him the skills needed to work on the Comprehensive Plan. He is familiar with the statute on Comprehensive Plans and can help navigate the legalities involved. He has vast experience in public hearings and collaboration with others to pass legislation. He believes this is the roadmap for the community and really wants to be involved.

Mr. Langley is on the board of the Ellsworth Area Chamber of Commerce and can bring a voice of small business. He believes that preservation of small businesses and education are important, as well as issues surrounding working water front. He is very passionate about the fishing industries and using locally sourced food. Mr. Langley believes that the Comprehensive Plan should be something that is used for years to come and referenced consistently throughout the next 10 years.

The Board had no questions.

Applicant 9: Nicola Camarda

Mr. Camarda was not present. City Planner Williams went through his application with the Board.

Mr. Camarda moved to Ellsworth 6 months ago from Minnesota. He believes that he can bring a fresh viewpoint as well as his experience in flow and development. He believes he can contribute by working with others with other viewpoints. He has experience in construction and renovations of historical building. He is also a business analyst and a strategic planner.

Applicant 10: Nancy Smith

Ms. Smith lived in Monmouth for over 30 years and worked on the Comprehensive Plan for them. Her perspective she brought was agricultural based. She also worked on many committees and was very involved in the community. She works at GrowSmart Maine which is a nonprofit focusing on smart growth. She also served in the State legislature for 8 years, giving her a lot of experience in collaboration.

Ms. Smith has experience in the agricultural field and brings perspective on preservation of natural resources. She moved to Ellsworth last July, which was a dream location for her. She works a lot in advocacy in front of the legislature. She has experience in updating several Comprehensive Plans and believes that they need to focus more on implementation of future goals. She believes that the Steering Committee should meet after the implementation of the plan to ensure that it is followed.

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Chair DeLeo stated that he wanted the Comprehensive Plan to be a plan that is referenced frequently after implementation. Ms. Smith said that it is important to reference the plan often because of all the time, funds, and energy that will go into the plan. Vice-Chair Lyles asked about her employment in Augusta and if that would impact her availability. Ms. Smith stated that she only goes into the office one day a week and works from home primarily.

Applicant 11: Zoe Toribio

Ms. Toribio was not present. City Planner Williams went through her application with the Board.

Ms. Toribio stated that she wanted to be a part of the Comprehensive Plan because she wants to be more involved in her community. She has lived in several towns in the area and is a student in the area. She moved here from Maryland and is getting more involved in the community. She believes that the Steering Committee should be a diverse representation of the community. Ms. Toribio stated that she was excited for the learning opportunity that would come with being on the Steering Committee. She stated that her education and work ethic make her a good candidate for this Committee. She interned in Frenchman Bay Conservancy and Green Ellsworth, as well as taking many classes about the environment.

Vice-Chair Lyles inquired into if the applicants notified the City Planner that they were going to be absent. City Planner Williams stated that not all did, however being present was not a requirement. Member Friedland reiterated that it was not a requirement to be present at this meeting and it would not hurt an applicant's chances of being selected.

Applicant 12: Eric Marichal

Mr. Marichal moved to Ellsworth 6 years ago, coming from Arizona. He has children in the Ellsworth school system and is very involved in the community. He was on the Board of Heart of Ellsworth and is currently the Chair of the Ellsworth Recreation Commission. Mr. Marichal believes that he has a lot of experience in community engagement. He is the Director of Business Development for a hotel company. He also does a lot of revenue management and data analytics for the company. Mr. Marichal believes he could offer insights into the amount of people traveling to the area and the tourism industry in general.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked if there were still hotels in Ellsworth that the company owns. Mr. Marichal said that there are still hotels in Ellsworth, however there used to be more. He stated that outside competition is the reason for the decline. Chair DeLeo asked about the data/statistics on tourism and what kind of information he gets. Mr. Marichal said that there is all kinds of information that can be obtained and believes that he could be a big help in analyzing that data. Member Friedland asked about which data systems he uses to get his information. Mr. Marichal stated that there were some computer systems, however most of it was community outreach and asking the members of the community.

Chair DeLeo brought up short-term rentals and the fact that Ellsworth does not have any regulations surrounding them. Short-term rentals are rising in the City so it may be something to consider during the Comprehensive Plan process.

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Applicant 13: Eric Lindquist

Mr. Lindquist was not present. City Planner Williams went through his application with the Board.

Mr. Lindquist lived in Ellsworth in the 1970's and moved back in 2019. He stated that he would like to have an impact on the community in which he plans to reside for the remainder of his life. He stated he is willing to do the "heavy thinking" and although he has not experience in urban planning or comprehensive plans, he is a quick study and is eager to join this committee.

Applicant 14: Wendy Lessard

Ms. Lessard grew up in Jackman. She loves the coast and Ellsworth for the things that are here that are not in central Maine. She moved here 25 years ago. She taught at MDI High School for many years and was involved in restructuring and reconfiguration of the MDI schools. She was involved in the school accreditation plans for several schools. She loves engaging and communicating with the public. She stated that she is very concerned about climate change and how it will impact Maine and Ellsworth specifically. She said that she wants to focus on community resilience. Ms. Lessard has her own business and she has persevered through many challenges. She believes that her perseverance will help her work on the Comprehensive Plan.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked if she had any experience in Comprehensive Plans. Ms. Lessard stated that she did not, however she loves learning and believes there are a lot of parallels with the school accreditation process.

