

City of Ellsworth
Steering Committee Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 27, 2023 5:30 PM

Chair Brian Langley, Vice-Chair Jennifer Sala, and Members John DeLeo, Rick Lyles, Casey Hanson, Jon Stein, Nick Turner, Paul Markosian, Nancy Smith, Eric Marichal, Erin Witham, and Levi Rogers were present.

Twelve members present

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

Two staff members present

1.) Call to Order

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

Call to Order

2.) Introductions and Housekeeping

The Committee introduced themselves. Chair Langley asked City Planner Williams to give an update on where the Steering Committee was in the contracting process. Williams said that on March 20th, the City Council voted to authorize City Manager Moshier to sign the contract with BerryDunn. Once the Steering Committee has an opportunity to speak with the consultants, Williams will give the contract to legal counsel to be reviewed and then to Moshier for it to be signed.

Introductions & Housekeeping

3.) Meet BerryDunn consulting representative with Q&A for contract and next steps.

Chair Langley turned the meeting over to Kevin Price, representative of BerryDunn, to give their presentation on the Comprehensive Plan process. Mr. Price stated that he will be the principal on this project. He also introduced his colleague, Khara Dodds, who will be a senior consultant on this project and part of the project team.

BerryDunn Q&A

Mr. Price then showed the Committee a timeline of the Comprehensive Plan. Price stated that they have proposed a 16-month timeline, but that can be changed if needed. Once the contract is executed, BerryDunn will begin with a Project Planning Call with City Staff. After that, there will be a bi-weekly status updates with BerryDunn and City Staff. Inventory and Analysis will begin and go through the summer, with a deliverable of the report at the end of this period. During that period, BerryDunn staff would come to Ellsworth and collect a lot of data and tour different parts of the City to get an idea of how things are currently. After that, there is the public engagement and visioning period will begin in the fall and a visioning statement will be provided at the end of that period. This will comprise of the majority of public engagement by BerryDunn. After that, there is the policy and development phase which includes some meetings with City Staff to get input. The implementation plan will be delivered at the end of this phase. The final phase would be the final document, it is scheduled for Spring/early Summer 2024 with a conclusion at the end of July.

Chair Langley asked Mr. Price about what process has worked with other communities. Mr. Price said that it is very municipality dependent, it really depends on what works for the municipality. Mr. Price did say that he thinks how the Steering Committee is structured is a good way to go about it. He went through how a few other municipalities have been

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approaching the project. He mentioned that other municipalities in the area have not had a Steering Committee, which he noted BerryDunn was very excited about when they learned about Ellsworth's Plan.

City Planner Williams asked Mr. Price if one of the bi-weekly meetings could line up with the Steering Committee meetings. Mr. Price said they should have no problem accommodating that and that would be a topic of discussion for the initial Project Planning call. He also noted that the project manager, who was not able to be in attendance at this meeting, would need to attend those so it would be dependent on her schedule. Mr. Price said that attending the Steering Committee meetings would be a good way to keep the whole Committee updated. City Planner Williams then asked Mr. Price for any advice or suggestions around the public engagement that the Steering Committee will be doing throughout the process. Mr. Price said that it would be beneficial to let BerryDunn know which events or other activities taking place by the Steering Committee. Mr. Price also said that BerryDunn will be holding some focus groups that align with the chapters, which may overlap with some of the focus groups or subcommittees that the City wants to have.

Chair Langley asked Mr. Price if there are some topics required by the State that take less effort and time than others. Mr. Price said that a lot of that is dependent on the type of community and the needs/interests of the community. He also said that if there are some areas that the City has done some recent studies on, which may help them get through certain chapters faster than others. Price said that by partnering with Woodard & Curran, they have access to a lot of information about the infrastructure of the City, so those chapters may take less time. Khara Dodds then agreed with Mr. Price that it is very dependent on the community and their needs. Langley stated that the Committee is deciding tonight which members would like to be on which subcommittees. He said that it might be beneficial to lump some of these subgroups together for efficiency's sake. Mr. Price said that another thing to think about during this process is the organizations that the City would want included in these subcommittees. If there are different subcommittees that want to hear from the same group, it might be a good idea to put those subcommittees together.

