

**The following notes are from the Comprehensive Plan Exploratory Group meeting of March 20th. The purpose of this meeting was to review and document Georgetown-unique issues that should be addressed in the updated Comprehensive Plan if/when we gain approval to proceed to implementation.**

This meeting focused on 3 specific topics: (1) marine resources, (2) communications and (3) energy. During his discussion of interviews, Pat Burns also noted that people he interviewed offered/discussed specifics on broader discussions about elder care, the school, land issues, economics, etc.

## **Notes from March 20**

### **Marine Resources:**

Pat Burns provided an overview of marine research and discussions he's had with many members of the fishing, digging, aquafarming, and marine college/research community in Georgetown and Maine in general. While the recent lobster catch in our area has been robust, there is an absence of young lobsters for future harvests. A recent article in the Maine Sunday Telegram summarized the situation. The lobster population has migrated North from Long Island, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Casco Bay has begun to decline and the rate of lobster migration North is 4.5 miles per year. That is why our area has continued to thrive for now but will soon experience the decline that has devastated the lower New England lobster grounds. The decline in the clam harvest in Maine alone is similar. In 1977 the yield was 40 million pounds. That has dropped today to 9.0 million pounds per year and is continuing to decline. Many flats are no longer harvested. Planning ahead now may offset the downside of these trends.

On the other hand, scientific data collected on the Heal Eddy project has shown that seeding and protecting the baby clams can rebuild a flat. Also, oysters have become a viable economic aquafarming success in Robinhood Cove. People he talked with suggested that aquafarming could be expanded to include eels grown from elders, quahogs, scallops, and kelp. Georgetown is ideally suited to take advantage of these opportunities.

Specific marine resource detail issues identified for inclusion in the Plan include:

1. Georgetown is ideally suited for fishing, digging, aquafarming and other marine based activities. Huge potential economic growth opportunity.
2. Keeping flats open to licensed commercial diggers as well as residents for personal use
3. Cooperative efforts to rebuild flats and protect seed clams from predators (ie green crabs)
4. Legislative initiative, supported by our Representative, giving the State administrative control of digging licenses
5. Developing a market for green crabs
6. Can we provide our own middle man and transportation
7. Fishermen and digger populations are getting older – young people are not taking up these trades
8. UMaine and other organizations are doing a lot of marine research that can be used by entrepreneurs interested in starting aquafarming enterprises
9. There are investors ready to support aquafarming enterprises

## **Communications:**

The group had a discussion about communications in a very broad sense. It was observed that most of the communications issues we've identified are related to other issues such as aging in place.

Specific communications detail issues identified for inclusion in the Plan include:

1. Potential disappearance of land lines – especially with recent takeover of FairPoint by a smaller, out of state company
2. POLR (phone of last resort) program supports elderlies with no other communication lifeline
3. Emergency communications to/for all residents
4. Establishment of a (volunteer) call-in system to check on seniors
5. Community (internet and/or phone) bulletin board and calendar
6. Cell phone coverage
7. Broadband
8. Seasonal home occupation – directory and/or (volunteer) switchboard to obtain information and/or support (lawn maintenance, shoveling, handyman, etc).

## **Energy:**

The group had a brief discussion of a range of energy issues, from winterizing houses to solar/wind alternative power generation. It was pointed out the school, which is the largest single electric power user in town, is ideally suited to have solar panels installed on the south facing roof. Pat Burns pointed out that Ben Polito (formally from Georgetown) has a company developing specialized solar power equipment that might be of interest.

Specific energy and alternative energy detail issues identified for inclusion in the Plan include:

1. Do ordinances unreasonably restrict residents from installing solar, wind or other alternative energy sources – do we need to revisit language
2. Can/should the town incentivize alternative energy by not adding to building assessment
3. Can/should the town support group purchase of alternative energy equipment and/or home insulation materials and services
4. Can/should the town support Efficiency Maine audits of houses

## **Future Meetings:**

The Comprehensive Plan Exploratory Group has scheduled April Meetings as to discuss additional specific topics. Meetings are held in the Town conference room at 7:00 - 8:30 pm.

Monday, April 3: Georgetown Central School

Monday, April 17: Land Use

As always, we welcome new members and/or visitors to participate.

Rick Cliffe