

Comprehensive Plan Committee Minutes November 7, 2023

Present: John Maltais, Toni Small, Alison Fongemie, Bill Farkas, Leticia VanVuuren, Jane Conrad, Van Thompson

Via Zoom: Greg Soutiea, Joline Godfrey, Dianne Oelberger, Chuck Gowan, Max Johnstone

Max Johnstone of MCOG joined us to discuss our planning process and **timeline**. He thinks it may be overly optimistic to think that we can get a final plan approved by the State and on the ballot in May 2025.

The State Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry Municipal Planning office must review and approve all proposed plans. Our existing plan, first approved in May 2013 and updated in 2018, is valid until May 2025. Many State and Federal grants require an approved plan in place in order to apply for and receive funding.

In August or September 2024, we should talk to Tom Miragliuolo in the State planning office to determine how long State review will take and whether we can apply for grants while a proposed plan is under review by the State and, if not, options regarding any gap.

Max wondered whether, during our interviews of key community members, we should provide them with a list of possible topics, rather than have an open-ended conversation. (We discussed this in detail below.)

John Maltais and Leticia VanVuuren outlined the **proposed data management plan** they devised for our use:

Raw Data (postcard and survey input; census data; DMR data, etc.):

- Emphasized the importance of collecting and storing raw data in a secure and standardized manner.
- Discussed the need for data integrity, accuracy, consistency in the collection process.

Processed Data / Information for Committee Review and Analysis:

- Highlighted the need for a well-defined process for data processing, transformation, and cleaning.
- Emphasized the importance of creating clear documentation to ensure transparency and reproducibility.
- Discussed challenges of processing & consolidating handwritten and digital surveys.
- Discussed the use of data analysis tools and techniques to extract meaningful insights for committee reviews.

Information Intended for Publication and Review:

- Discussed the potential design and creation of interactive data presentation formats to enhance accessibility and engagement.
- Agreed on the importance of ensuring data privacy and complying with relevant regulations when sharing information with the public.
- Discussed options for presenting demographic and other content at various levels of summarization to cater to different user needs.

New Proposal – focus on Raw & Processed Data:

- Use Google Drive as the preferred repository for secure storage and collaboration on raw data files. Google Drive permissions can be set to define various levels of private, team, or public access, ensuring data security and accessibility.
- Evaluate data elements for relevance and appropriateness to maintain a focus on meaningful insights.
- Filter certain data points that are statistically insignificant when evaluating categorical groups. We should seek to avoid 1) unwanted attention to individuals and 2) skewed interpretations.
- Utilize the intern to assist with this level of data extraction and preparation. Leticia has offered to be the point person to engage with and guide the efforts of our college student, which John wholeheartedly supports.

The committee unanimously agreed to proceed with the data management plan outlined above. John will talk to Rick Erb and Bill Batty at the town office about whether this committee needs its own Google Drive account or should use the existing town account.

We talked about using the table of contents of our existing Comprehensive Plan or State checklist as an organizational tool for data gathered from our local “subject matter experts” and source points.

Leticia continues to review **census data and American Community Survey data** which might be useful to our process. The ACS info will soon be published. We talked about demographic changes in our town, specifically how the pandemic and broadband capability have made it possible for people to move to St. George and work remotely for companies elsewhere.

Joline Godfrey pointed out that this includes a number of people in the “creative” fields (writers, artists, etc.). We discussed whether these people were likely members of the St. George Business Alliance. Greg Soutiea looked at the membership list, which includes over 30 artists, but we agreed that many people working virtually or on their own may not choose to be members of the Alliance. Perhaps we can ask respondents to our community survey to identify their area of work.

Jane had **postcards printed and created dropboxes**. The cards and box were in the large meeting room while the polls were open today. Dropboxes and cards will be delivered to the school and 3 post offices in the next few days. It will also be possible for people to download the ‘postcard’ content at home, fill it out on paper, and put that into a dropbox. Alison Fongemie agreed to create a Google Form that we could post on the website so people could do this entire process online, obviating a trip to a dropbox. We will solicit postcard input through the end of 2023. Jane will collect this data from the boxes.

Jane Conrad would like to solicit input from St. George students as a **civics** lesson in how community priorities shape public policy. Since a plan is in effect up to 12 years, a 10 year-old today will become an adult while the next plan is in place. Jane and John Maltais will talk to Mike Felton about how this project.

John Maltais talked about his **interview** of Sandra Hall and we discussed whether we should provide interviewees with topics they might wish to address. We agreed that because most people have been identified because they are “subject matter experts” on a topic (working waterfront, local business owner, etc.) we have assumed they would focus on their primary

area of interest. However, a life-long resident like Sandra should feel free to discuss any subject of interest or concern. Also, this will not be anyone's sole opportunity to provide input. John highlighted that Sandra listed over 20 areas which she feels the town is handling well.

Greg Soutiea suggested that his wife, Lauren, has experience in **community surveys** and might provide guidance when we are developing survey content.

Toni Small was elected vice-chair of the committee by unanimous vote.

The minutes of the October meeting were approved.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 9 p.m.