Applicant 15: Levi Rogers

Mr. Rogers moved to Ellsworth in July 2021 and works as the Sustainability Manager for JAX. He moved here from upstate New York where he worked in sustainability. He is involved locally in Green Ellsworth and would like to serve his community more. His career has focused on sustainability and the economic, social, and environmental impacts. He has some experience in transportation, land use, and planning. His experience in the sustainability field has prepared him to be a forward-thinker and future planner. He is often involved in long-term visions and strategies to achieve those visions. Mr. Rogers stated that his experience has allowed him to work collaboratively with many community members and believes that he can bring those skills to the Steering Committee.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked which JAX location he works in. Mr. Rogers said that he works primarily in Bar Harbor. Vice-Chair Lyles asked if he has any involvement in community outreach. Mr. Rogers said that he has had experience in community outreach in his past jobs and will be doing so in his current job in the near future. He also pointed to his work with Green Ellsworth and how that helped him build his skills on collaboration.

Member Friedland asked about his involvement in Green Ellsworth and what brought him to join the group. Mr. Rogers stated that it was his personal interest and his desire to be involved in the community. Member Friedland asked him what brought him to the region.

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Mr. Rogers said that the job opportunity at JAX as well as his love of the area influenced his decision to move to Ellsworth.

Applicant 16: Lola Hayes

Ms. Hayes has lived in Sedgwick for four years. She is interested in being on this committee because Ellsworth is a vital City in Hancock County and she wanted to be involved. She has a lot of experience in development and working with planning and zoning ordinances. She started a development company of her own and worked on several developments. She also worked on construction projects and is well versed in commercial construction, particularly mixed use and affordable housing. Ms. Hayes moved to Maine with her husband to start their family and they really love Maine. She knows a lot about planning and zoning and believes that she can contribute to this process in a meaningful way.

Chair DeLeo asked if she would want to get back in to private development. Ms. Hayes said she was interested in urban planning and would like to get back into the development sector in some way, however more in the public sector to focus on sustainable development. She is also a data analyst and has experience in GIS and other types of property software.

Applicant 17: Erin Witham

Ms. Witham moved to MDI in 2018 from the midcoast region. She works at Frenchman Bay Conservancy (FBC) and is very excited about being a part of this process. FBC has been very involved in the Ellsworth community and is very dedicated to the conservation of Ellsworth's natural resources. She is very involved in the community and has experience in soil and water studies. She has worked with the Downeast Conservation Network, working with Conservancy groups and municipalities to find solutions to the ecological issues in the area. She believes that this has taught her to work with others with varying viewpoints. She wants conservation and development to coexist to bring the City forward.

Vice-Chair Lyles asked Ms. Witham how much of a regional viewpoint she has versus and Ellsworth-centered viewpont. Ms. Witham said that she thinks it is a balance of both. She relies on Ellsworth as a commercial and community center and she has experience working with all of Hancock County.

3.) Executive Session pursuant to 1 M.R.S.A § 405(6)(A) to discuss the appointment of individuals to serve on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

Executive Session

Vice-Chair Lyles moved that the Board will go into Executive session at 6:46pm. Chair DeLeo seconded the motion. The vote was unanimously in favor (4-0).

4.) Selection of Members for the Ellsworth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee.

Selection of Members

The Board opened the meeting to the public again at 7:34pm.

Chair DeLeo thanked all of the applicants for their interest.

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Chair DeLeo made a motion to appoint the following individuals to the Ellsworth Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee: Nick Turner, Paul Markosian, Brian Langley, Erin Witham, Nancy Smith, Eric Marichal, Jennifer Sala, and Levi Rogers. Vice-Chair Lyles seconded the motion. The vote to appoint those individuals was unanimous (4-0).

Members of the Steering Committee
APPROVED

Vice-Chair Lyles reiterated that there are many subcommittees that those people who were not selected for the Steering Committee to be a part of. City Planner Williams stated that he will be reaching out to all applicants to encourage them to be a part of one or many subcommittees.

5.) Staff Comments

Staff Comments

City Planner Williams stated that he would reach out to the members of the Steering Committee meeting to plan when they will first meet. City Planner Williams thanked all of the applicants and reiterated that he will be in touch for the subcommittees.

Mr. Langley asked how long the plan will take to be completed. Chair DeLeo and City Planner Williams replied that it would be about two years. Vice-Chair Lyles asked about when the proposals for consultants are due. City Planner Williams stated that it was the 22nd of February.

Mr. Langley asked where he could find a copy of the current Comprehensive Plan. City Planner Williams stated that it is available on the Planning page of the City's website.

6.) Adjournment


Vote to adjourn at
7:39PM

Chair DeLeo moved to adjourn, Member Friedland seconded, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote (4-0).

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Littlefield, Assistant City Planner.

Agendas and minutes posted on the City of Ellsworth's website: ellsworthmaine.gov
A video transcript of this meeting is also available on YouTube.

3/1/23
Date


Nelson Geel, Secretary
Ellsworth Planning Board