

INTRODUCTION

The impetus for preparation of this document was the State Growth Management Law, which recognized New Gloucester as one of the fastest growing communities in Maine and required that a revised Comprehensive Plan, consistent with new State goals be submitted for state review by 1/1/91.

The Town had just passed a new zoning ordinance and subdivision regulations that were light years ahead of previous documents in terms of establishing and/or strengthening protection of natural resources, and creating reasonable standards for new development in the community. The Planning Board was just getting familiar with the regulations, and zoning ordinance committee was taking a much deserved rest, when the offer of grant assistance for preparation of the new document was offered to the Town, and the 1990 comprehensive planning process was born!

In order to be representative of community interests, a comprehensive planning process depends on participation from the community. In that vein, the planning process began with the appointment of a 17 member committee by the Selectmen. The committee was appointed with the idea of bringing together a selection of people that represented many interest groups, incomes, occupations and beliefs. A core group of dedicated volunteers met monthly for a two year period. All members were kept on the mailing list during the process.

The committee involved the public in the preparation of the document by sending a survey to every property owner in the Town, by holding several introductory workshops, by gathering all Town volunteers together for a brainstorming session, by hosting an interlocal meeting of area towns and by arranging for newspaper coverage of their efforts in the New Gloucester News. Many other people besides appointed Committee members were active in the process for short term specific projects. In addition, each regular committee member has spoken about the plan one on one, with friends and neighbors.

While the preparation of a new comprehensive plan seemed like backtracking at first, a lot was learned and accomplished during the process. First, a citizen survey revealed that preservation of rural character and control of rising property taxes were the top two issues of concern to the community. Second, it was soon discovered that the Town's regulations were not working as well as expected to promote previously identified community goals. Third, a lot of up to date, technical information about the Town and its resources, ranging from fiscal health to natural resources was compiled and analyzed. A series of useful maps was prepared. Fourth, the planning committee developed a set of goals and policies to document a vision of the future. Lastly, a series of action steps were developed to translate the ideas expressed in the Plan into reality during the next five years.

Taken together, the above steps constitute New Gloucester's future action plan. The Plan establishes a framework for future decision making in the Town. It is an expression of the town's values, and a description of how the community hopes to grow and change in the future.

This Draft Comprehensive Plan for the Town of New Gloucester is being submitted for review to the Office of Comprehensive Planning. Review comments from the State are expected in March of 1991. Several public hearings on the content of the Plan will be held in New Gloucester between January and May to receive citizen comments. After revisions based on both community comments and State comments, the Plan will be presented to the voters for adoption at the June, 1991 annual Town Meeting. Revisions to Town ordinances and other implementation methods will be developed during the year following adoption of the Plan.

Funding for this project was provided by the State of Maine, Department of Economic and Community Development, Office of Comprehensive Planning and matched in part by the Town of New Gloucester. The plan was developed under the rules and regulations contained in the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act of 1988 (Title 30 M.R.S.A. Section 4960).

The Greater Portland Council of Governments has served as consultants to the Comprehensive Plan Committee throughout the two year planning process. Kathleen Leyden, Senior Planner and Matthew Eddy, Director of Planning provided staff assistance to the committee.