

# **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BELGRADE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT TO THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

## **Comprehensive Plan Implementation Oversight Committee**

September 16, 2020

### Introduction/Background

The Town of Belgrade's Comprehensive Plan, which was approved by voters in 2014, lays out the Town's goals. It also includes recommendations to achieve those goals.

The Plan includes an implementation plan (Chapter 16) summarizing who in Belgrade Town government is responsible for implementing each recommendation. Where a recommendation does not fall within the jurisdiction of an existing Town board, committee or official, responsibility for determining how to implement rests by default with the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen.

The purpose and role of the Comprehensive Plan Implementation Oversight Committee as spelled out in its charter is to monitor progress (or the lack thereof) in the implementation of the Plan's recommendations, report their status, and make recommendations for the Plan's implementation to the Select Board for their consideration and action.

This report covers our findings since our last report to the Select Board, dated May 21, 2019, and presented at a Board meeting of that same date. Our intention was to present a progress report to the Select Board this past May. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee did not meet from March through August 2020. The Committee resumed meeting with the Town Manager's and Clerk's assistance and utilizing the Town's Zoom software application in September. We met four times over this time.

During most of this time the Committee consisted of just three members. Thanks to the Town Manager's efforts, three new members joined the Committee by January 2020.

### Areas Reviewed

The Committee to date has completed a first-cut review of the Town's progress implementing the recommendations in the following areas of the Plan:

- Historical and cultural resources
- Community recreation
- Natural resources
- Water resources
- Economic development

- Housing
- Growth and development

These have been completed with the input and cooperation of the applicable Town officials, board, and committee members. Our many thanks.

The Committee will next assess the Town's progress implementing the recommendations of the Farming and Forestry Chapter of the Plan.

Areas where progress remains to be evaluated by the Committee include the following:

- Public services and management
- Transportation systems

### Findings

All the Committee's findings since it was established by the Select Board are presented in a spreadsheet available on the Committee's web page of the Town's website. We encourage you to review if interested in our detailed findings. Here is a link to that page for your convenience: [townofbelgrade.com/trackingsheet](http://townofbelgrade.com/trackingsheet)

Generally, the Committee has found that where specific Town officials, departments or committees have responsibility for implementation, considerable progress has been made or is underway. Where implementation responsibility is not within the clear jurisdiction of existing officials, departments or committees, implementation frequently fell through the cracks of Town government. This issue was highlighted in the Committee's prior reports to the Select Board.

Over the last year, the Committee completed its review of the Town's progress implementing the recommendations found in Chapter 13, Growth and Development. Simply put, this chapter and its recommendations focus on managing the suburbanization of Belgrade as it continues to grow in population and to develop. A summary of our findings follows.

Tasks completed or underway:

1. The Planning Board has completed a review of Town ordinances for which it is responsible for administering for consistency with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. They have been incorporated into two ordinances by the Planning Board – the Commercial Development Review Ordinance and the Shoreland Zoning Ordinance. This includes incorporating improved management of stormwater and phosphorous runoff from developments and better protecting the water quality of the Belgrade Lakes. Work is currently underway to make the Subdivision Ordinance consistent with the Plan, as well as other needed updates. The goal of the Planning Board is to bring the subdivision ordinance to voters at the March 2021 town meeting.

2. The Plan recommended the development of a written job description and performance goals for the Town Code Enforcement Officer, and an increase in funding and hours to enable providing guidance to homeowners and developers, identify ordinance violations, perform compliance inspections of active permits, investigate citizen complaints, and initiate corrective and enforcement actions with the goal of improving compliance with Town ordinances and providing a “level playing field”. The Town Manager has revised the 2013 job description and developed performance goals for the CEO position. The position has also been upgraded to 25 hours per week. What measurable progress has been made since funding for the position was increased toward the above goals is uncertain due to a lack of information on the level of effort and progress.
3. Consistent with the Plan’s recommendations, all Planning Board members have completed Maine Municipal Association training for planning board members regarding how to properly perform their duties.
4. Planning Board agendas and minutes are made available to the public on the Town’s website, although timeliness has been variable periodically due to either minute approvals being postponed to make more time for permit reviews, or the unavailability of Town office staff time to prepare minutes.

Tasks not yet initiated:

1. Preparation of a citizen’s guide to the Town’s land use ordinances. Such a pamphlet as envisioned by the Plan would provide a general overview of the Town’s ordinances and when they apply.
2. A comprehensive review of the compliance of commercial developments approved under the Commercial Development Review Ordinance.
3. Development of provisions to ensure open space protection in rural areas of town, such as open space set asides, establishment of an open space acquisition reserve account, transfer of development rights, development density bonuses and incentives for cluster development.
4. Create and maintain a geographic information system (GIS) to track development and update mapping layers created for the Comprehensive Plan, including acres of open space.

New Recommendations

1. The Planning Board with technical assistance from KVCOG continue its work to complete a rewrite of the Town’s out-of-date Subdivision Ordinance, ensuring it is consistent with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The Comprehensive Plan Oversight Implementation Committee meet with the Town Manager and CEO to discuss and to continue to monitor on-going efforts to measure and determine progress toward greater compliance with Town ordinances.

Past Recommendations:

1. The Select Board discuss and develop an action plan how to implement the Plan's recommendation for the development of a comprehensive land use ordinance to bring to voters. See our 2019 report for more details and a suggested approach for your consideration.
2. The Select Board and Town Manager should review the implementation table found in Chapter 16 of the Comprehensive Plan, identifying those recommendations which are the Board's and Town Manager's responsibility to implement, including those not already assigned to a specific official or town board or committee. A work plan should be developed, and progress periodically reviewed so not forgotten amongst the day-to-day operations of Town government.

Respectively submitted,

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Mary Vogel  
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