Member Lyles asked if there would be any overlap in the phases of the schedule, particularly asking if public engagement will begin any earlier than planned, perhaps during the inventory and analysis phase. Mr. Price said that they will alter the schedule if needed, and there would be some public engagement during the first phase, however the bulk of the public engagement will come in the second phase. Price also suggested looking at the City of Bangor's inventory and analysis document and their process since BerryDunn is just finishing up their Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Dodds also said that the inventory and analysis document goes to the City Council for comment once it is completed. After that comment opportunity, the document will be refined before the bulk of the public engagement is done. Member Turned asked if the New England Village Concept and Historical Preservation would be key components of the plan. Ms. Dodds said that these would both be considered during the plan. If these are key attributes of the community identity, they will be focused on in the inventory and analysis report. Mr. Price had pulled

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up the inventory and analysis document from Bangor and showed the Committee the different types of information that go into that document.

Chair Langley then asked City Planner Williams what the next steps would be. Williams said that the next step is to have Manager Moshier sign the contract, and then the work begins. Langley asked Mr. Price a clarifying question, asking if the inventory and analysis document includes an implementation plan. Price said those are different documents.

4.) Discussion on Subcommittees for Chapters required by State.

City Planner Williams said that most of these subcommittees do line up with the required chapters. Chair Langley asked if the Committee should start assigning members to each Subcommittee. Williams said that the purpose of this discussion is to create a process for how to best conduct these subcommittees and to see which areas were of interest to the Steering Committee members. Williams said that the Steering Committee with the Planning Board as alternates can act as the heads of these subcommittees and run the meetings. Williams suggested having two people for each subcommittee. Williams said they can combine meetings about common topics perhaps combining some interests into fewer meetings. Williams also said that they should begin to think about scheduling, suggesting that they begin with the first required chapters and just go down the list since that is probably how the consultant will be writing the final plan. Member Marichal asked about the requirements from the State, Williams said that it was only the items on the checklist that he provided them. He said there are past versions of requirements which can cause confusion.

Chair Langley said that some of these topics naturally go together. City Planner Williams said that the Committee can pair the topics up however they think would work best. Chair Langley asked the group for their thoughts, also stating that he believed it would be best to start with a relatively easy topic so the public can get their feet wet. Langley said he would be interested in marine resources. Vice-Chair Sala said she would be interested in historical and archeological resources. Langley asked Williams if a consultant from BerryDunn would be at each subcommittee meeting. Williams said that Staff would be at all of the meetings and the consultants will come to some of them. Williams reiterated the main role of the heads of the subcommittees was to run the meeting. Williams also suggested picking subcommittee topics that the individual member has a background or some interest in to better guide the discussion.

Member Witham asked about which subcommittees would make sense to hold. Witham said there are some chapters that are required that may not need their own subcommittee since the information ties into other required chapters. Member Lyles asked if each of the required chapters needs to be addressed separately in the final plan. City Planner Williams said that they do need to be addressed separately. Witham then asked if it would make sense to have the meetings separate or if it would lead to redundant meetings. Vice-Chair Sala said that there may be some person who is only interested in one of the topics that may be deterred from attending meetings if there are other topics on the agenda. Lyles said that the subcommittees will be fluid and there may be other topics discussed that are not a required chapter. Lyles suggested that it may be better to hold separate meetings and the

**Required
Subcommittees**

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subcommittee heads then trade notes at the Steering Committee meetings to figure out common trends or interests. Williams said that Assistant Planner Littlefield will be taking minutes at all of these meetings and those minutes will be distributed among the group as well as being available to the public. Williams also said that we can do subcommittee reports at the Steering Committee meetings to give the entire group an update on how the meetings went. He also suggested that if it seems like two subgroups were wanting to discuss the same topic, those two groups may just decide to hold a joint meeting. Member Lyles cautioned that the group be careful about these subcommittee topics becoming “siloed” (i.e., being considered individually as opposed to the plan as a whole). Member Smith said that it may be beneficial to combine the meetings since the City needs to be taking a comprehensive approach to the plan. City Planner Williams said that the Steering Committee’s role is to bring all of the information together to create a Comprehensive Plan. Member Smith then stated that there are so many topics that fit together and maybe the Committee should group the heads of the subcommittees together so that there is some synergy.

