

December 26, 2008

To: Mike Lassell and South Berwick Economic Development
Committee
From: Frank O'Hara
Re: Results of November 12, 2008 workshop



A. Goal Priorities for Economic Development

Twenty-two South Berwick citizens attended a November 12, 2008 workshop at Town Hall to review economic development survey results, and to discuss priority goals and strategies arising from the Town's situation.

In the first exercise, participants were given 100 points to distribute across four goals. The four goals were phrased by the consultant to reflect what people reported on the earlier opinion leader survey. Those goals were:

- Reduce residential property taxes
- Create new jobs and economic opportunities for residents
- Make the community desirable for people to live, shop, and work
- Create a sustainable community -- energy-efficient, environmentally and economically sound

Participants were also given the opportunity to add goals, and four members suggested the following:

- Farming/agriculture coop
- Recreational
- Have a vibrant town center for commerce
- Make most of our gateways by re-zoning to allow mixed use business/residential
- Maintain desirable attributes of the community

The result of the exercise was that the participants favored economic development goals that enhanced the Town's "quality of place" – its desirability with regard to living, shopping, and working – as well as those that supported the creation of a "sustainable community" in the future.

In one respect, this was a slightly different set of priorities from the 27 community opinion leader surveys, where the desire for economic development to offset property taxes was the most frequently mentioned rationale. In another respect, however, the two results were compatible – in that there was substantial support for a diversity of goals in both the opinion leader survey and among workshop participants. It seems that the citizens of South Berwick

want an economic development strategy that achieves multiple goals, not one at the expense of the other.

| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS AS RANKED BY SOUTH BERWICK WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS ON 22 NOVEMBER 12, 2008 | | Average Points |
|--|---|---------------------------|
| 1 | Make the community <u>desirable for people to live, shop, and work</u> | 29 |
| 2 | Create a <u>sustainable</u> community -- energy-efficient, environmentally and economically sound | 28 |
| 3 | Create <u>new jobs</u> and economic opportunities for residents | 20 |
| 4 | <u>Reduce</u> residential property <u>taxes</u> | 17 |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Farming/agriculture coop ○ Recreational ○ Have a vibrant town center for commerce ○ Make most of our gateways by re-zoning to allow mixed use business/residential ○ Maintain desirable attributes of the community | 5 |
| | | 100 POINTS |

B. Strategy Priorities

The second exercise tested eleven development strategies that came up in the opinion leader surveys against the goals. In this case, participants distributed points across each goal to try and answer the question --- which strategy was best positioned to achieve the stated goal?

Again, there was a diversity in the strategies selected. The top seven strategies were:

1. Support downtown businesses
2. Promote light manufacturing
3. Support public improvements downtown – new library, town common, parking
4. Support new businesses in neighborhoods abutting downtown – Norton Street, lower Main Street
5. Promote professional/service/hi-tech/biotech/software/medical offices and businesses

6. Promote green businesses that design, manufacture, install solar, wind and geothermal systems
7. Reduce Town costs through consolidation, efficiencies

Town residents want downtown improvements, but they also want to promote job development and green businesses, and to help the Town operate more efficiently. The detailed results of the strategies workshop are shown on the next page.

On the last page are notes from the general discussion. It shows that while people value the ideas of green development, culture and the arts, etc., they also want to be realistic. Will the strategy work, is it right for South Berwick, is the question.

C. Lessons for South Berwick's economic development goals

Several conclusions can be drawn from both the opinion leader survey and the workshop:

1. Any strategy for South Berwick must be multi-faceted. Residents have a diverse set of development goals and strategies they would like to pursue for the Town, and the appearance that one goal or strategy might predominate and take all of the available resources would create dissension.
2. Any strategy must not only be consistent with, but strengthen, the character of South Berwick. Whatever is done cannot take away from the residential attractiveness, the in-town charm, the historic feel, the natural beauty, the quality of schools of the existing community. On the other hand, South Berwick's people have long worked at the Kittery shipyard and Pratt and Whitney, so part of the community's character is making things, working in manufacturing, not just in large but in small business as well. Both parts of South Berwick character need to be maintained.
3. Any strategy must be realistic, and meet the straight-faced test. People want to see their tax dollars used effectively, no matter what the purpose.

D. Next steps

Chuck Lawton of Planning Decisions will provide a short economic overview of South Berwick and its region in January. The purpose of the overview will be to try and identify the potential economic development opportunities that fit within the goals and strategies generated from the process so far.

With that last piece of the puzzle in place, the Committee will then turn, with the consultant's help, to identifying recommended goals and strategies to present to the Town this winter.

South Berwick Economic Development EXERCISE 2: Possible Strategies

| | Goal | 2 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|----|---|------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| | | Sustain – able Comm'ty | Good place to live, shop, work | New jobs + economic opps | Reduce property taxes | Other | TOTAL |
| | | 5,012 | 3,765 | 3,155 | 1,983 | 850 | 14,765 |
| 1 | Support downtown businesses | 480 | 460 | 379 | 251 | 115 | 1,685 |
| 2 | Promote light manufacturing | 585 | 343 | 315 | 222 | 65 | 1,530 |
| 3 | Support public improvements downtown – new library, town common, parking | 500 | 390 | 345 | 192 | 75 | 1,502 |
| 4 | Support new businesses in neighborhoods abutting downtown – Norton Street, lower Main Street | 480 | 485 | 252 | 107 | 105 | 1,429 |
| 5 | Promote professional/service/hi-tech/biotech/software/medical offices and businesses | 437 | 397 | 290 | 178 | 70 | 1,372 |
| 6 | Promote green businesses that design, manufacture, install solar, wind and geothermal systems | 422 | 308 | 373 | 191 | 60 | 1,354 |
| 7 | Reduce Town costs through consolidation, efficiencies | 463 | 436 | 199 | 56 | 105 | 1,259 |
| 8 | Extend sewer and water to new parts of the community to allow business growth | 290 | 171 | 277 | 216 | 30 | 984 |
| 9 | Foster more culture and recreation | 320 | 301 | 198 | 64 | 80 | 963 |
| 10 | Create a new business park | 360 | 152 | 215 | 116 | 60 | 903 |
| 11 | Promote the area for tourism | 245 | 145 | 197 | 81 | 30 | 698 |

Selected comments from Group discussion

- promote downtown businesses
- make public improvements
- professional offices
- promote green business
- question – is “sustainable” realistic
- light manufacturing -- some high pay/some low
- utilities -- mid-range -- didn't help
- promote tourism
- clean up river restock salmon
- culture and recreation? Be realistic, they are not South Berwick
- promote what we have
- be a place to come inland when foggy
- trolley
- outlook and spring hill -- weddings, small inns, restaurants
- support bakeries, farms, limo, florist
- inventory existing businesses for their needs
- promote golf course -- community tournament, attraction
- promote schools
- create incubator – attract those working out of home
- opportunity to grow and stay
- crafts people – create a visible brand
- strawberry festival
- small business counselor?
- town newsletter
- work with greater york regional chamber
- work with Score
- promote working farms
- no farm zones in ordinance -- tax problem; soils problem
- set up farmer's market
- conservation activities related to open space
- promote open space, snowmobiling, rec.
- nothing to keep people in-town
- promote so people know market
- brochures
- play to strengths
- town bulletin boards, as well as library
- should there be a balance?
- downtown plus business park?
- position ourselves to take advantage of opportunities