

Duxbury Community Forum December 13, 2018

Report

Sixteen Duxbury residents met on December 13, 2018 in the Crossett Brook Middle School to provide input to the Planning Commission as it begins work on updating the Town Plan.

Alan Quackenbush, Planning Commission Chair, welcomed everyone and provided a brief overview of the Plan revision and adoption process. He acknowledged the efforts of former commissions in producing previous updates and introduced the other Planning Commission members Bill Whitehair and Toni Muir.

Participants formed four small groups: Economic Development (Audrey); Energy and Transportation (Toni); Housing (Bill); and Natural Resources (Alan). Group members responded to three questions:

1. What do you appreciate most about Duxbury?
2. Regarding this topic, what are Duxbury's strengths/challenges?
3. What ideas do you have for addressing the challenges?

After the discussion, participants had the opportunity to add comments to the results of other groups, which had been recorded on flip charts. Following this exercise, the facilitators summarized the results of their groups. Four themes emerged among the groups and they are highlighted below.

- Most appreciated about Duxbury is its **rural and undeveloped landscape**.
- Duxbury's people are viewed as **genuine, helpful, and respectful of neighbors' privacy**.
- **Duxbury's zoning districts should be reviewed and, possibly revised**, to provide more opportunities for affordable housing, economic development, and conservation.
- New **initiatives should be explored** that could address challenges for each of the four topics.

Sampling of Strengths and Challenges

Strengths: Close proximity to larger towns and resources they offer, but different; residents willing to help neighbors; open land available for a variety of recreation, not posted; conserved land for wildlife and protection of water quality.

Challenges: Expensive housing; high taxes; geographic barriers; difficult to maintain roads; dispersed development; overly strict state regulations; too few volunteers to fill town roles; town representation not even throughout town; restrictive town zoning; pressures from the State's promotion of Camel's Hump State Park; and new residents desiring to make Duxbury like other places in terms of regulation.

Small Group Summaries (Including additions from members of other small groups)

Economic Development

This group focused on the drawbacks of too much regulation from the State and Town.

Strengths were identified as: community involvement and not having been over-regulated traditionally. Challenges included: too much state regulation, too much pressure from the State, and the wishes of newcomers to make changes.

Recommendations included:

- Rezone where appropriate and encourage downtown mixed-use development
- Decrease lot sizes and road frontage requirements
- Allow commercial establishments in the Forest Recreation and Timber Management and Wildlife districts.

A number of comments were made that didn't directly relate to the topic. Concerns were shared about the turnover in the Select Board, that representation on the Select Board isn't evenly distributed in all parts of Town, and that there is a lack of volunteers to fill Town offices. They also expressed a desire for Select Board members and our State Representatives to advocate for less state regulation. In conclusion this group would prefer fewer and less restrictive regulations and more opportunity for economic development throughout Duxbury.

Energy and Transportation

This group addressed energy and transportation issues in Duxbury. They generated a comprehensive list of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. There was some overlap with energy and transportation. Regarding energy conservation, group members proposed the following ideas:

- Use the former gravel pit for solar
- Create a park and ride with EV plugins using solar
- Employ solar energy to new town buildings, i.e. potential new town garage
- Encourage small scale residential wind development
- Partner with an energy company to audit homes for energy usage

Ideas specifically related to transportation:

- Establish a Park and Ride – Consider a shuttle service from South Duxbury to the Park and Ride
- Pursue grants to improve the road network, including paving of River Road
- Explore commuter rail
- Investigate feasibility of a bike/pedestrian lane on the River Road as a Route 2 alternative
- Consider feasibility of an additional bridge near Camel's Hump Road

Housing

The housing group identified key impediments to affordable housing:

- High cost of new housing
- Lack of accessible and diverse housing options
- Geographic challenges

Suggestions for improvement were as follows:

- Allow increased density via zoning
- Encourage cluster development
- Promote multi-family projects
- Partner with Yestermorrow School to build innovative development, i.e., tiny homes
- Collaborate with Down Street Housing and the Community Development Agency

Natural Resources

Group members generated a lengthy list of reasons they appreciate Duxbury including: the views; conserved and undeveloped land; free use of natural resources; limited posting of land; water resources; and wildlife. Duxbury's natural resource strengths were identified as: having large swaths of protected lands; access to Camel's Hump State Park; and its land ethic. Challenges included: habitat fragmentation; being a bedroom community; climate change; invasive species; and poorly managed logging.