Member Witham asked if the subcommittee process is part of the public engagement process. City Planner Williams said that it was and it also helps guide the public conversation. Member Lyles said that the Committee can work with the consultants regarding what kind of information they need to obtain. Vice-Chair Sala then said that it may make more sense to hold the initial subcommittee meetings separately in hopes of attracting more people for the specific topics. Chair Langley suggested that instead of pairing the meetings, they should pair the heads of the subcommittees. Member Lyles said that the meetings can be combined and separated however and whenever the Committee wants.

Member Smith said that she thinks climate needs to be included in the conversation, even though they are not legally required by the State. Smith stated that the suggestions for the topics not required by the State should be treated as primary issues. Smith said that looking at things in a “silo” can be helpful, as long as the Committee gets out of the silo. City Planner Williams suggested an introductory meeting of each subcommittee to be held separately to gauge public input for each topic. Chair Langley suggested looking at all of the suggested topics and to consider how they will fit into the required categories and enhance the process. Williams said that a lot of this will impact the visioning statement which states what Ellsworth’s culture is.

Member Lyles said there were some topics that he wanted to be addressed: aging population and special issues; communications; sustainability; energy/sustainable energy; and a focus on Downtown development. Member Turner asked how old these requirements are, because there are several topics, such as arts and education, which are not mentioned but very important. Member Smith said these requirements predate the internet. City Planner Williams said that there will be ample opportunity to incorporate these topics into the required chapters. Chair Langley said that the Committee should start planning for large community engagement about all of these topics and pare down when needed. Member Rogers said that he would like to see sustainability and climate considered in this process, particularly how Ellsworth will deal with the ramifications of climate

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change. Williams said that these topics will come up in several different ways, whether directly discussing them or in tangential work that addresses improving infrastructure.

Member Witham said that not every required chapter needs their own subcommittee. She asked if these subcommittees would be to gather information for the chapters. City Planner Williams said that it was and also to guide the public conservation throughout the process. Vice-Chair Sala suggested holding a large workshop with several of the subcommittees present to answer questions and to gauge public interest. City Planner Williams said that he thought holding individual meetings in the beginning will be best and to maybe combine the meetings later down the line if it looks like it would be more efficient. He also said that the consultant should be included in any large workshop plans. Member Marichal said that a lot of these additional topics can be considered in the larger chapters. Sala said that there are several underrepresented groups in the community that we need to be sure to connect with and not to forget about. Williams said that these demographics should be considered when determining what forms of public engagement the Committee decides to go with. Williams reiterated that this process will be very fluid and the Committee can change their approach whenever they feel it is necessary. Williams asked the Committee if they would rather hold the subcommittees for the required chapters first and then get a feel of what the public wants. Vice-Chair Sala said it would be a good idea to choose the subcommittees for the required chapters first and then look at the suggested topics once the Committee has had some input from the public. Member Lyles said that there would need to be some common form or procedure for conducting the subcommittee meetings so there is cohesiveness during this process.

