

Preserve Somersworth Meeting Minutes
November 21, 2019

Members present: Scott Orzechowski, Chair, Dale Smith-Kenyon, Doug Watson.
Public present: Richard Brooks.

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 pm by Chairman Orzechowski.
The minutes of the September 5, 2019 meeting were approved as written.

Comment [1]:

Scott opened the meeting with a discussion of a draft planning process that Doug proposed as a way of clarifying the meaning of “preserve Somersworth” and to identify valued aspects of living in Somersworth in the past, present, and future.

Scott had reviewed the draft proposal and suggested cutting back the proposed planning process from three to two meetings, increase the number of community members invited to participate in the process, and increase emphasis on the preservation of environmental resources. Scott suggested replacing the team neighborhood tours with a slideshow depicting the present condition of roads, buildings, infrastructure, e.g., the water treatment facility, land conservation sites (land use), environmental resources, available transportation options, etc., and using an area map to facilitate a discussion about the state of the environment and community.

Dale commented that it was important that the information obtained and presented by the Commission address future growth and sustainability, and includes planning for housing and supports for elders to stay in their neighborhoods and community. Dale suggested that the work of the commission should convey a message that acknowledges the loss or unavailability of accessible neighborhood resources like grocery and drug stores, and make accessibility, walkability, and availability of convenient transportation options (trolley or shuttle) required considerations when the City plans and budgets for new development, makes improvements to existing infrastructure, and performs required maintenance. Dale shared demographic data that positions Somersworth as “the second oldest city in the state”, (percentage of population), a fact that creates a compelling reason for the City to plan for the needs of an increasing population of older citizens. Doug suggested that the Commission adhere to the architectural principles of Universal Design as a foundation for making recommendations relating to new construction or improvements to existing buildings or infrastructure in order to improve accessibility for all citizens and reduce obsolescence.

Further discussion identified twenty-one community members as potential contributors to the process. It was also suggested that the “what was”, “what is”, and “what could be” discussions be extended to city employees including fire, police, public works, planning department, city manager, and department heads to insure an opportunity for their input. Other suggestions included interviewing regional contacts about their relationships with the city of Somersworth, to identify common concerns, and opportunities for regional collaboration. It was also considered important to reach out to local businesses for their input. Increasing the number of people identified led to the suggestion that a survey or questionnaire be developed to gather information. At the next Commission meeting, Doug will present a draft invitation and process for extending invitations, and Dale will present a draft questionnaire for discussion.

A motion to adjourn was made by Doug and seconded by Dale. The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 pm. Next meeting: To be Determined.

Respectfully submitted by Doug Watson, December 9, 2019.