The group came up with the following ideas to address challenges:

- Encourage development in already developed areas
- Promote traditional settlement patterns and cluster development
- Change zoning to allow denser development
- Increase the Ecological District
- Review floodplain regulations
- Encourage buffers along streams
- Decrease road salt usage
- Encourage native plant gardening
- Consider creating a conservation commission
- Promote selective harvest logging to create diverse habitat in forested areas.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Sixteen engaged participants generated a significant amount of information for consideration by the Planning Commission as it begins work on updating the Town Plan. Many of the responses reinforced content in the current Plan. There is some overlap across the small groups as well as potential conflicting preferences in some areas, possibly between the Economic Development and Natural Resource groups. However, there was consistency among the groups in some aspects, which are reflected by the four identified themes:

- Most appreciated about Duxbury is its **rural and undeveloped landscape**.
- Duxbury's people are viewed as **genuine, helpful, and respectful of neighbors' privacy**.
- **Duxbury's zoning districts should be reviewed and, possibly revised**, to provide more opportunities for affordable housing, economic development, and conservation.
- New **initiatives should be explored** that could address challenges for each of the four topics.

As a result of the forum, the Planning Commission has a foundation of information to review and assess in accordance with state land use regulations, community needs, topography, natural resources, current development patterns, and projected population growth. As work progresses, the Commission will continue to solicit community input and residents' feedback to document drafts. The Commission is grateful to those who participated and demonstrated their Interest and commitment to Duxbury's future.

Submitted by: Audrey Quackenbush

Forum Facilitator

Addendum: Complete Record of Small Group Responses (Including comments from non-group members).

Economic Development

Most appreciated about Duxbury:

- Close to Burlington
- Rural/undeveloped
- Small enough that an individual can make a difference
- Less developed than adjoining towns

Strengths regarding economic development:

- Community participation
- Traditionally not over regulated
- Good, hard-working people

Challenges regarding economic development:

- State overregulation
- Too much change from outsiders
- Too much State promotion of Camel's Hump
- Select Board turnover
- Not enough volunteers to fill positions

Ideas to address challenges:

- Resist regulation
- Select Board advocates for the town
- Ensure select board representation throughout town
- Reduce regulations to allow variety of development in more districts, i.e. bed and breakfasts where housing is allowed; restaurants and retail in Forest Recreation
- Reduce setback and road frontage requirements
- Consider rezoning where appropriate

Energy and Transportation

(Energy)

Ideas to address challenges:

- How many homes have solar?
- Gravel pit solar – Could be a place for cluster development and solar (Economic Incentives)
- Park & Ride with EV plugins and Solar to supplement
- New town garage to have solar
- Small scale wind residential
- Partnership with energy audit company for homes
- Challenges: Many outages each year (Washington Electric)

(Transportation)

Ideas to address challenges:

- Park and Ride (Next Door)
- Road improvement
 - Grants for improvement
 - River Road paving (Road runoff into the Winooski)
- Commuter rail
- Bike/pedestrian land on River Road
 - Rt 2 biking alternative
- River Road Speed and Safety
- Additional bridge near Camel's Hump Road
- Formalize pedestrian path from North Duxbury to South Duxbury
- Shuttle from Rt 100 (South Duxbury) to River Rd (North Duxbury) to Park & Ride

Housing

Challenges regarding housing:

- Geographic challenges
- Availability/New Construction is too expensive
- Cost/Taxes
- Zoning – Road Frontage
- Lack of senior housing – accessible
- Moving out of community – age
- Cluster housing/Allow increased density
- Multi-family homes
- Small – Affordable housing
- Rural burnout

Ideas to address challenges:

- Increase population and business
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Decrease taxes
- Partnership with Yestermorrow, Down Street Housing and Community Development
- Build tiny town
- Provide diversity of housing options
- Get rid of 25-acre zone (Increase Ecological Zone and density in Forest/Recreation)
- Fashion zoning to increase downtown mixed-use development

Natural Resources

Most appreciated about Duxbury:

- View
- Conserved land and undeveloped land
- Small rural community – free use of natural resources
- Adjacent to other conserved land
- Community involvement
- Not suburban
- Streams, rivers, and wetlands, trails, swimming holes, wildlife

Strengths regarding natural resources:

- Large swaths of protected lands
- Access to Camel's Hump State Park
- Limited amount of posted land
- Land ethic

Challenges regarding natural resources:

- Habitat fragmentation
- Bedroom Community
- Climate Change
- +/- Logging
- Water Quality
- Invasive Species – Emerald Ash Borer

Ideas to address challenges:

- Encourage development in areas already developed; traditional settlement patterns
- Cluster development
- Change zoning for denser development
- Enlarge Ecological zone
- Flood zone requirements
- Buffers
- Decrease salt usage

- Road management
- Education, coordination
- Volunteers
- Native plant gardening
- Conservation commission
- Selective harvest logging to create diverse habitat in forested areas