Member Smith suggested holding an Expo or something like that where the public can come and talk with each subcommittee. The Committee was receptive to this idea and thought it would be beneficial before the subcommittee process really starts. City Planner Williams said that this would be a good way to start. Chair Langley said that the Committee can give out surveys or questionnaires during the Expo as a way to see where the interest is. Member Lyles said that he thought it would be a good idea to hold a big meeting like this initially. Member Markosian asked who would man the tables at the Expo. Williams said that he can recruit from the Planning Board and City Staff to help man the tables. Member Witham asked again if the subcommittee process is different from the public engagement. Williams reiterated that the subcommittee process is just one form of the public engagement, they are not different. Williams said that the subcommittees are a good way to have face-to-face conversations with the public as opposed to virtual public engagement. Witham said that there are people in the community who want to contribute to the Comprehensive Plan process. Witham asked if these subcommittees would be working with those people and asking for input. Williams said that the public can provide input whenever they want and if there is an individual who would like to be more involved, there will be ample opportunity for that down the line. Member Smith said that the Expo would be a good way to identify the people who want to contribute more, particularly the individuals who applied to be on the Steering Committee who were not selected.

Chair Langley asked the Committee if anyone has any particular interest in any of the subcommittees and assignments were discussed.

5.) Discussion on Subcommittees for Chapters NOT required by State.

The Committee decided to wait on the suggested topics until the Expo has been held and the public has had a chance to give some input.

6.) Discussion on Potential Public Engagement options.

Chair Langley asked about what forms of public engagement that the Committee thought would be beneficial. Langley said that the Committee would be holding the Expo, but needs to think of many different other kinds of engagement. Langley stated that there may be some members of the public who would not want to attend an Expo with a large group of people, so some individualized engagement could be beneficial. City Planner Williams said that he planned on conducting some engagement at local businesses and maybe even organizing a door-knocking day where Steering Committee members can go around the City and engage with the public. Williams also said that some of the meetings can be held at locations closer to the edges of the City, since it may take some members of the public a considerable amount of time to drive into Downtown Ellsworth. It was suggested that the church which is also a voting ward would be a good location for North Ellsworth residents to attend a meeting. Member Smith suggested bringing the surveys/forms that are given out during the Expo during these other activities. Vice-Chair Sala recommended sending mailers with the surveys included to reach some residents who may not want to participate in the Expo or any subcommittee meetings. Member Markosian suggested keeping those forms at City Hall as well as giving them out to local business owners to give to their patrons. Langley suggested attending the Chamber of Commerce annual dinner on June 1st. Member Turner said he can put a PSA at the Grand so that it will play before every show and encourage people to participate in the survey or fill out the form. Member DeLeo suggested engagement at the Moore Community Center and other facilities for elderly individuals, stating that some older people may not want to come out to an event.

Member Smith asked about engaging school-aged members of the public. City Planner Williams said there will be two High School students who will start attending these meetings to give input. These students have not been selected yet, but they will begin attending meetings soon. Member Turner brought up the school career day as an opportunity for engagement with students. A teacher from Ellsworth High School, Carrie Kutny, was in attendance and said that she would be willing to pass along any information that the Committee wanted to the students and faculty at the High School. Williams asked Ms. Kutny if she could reach out to the High School about getting some volunteers for this process, she said she would reach out and they would be in touch. Vice-Chair Sala said that another issue to address regarding education is the lack of higher educational opportunities in Ellsworth. Sala stated that all the students currently going to Ellsworth High School will need to leave the City to go to college if they so choose. She said that having more higher education opportunities in the City would be a good way to keep the younger individuals in the City as opposed to them moving away.

Chair Langley said that the Committee really needs to think about engaging with the workforce, who would not be able to attend traditional subcommittee meetings given their work schedules. Member DeLeo said that they need to go to the businesses themselves

**Additional
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**Potential Public
Engagement
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and engage with the staff. DeLeo also said that a lot of businesses are providing education in order to attract employees, and this could be some information that would be crucial to this process. Member Smith said that the aging population needs to be considered when engaging with the workforce. Smith went on to explain that while there are some of the aging population that needs to be cared for, there is also a lot of the population who is still working and make up some of the greatest employees if the business owner is willing to adjust the job to fit their needs. Member Turner said that there has been an increase in late retirees (i.e., individuals who may want to retire but cannot for some economic or personal reason). Vice-Chair Sala said that the Committee needs to look at all of these underrepresented groups to ensure that no one is overlooked during the public engagement process.

