

**Disclaimer:**

This document is a user guide only. Its purpose is to assist Comprehensive Planners and community members to provide organized input to the Comprehensive Plan. This document is not a legal document and is non-binding on any party. Statements made in this document may sometimes reflect the opinion of the author or may be inaccurate in describing the legal requirements or processes defined by the Clifton Land Use Ordinance or State of Maine. People using this document do so at their own risk with no warranty expressed or implied regarding outcomes as a result of using the document. The Town reserves the right to alter or otherwise adjust, modify or amend this document at any time.

**Introduction**

The Clifton Comprehensive Plan is a product of the Select Board. By default, the Select Board generally looks to the Planning Board to develop the Comprehensive Plan. Many elements in the Comprehensive Plan are well beyond the regulatory scope of the Planning Board. That said, the Planning Board frequently is the most direct implementation party for the Comprehensive Plan because of the heavy weight placed on land use and zoning issues commonly resulting from a Comprehensive Plan.

**The Committee**

The Select Board appoints people to be a party to the Comprehensive Planning Committee. The Select Board owns the process and there should be a working document appointing people to the Committee. The Committee should elect a Chair and periodically reaffirm the Chair. The Chair should have a document from the Select Board naming Committee members and maintain a notebook or digital folder with authorizations. Committee members should have at least average writing skills and be compatible with email and basic Microsoft Office products such as Word, PowerPoint, and Excel.

Committee members should decide the minimum number of people to be present in order to vote on items and determine plurality rules for various stages and recommendations surrounding the plan. These may include and not be limited to: posting items publicly; holding public hearings; making recommendations to the Select Board; goals and recommendations within the Comprehensive Plan. Plurality rules should be for majority; super majority; unanimity. For example, posting a draft may require a simple majority or it may be a simple Chair approval. Alternately, readiness for a public hearing may require some sort of super majority (such as 2/3 agreement). In any regard, the Committee needs to establish these ground rules.

**Committee Meetings**

Committee meetings should generally be held in public areas. Though the Committee is not adjudicatory or decisional, the purpose of the Committee is to represent the entire community and not any particular segment or interest. If the Committee meets as a portion of another meeting (as in during a Planning Board meeting), the Committee should formally open and close the Committee meeting. This way non-Planning Board members may freely participate in the Comprehensive Plan and not interfere with the regulatory and adjudicatory domains of the Planning Board functions. There may be times when a Committee Meeting may occur spontaneously or at another off-site workshop (i.e. some sort of training session being attended by more

than one member), however, this is something to avoid as it creates the appearance of non-transparency or establishing an ex parte agenda.

### **Committee Member Input**

All Committee members should have even footing and voting rights regardless of their other town duties. In other words, by nature of being a Select or Planning Board member, a Board member on the Committee vote carries no more or less weight than a non-Board citizen assigned to the Comprehensive Plan Committee. The Chair should maintain a digital or hard copy of the working files provided at Committee meetings. Digital files can be on shared drives and in notebooks or file cabinets at Town Office. Active work drafts need not be made immediately available to members of the public. However, on request, Committee members should be prepared at any moment to hand over any and all relevant files. Periodically, the Committee should decide certain draft phase files are ok to be public in a watermark DRAFT state and post them to the Planning Board web site. Active working drafts may be on privately shared cloud accounts such as a Google drive. Emails among committee members should always copy the Maine Freedom of Access Act account email address for the town. The address is: [cliftonpbfoaa@gmail.com](mailto:cliftonpbfoaa@gmail.com).

### **Non-Committee Member Citizen Input**

To maximize thought diversity and preserve freedom of expression for everyone, citizen input is something the Committee should encourage. Citizens wishing to provide input or comments should do so in writing. Verbal presentations are a useful form for conveying a general thought or passion regarding a topic, however, messages delivered via verbal means are generally not effective due to the interpretive nature of verbal communication. Email comments should always copy the FOAA account noted above. Should hard copy documents come to the attention of the Chair or town staff, the Chair or staff member needs to record the document as a receipt and then file the document in the file cabinet or notebook for later use and possible plan incorporation.

### **Closing Comments**

The Comprehensive Plan is a work product of the Select Board. It is a non-binding policy document designed to assess in a summary fashion, the current state of the community and suggest future goals and strategies to achieve the goals. There should be goals and strategies for each subject area and if there are truly none, the plan should affirm no goals or actions and why. The Plan is much more than a land use document and it's important for the Select Board, Planning Board and Citizenry to recognize these characteristics. There should be a minimum of two public hearings before submitting to the State for review and one public hearing after state review before acceptance by the Select Board from the Committee. Once accepted by the Select Board, the Comprehensive Plan should appear on the next regular election ballot.