

Community Guided Planning and Zoning in the Washington County Unorganized Territories First Round of Community Meetings Brookton – October 22, 2015

Please also see the Powerpoint presentation provided at each community meeting held in Alexander, Dennysville and Brookton in October, 2015.

These notes also accompany the audience-polling summary for the 3 community meetings.

Both are posted at <http://www.wccog.net/community-outreach.htm>

Introductions

Judy introduces the purpose of the meeting

- New prospective zoning areas in the Washington County Unorganized Territories (WCUT)
- Much of the WCUT is in a General Management Zone, in certain areas there are residential, and commercial zones as well
- If you are in General Management you need a zone change before getting a permit
- The Community Guided Planning and Zoning process anticipates future growth and reduces the 2 step (zone change and a permit) process to one step (permit)
- Question: was there a problem in changing the zones?
- Judy: there have been complaints in the past; it is a two-step process; Some also felt that decision making is too far away; this is an attempt to bring decision-making to Washington County
- Question: If I want to build a garage what would change?
- Judy: It would depend on your circumstances.

Audience Polling questions:

- 1. Gender**
- 2. Age – 64% over 65**
- 3. Residency – 85% full time residents of UT**
- 4. Land Ownership – 92% own land and live in UT**
- 5. Interest in UT planning**
 - Other may mean all of the above; a lot of retired people interested in all of these things
 - I live here!
- 6. Affiliation/Interest - 77% interested citizens**

Judy reviews - How did we get here?

- See slides and handouts
- Prospective zoning explained
- Why here, why now
- Efficiency and predictability
- Project process

- GIS mapping
- Question: What does this all do for us?
- Judy: What it gives to you is more decision-making over how land is used in your communities
- Question: Who makes the final decision?
- Judy: Recommendations from the Planning Committee will be reviewed and approved first by the Washington County Commissioners and then by LUPC; they will be guided by all this input

7. Benefits to UT

- Natural resources - 73% very important
- Quiet remote lifestyle – 57% very important
- Land base for critical habitat – 79% very important
- Commercial resource extraction – 47% very important
- Residential growth – 43% very important
- Comment: “Jobs are what is important; bunch of retired people here.”

Judy reviewed Anticipated Products slides

- Talked about the Brookton Community Building as an example of a project that might come from the Capital Investment Planning
- The Planning process will recommend the kind of projects that should be supported

Judy reviews Context for Planning – what is part of the planning process, and what is not?

8. Focus areas - resilience to extreme weather

- Infrastructure – 75% very important
- Landowner training – 46% very important
- Land use restrictions – 57% very important
- Land conservation – “depends on who does it” – 79% very important
- Land management – 57% very important

9. Future Development

- Shellfish and septic systems – 33% very important
 - Question: Why would TIF money be used for this?
 - Judy: Shellfish is significant for economic development in coastal Washington County; how should this industry be supported?
- Consistent forestry regulations – very important
 - Comment: Doesn't seem to be anyone enforcing what they do now.” -
- Blueberry production – 46% very important
 - Comment: “does this mean that you would tear out blueberry fields for residential growth?”

- Judy: no it is a question about the location of new development near existing blueberry fields
- Residential development where services close by – 38% very important
 - Comment: We do not have community services
 - Judy: Yes they are limited in the WCUT but there are services in nearby larger communities
- Increase residential development where ever proposed - 20% very important
- Increase commercial/industrial - 29% very important
- Identify locations for Commercial – 46% very important
- Explore mineral extraction opportunities - 21% very important
- Critical habitats – 57% very important
- Wildlife/fish passage – 36% very important
- Continued public access to water and land – 93% very important

10. Competing interests – audience comments

- “Trucks driving through town vs forestry jobs”

11. Land use with most positive impact – audience comments

12. Topics/concerns to be aware of – audience comments

- Comment: population and communities vary in different UT’s; some favor wind turbines and others are against them because it impacts why they are there or what they do; each one of the communities is unique and the state lumps us all together; am I making a decision that impacts another UT (shellfish are coastal issues not Brookton’s issues); I do know about my own community and what my fears are; will you have a decision making process that considers each community; who will make the decisions for Brookton vs. the other UTs; there are some things that blindside us; it is right for me to make a decision about Baring, and vice versa? One of the reasons I came to the meeting is that I would like to see community input on what are Brookton concerns; how will this all get weighted. (Dale)
- Judy: we have separated the entire WCUT into 4 sub regions; the decisions that are made in one UT will be reviewed by the people who live in that UT; when it comes to drawing new prospective zones you will make those decisions; we have had three introductory meetings this October; we will have more meetings in June of 2016 with more specific information to the communities; these meetings will be tied more to individual UTs.
- Judy: the Planning Committee is still taking on members; monthly meetings beginning in Nov through to June; if you want to be on the meeting notice provide email so you will be informed
- Comment: my concern – I am all for development – but decision makers will put things in the UTs because they perceive that no one lives here; eg. a rock crusher; there are people who live here and who care; example – there was a cell tower on a property with a strobe light blinking on neighbors; UT rules do not include public hearings on cell

towers; there was so much concern and the cell tower was lowered; but they could say we will put cell towers all around and lose night skies and what we enjoy here.

- Question: What does TIF stand for?
- Susan – Tax Increment Financing: a finance vehicle available to individual municipalities and also to the WCUT as a whole; it captures monies generated by the Stetson I and Stetson II wind farms located in the WCUT; TIF funds provide grants and loans to people and organizations who want to create and expand businesses and other opportunities in any of the WCUTs; it includes a nature-based tourism fund, a revolving loan fund, and economic development planning funds and a capital projects fund.
- Question; when did you start getting TIF money?
- Susan: the TIF was put in place in 2009 and funds started in 2010
- Question: how is the money being spent?
- Susan: on projects all over the UT
- Judy: we will be showing the projects, their locations and the amounts invested in the planning work
- Susan: An example project: when the Eastport breakwater collapsed some boats were destroyed; the TIF helped a UT resident get a new fishing boat; TIF funds also supported a planning grant in Big Lake to study the feasibility of an RV park,
- Judy: the money for Community Guided Planning and Zoning is coming from the TIF – County Commissioners chose to do Community Guided Planning and Zoning to proactively think about where development should and can go; in Aroostook County (where they just completed a scaled down Community Guided Planning and Zoning process) they created a new zone called Development-Rural Business (D-RB) which supports the creation of small natural resourced based businesses or the expansion of home based businesses. Instead of drawing this zone on specific areas of any township however they developed criteria for a sub-set of Aroostook County UTs that were eligible to have this designation if a landowner requested it; the criteria included whether the township contained a major public road, has population, is located in close proximity to a service center or retail hub, etc.
- Hugh: this new district applied in Aroostook County in less than ½ of the UTs that were east of Route 11
- Judy: this approach meant that landowners did not have to get a zone change, just a permit pursuant to a Development-Rural Business zone