Chair Langley suggested that each member of the Committee think of 2 or 3 different events that the Steering Committee could attend and bring it to the next meeting or email to City Planner Williams. Vice-Chair Sala said that the Ellsworth Pride Festival in June would be a great opportunity for public engagement, as well as the Library Open House taking place in May. Member Marichal said that the Committee also really needs to utilize social media, bringing up the Facebook function that allows someone to “boost” the post. Marichal said that he would be willing to go to events on his own with short notice, as long as he had the information necessary. City Planner Williams said that he would create a packet of information and surveys so that any member of the Steering Committee can go to events on their own and have the information to hand out. Member Lyles said that he would like to see the Ellsworth American attend the meetings and cover the work the Committee is doing. Lyles also said that there needs to be public engagement at all points during this process, not just when the consultants say they will engage with the public. Williams said that BerryDunn’s public engagement will be in addition to the Steering Committee’s public engagement and the Committee will begin much earlier and keep up the engagement until the end of the process. Williams said that although BerryDunn will not be working primarily on public engagement at the beginning, they will be there to help the Committee should they need it. Sala said that BerryDunn would provide materials for the Committee to use during the public engagement so the Committee would not have to draft everything themselves. Member Witham stressed that the Committee should take some time drafting the survey questions, as the questions will really frame the information obtained.

The Committee discussed when would be a good time to hold the Expo. City Planner Williams said that he was thinking sometime in the summer. The Committee was unsure that this would be the best time, since people are usually much busier in the summer. Vice-Chair Sala asked if there would be materials provided in time for May. Williams said that he can get materials whenever the Committee wants. Chair Langley advised asking the consultant about what the right time is to hold an Expo. Member Marichal said that another group of people that should be considered when doing public engagement is the tourists who come to and through Ellsworth. Marichal suggested bringing the surveys and information to local hotels and asking them to give it to patrons. The Committee thought this would be a good idea, noting that there are many tourists in the area through summer and well into fall. Vice-Chair Sala said that it would be beneficial to get a tourists’

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perspective since they are far enough away from the issue to potentially see the bigger picture better than some residents can.

7.) Public Comment

Carrie Kutny was in attendance. She is the Vice President on the Board of the Heart of Ellsworth. She said that the Heart of Ellsworth is very excited about this Comprehensive Plan project and they want to be involved in any way they can be. Chair Langley asked if the Heart of Ellsworth would help with distributing the surveys once they are made. Ms. Kutny said that Heart of Ellsworth would be happy to help, noting that their organization just hired someone to work on social media which would help the Committee through this process.

Vice-Chair Sala said that she was given a comment from a member of the public. This individual asked Sala if there would be a moratorium on large zoning changes and development during this process, since the final plan will have an impact on the Zoning code. The Committee did not think this was something that they had the authority to do, which City Planner Williams confirmed. Williams said that the only body that can make that decision is the City Council. Also, the Committee was unsure that a moratorium for such a long period would be in the best interests of the City, noting that this process will take at least 2 years, probably a little more. Member Smith asked what in particular the member of the public was concerned about. Sala said primarily zoning and new developments that may not align with the future plan.

8.) Staff Comments

City Planner Williams said there was an event being put on by Green Ellsworth about the Union River Watershed which he will send around to the Committee.

City Planner Williams then brought up the topic of communication between the Committee and the public. He cautioned the Committee on conducting email conversations or email chains with other members, as it may lead to an unauthorized meeting or differing information from different members. Williams asked if the Committee would like to set up an email address for the Steering Committee that the public can use to reach out. The Committee agreed and said they would like those emails to come to Williams and Assistant Planner Littlefield to be vetted and sent out to the entire group.

9.) Adjournment

Member Markosian made a motion to adjourn. Member DeLeo seconded the motion. Chair Langley adjourned the meeting at 7:36PM.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth Littlefield, Assistant City Planner.

Public Comments

Staff Comments

**Meeting adjourned
at 7:36PM**

*Agendas and minutes
posted on the City of
Ellsworth's website:
ellsworthmaine.gov*