



RPC News & Notes

Newsletter of the Rockingham Planning Commission

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Road Inventory Update Slated for Kingston, Newfields, Sandown, So. Hampton

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) is coordinating an effort to use Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to map roads that are missing from its GIS database. The RPC and other regional planning commissions will provide ongoing road data collection to update the NHDOT Roads GIS database. This effort will standardize the mapping of road features and will ensure more accurate and up-to-date delineations — and fairer block grant distributions to communities. The goal of the project will be a statewide roads GIS database and an effective method for keeping it up to date. NHDOT has provided regional planning commissions with Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers and other equipment needed to map and collect information on roads.

In our process to identify and map missing roads we will rely on the assistance of municipal officials. We will solicit the help of town managers, road agents and selectmen. All new road names must be verified by signature from the Board of Selectmen before being accepted by NHDOT. The Commission has purchased a vehicle for use in the road inventory. The vehicle is equipped with a distance-measuring instrument that enables us to precisely measure the length of a road, as it is driven. Data collection is performed by a team of two. One drives, while the other operates the GPS receiver and the distance-measuring instrument.

To date inventories have been updated for *Greenland, North Hampton, Fremont, Brentwood, Danville, Kensington, Hampton, Newton and Plaistow*. Upcoming communities are Kingston, Newfields, Sandown, and South Hampton. This schedule can be adjusted based on municipal interest in participation. If your community is interested in participating in this project, please contact Robert Pruyne, GIS/Trans Tech at rpruyne@rpc-nh.org or 778-0885.

North Hampton Completes Sustainable Development/Smart Growth Audit

Staff from the Rockingham Planning Commission recently conducted a Smart Growth Audit for the Town of North Hampton. The audit was based on the principles and practices used in the Smart Growth Audit process developed by the New Hampshire Office of Energy and Planning (OEP). The Planning Board of North Hampton chose to focus on just two of the eight Smart Growth principles defined by OEP: “Preserving New Hampshire’s Working Landscape” and “Protecting Environmental Quality”.

The project came to be referred to locally as the Sustainable Development Audit, as the Town Planning Board felt that the term reflected a more descriptive and integrated approach to planning. Sustainable Development is commonly defined as development that meets the needs of the current generation without sacrificing the needs of future generations. Both Sustainable Development and Smart Growth are based on principles and practices designed to balance the needs of the environment, the economy, and the community while recognizing that future generations will experience the effects of the decisions made now about development.

RPC staff reviewed the Town’s master plan, zoning ordinance, and land use regulations to determine whether provisions in those documents furthered or hindered the realization of the goals of preserving the working landscape and protecting environmental quality. After this review, RPC staff met with members of Town Boards and Commissions in a public forum to present the audit. Public outreach on the project also included a presentation to an eighth grade enrichment class at North Hampton School. The enrichment class may use the presentation as a starting point to independently develop their own projects in the spring on environmental protection, civic participation, and youth participation in town planning.

Recommendations for actions to support North Hampton’s Smart Growth goals include the following:

- ? Update the Master Plan
- ? Coordinate with neighboring towns to protect the working landscape and environmental quality
- ? Revise the zoning ordinance to allow smaller lots in some areas of town as well as mixed-use development
- ? Consider tree protection regulations
- ? Discuss the adoption of a Conservation Subdivision ordinance
- ? Require low-impact development practices in site design
- ? Revise wetlands ordinance to require vegetated buffer areas
- ? Add aquifer protection district provisions to zoning ordinance

Suggestions made at the public meeting were incorporated into the final report, which will be made available to the Planning Board and other town Boards and Commissions to use as technical guidance for future planning projects. The document is not an official governing document of the town, but rather a report generated by the RPC to be used as a guide for future decisions, if the Planning Board chooses to do so. Contact RPC Regional Planner Jill Robinson at jrobinson@rpc-nh.org or 778-0885 with questions.

RPC Partners on Land Conservation Plan for Coastal Watersheds

The Rockingham Planning Commission will work with the Nature Conservancy, the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, and the Strafford Regional Planning Commission to develop a land conservation plan for New Hampshire’s coastal watersheds under a grant recently awarded from the NH Estuaries Project.

