

Notes from Comprehensive Plan Exploratory Group Meeting, April 3, 2017

Georgetown Central School:

In addition to the Exploratory Group there were about 10 visitors at this meeting. The primary purpose was to identify issues (not solutions) related to the school. The number of students at GCS has decreased from about 100 in 2008 to 71 today (2 are home schooled but take art at GCS). The school budget, which represents approximately 50% of the total Town budget, has increased at a 3-4% per year rate during the same time. Highlights of the discussion include the following specific issues identified for inclusion in the plan.

1. We have a population of transient children in town, including winter rentals. Number of students varies from year to year but overall trend has been downward.
2. We have a population of children in town who are not being served by our school. Some special needs children go to other specialized facilities. Some children in town go 'away' to private schools. As the school has grown smaller an increasing number of families appear to have chosen other options.
3. Land is expensive which means young families with children can often not afford to buy or build here. One obstacle to attracting young families may be that '2 acre zoning' results in higher land cost. Also owners must drill a well and build a septic system.
4. In spite of the small population, high property values, often related to seasonal housing, result in a low mil rate compared to nearby towns.
5. If we don't increase the school population, we could lose it unless creative ways are found to address the issue.
6. Other places have found creative ways to keep very small schools open. Island Institute may have information.
7. An outstanding school could attract young families.
8. Our school could accommodate significantly more students without more costs.
9. The relationship between community and school needs to be strong.
10. A declining school population sometimes lowers standards.
11. Staffing, programming, and budget may need changes.
12. AOS98 is working on a comprehensive plan for the district. How will GCS fare within this context?