The plan will identify areas for conservation using a wide range of geo-spatial information as well as existing studies and plans from local and regional projects. Working with a multi-disciplinary advisory team made up of environmental, governmental, and university representatives at the local, regional, and state levels, the principal partners will identify potential areas for land conservation, collect and synthesize data, and discuss the project with local communities. Toward the end of the project, the principal partners will work with local stakeholders to discuss the project results and strategic actions including master planning, zoning and regulatory changes, and voluntary land owner conservation programs. The one-year project is slated to begin in May of 2005. Contact RPC Regional Planner Jill Robinson with questions at jrobinson@rpc-nh.org or 778-0885.

NH Route 125 Improvements Move Ahead with Input from Advisory Task Force

For the past two and one-half years members of the NH Route 125 Advisory Task Force (125 ATF) have been meeting every other month to help coordinate the public information outreach process for a program of substantial transportation improvements to the NH Route 125 corridor in the towns of Plaistow and Kingston. This committee is comprised of public and safety officials from the two Town's that have been tasked with serving to bridge the gap between the NH Department of Transportation and the general public regarding project proposals. In early winter the final public hearing on the project took place paving the way for the official programming of the series of improvements in the Governor's Ten Year Transportation Plan. The first of these improvements has already begun, a major re-alignment of Hunt and Newton Junction roads in Kingston that addresses severe safety issues at this formerly dangerous intersection. The remaining improvements, slated to occur between now and 2012, include a number of traffic management practices that are typically under-utilized by NHDOT, in an effort to maintain corridor integrity in the future. The two most radical of these are a raised median for approximately half of the six-mile segment combined with an aggressive program of parcel-based access management, which minimizes curb cuts to the highway while at the same time directing the flow of traffic to and from businesses and residences.

The 125 ATF has held a number of workshops over the past two years to familiarize affected property owners of the impact of this project upon their properties and to incorporate their comments into the overall corridor design plan. In addition to the uncommon traffic control elements mentioned above the plan incorporates signaling several intersection and either planning for or constructing frontage roads parallel to NH Route 125 in order to ease traffic flow on the highway. Contact RPC Assistant Director Glenn Greenwood at 778-0885 of ggreenwood@rpc-nh.org if you have any questions regarding this project or the 125 ATF.

Major "CEDS" Update Begins

A major five year update of Rockingham County's CEDS or "Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy" is underway. The effort is being undertaken by the Rockingham Economic Development Corporation (REDC) with assistance from the RPC and from Community Solutions Inc., an economic development consultant.

The CEDS for the County was first completed in 2000 and has since been updated annually. Every 5 years the CEDS must be rewritten to incorporate changes in the regional economic conditions as well as new information about threats and opportunities for the economy in the region.

The CEDS is important for a number of reasons. First, it helps establish a strategic thought process, incorporating a broad cross-section of input, about how the region should position itself for future sustainable economic development. This may become of critical importance in the Seacoast given the upcoming Base Closure and Realignment (BRAC) and its potential impact on the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Second, it maintains the County's eligibility to receive EDA (Economic Development Administration) infrastructure grants to support identified priority projects, and third, it brings together data and analysis about existing economic and demographic conditions which are useful to many other groups in their own work throughout the County.

The update effort will begin with two identical public kickoff meetings, first on **March 23, from 8:00-11:30 am at the Pease campus of the NH Technical College**, and the second on **March 30, also 8:00-11:30 am at the Derry Municipal Complex**. These meetings will include an overview of demographic and economic factors to be considered in the new CEDS provided by Peter Francese, noted demographer from Exeter, followed by a vision and goal setting session. For more information contact

Dates to Remember

- ? **Wednesday, March 23** - Governor's Advisory Committee on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) Meeting. 2:00 pm. Concord.
- ? **Wednesday, March 23** - CEDS Kickoff Meeting I, NH Technical College Pease Tradeport Campus. 8:00-11:30 am.
- ? **Wednesday, March 30** - CEDS Kickoff Meeting II, Derry Municipal Center. 8:00-11:30 am.
- ? **Thursday, March 31** - Seacoast MPO Policy Committee Meeting. 7:00 pm. Portsmouth City Hall.
- ? **Wednesday, April 6** - Salem-Plaistow-Windham MPO Policy Committee Meeting. 7:00 pm. Kingston Town Hall.
- ? **Saturday, April 9** - 12th Annual OEP State Planning & Zoning Conference. 8:00 am - 3:00 pm. Radisson Hotel/Center of New Hampshire in Manchester.
- ? **Wednesday, April 13** - RPC Commission Meeting. 7:00 pm. Kingston Town Hall.
- ? **Wednesday, May 18** - RPC Commission Meeting. 7:00 pm. Location TBA.

For more information call 778-0885, or visit www.rpc-nh.org.

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