

October 16, 2008

To: The South Berwick Economic Development Committee  
Re: Results of opinion leader interviews  
From: Frank O'Hara



Between August and October, 2008, eight South Berwick volunteers interviewed 27 different opinion leaders in the community about their views about South Berwick's future and economic development. This memo provides a listing of all of the comments they received in their interviews, with the exceptions of comments aimed at particular individuals. These comments will be used by the Economic Development Committee, in consultation with the public, to develop economic goals.

Thanks to Mimi Demers, Sue Pullar, Katherine Wolfe, Clifford Cleary, Mike Lassel, John Rudolph, Douglas Leteillier, and Brad Christo, for their excellent work in conducting these interviews, and entering the information into the survey system.

The following are the questions that the interviewers asked, as well as a reference to the page the responses can be found:

1. What are the major challenges you see facing South Berwick in the next 5 years? (*see page 3*)
2. In broad terms, what do you think the town government in South Berwick should be doing to address these issues? (*see page 6*)
3. Is economic development – defined as helping existing businesses to grow and expand, and attracting new businesses to move into the community – an important priority for the community? Why or why not? (*see page 9*)
4. Here are some reasons for economic development. Which matter the most to you?
  - a. To keep tax rates down?
  - b. To provide job opportunities for young people?

***Note on opinion leader surveying***

*Opinion leader surveying is a method for gaining the pulse of a community. It has some of the characteristics of the traditional opinion survey methods of telephone polls and focus groups. Like a poll, it is a one-on-one conversation. Like a focus group, it is in-depth, and not just a yes-no answer. It is different than a telephone poll in that the respondents are selected for the diversity of their views, rather than randomly. It is different than a focus group in that the conversations take place one-on-one, rather than in a group.*

*The value of opinion leader surveying is that it provides a greater breadth and depth of community views than traditional survey techniques, and when it is conducted by citizen volunteers as was done in this case, at a much lower cost. This is not a "poll" – the reader can't add up all the people who support one action or another, and generalize that figure to the town as a whole. But if the selection of interviewees is diverse, as it was in this case, the reader can be confident that the responses cover 99% of the range of opinions held by one person or another within the community.*

- c. To have a lively and interesting downtown?
  - d. To encourage economic innovation and prosperity?
  - e. Other?  
*(see page 12)*
5. If you were to pick two or three ideal economic development project for South Berwick, what might they be? *(see page 16)*
6. What should be the Town's role in economic development? Should it (why or why not?):
- a. Market the community and/or region through brochures, web sites, etc.?
  - b. Apply for grants to help businesses or business park developers who ask for it?
  - c. Provide tax increment financing districts for businesses or business park developers that ask for it?
  - d. Develop a town-owned business park through a combination of grants and town money?
  - e. Develop a package of financial tools for businesses in South Berwick, such as revolving loan fund and TIF districts, as ways to encourage businesses to grow and expand?
  - f. Participate financially in regional efforts to promote economic development?
  - g. Other?  
*(see page 20)*
7. What is the easiest way for the Committee to communicate with you and other citizens going forward (i.e., mailing, website, post at transfer station, email, etc.) *(see page 25)*
8. Do you have any final comments or suggestions for the Economic Development Committee?  
*(see page 27)*

**Question 1: What are the major challenges you see facing South Berwick in the next 5 years?**

**Respondent 1:**

Education: We need to do a better job of preparing our youth for the 21st century

Economy: This means greater emphasis on critical thinking in math, the humanities and science, also effective and early foreign language instruction.

Environment: We need to help each and every business and residence make significant reductions in energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. We also need to find ways to implement alternative energy (i.e. solar, wind, geothermal) systems throughout our community. We are entering a new era in which the cost of fossil fuels will continue to rise and the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will become mandatory. Communities that respond to these challenges early will have a better chance of thriving.

Transportation: Roads leading into town are at or near capacity. We need to work on regional transportation strategies that get people out of their cars to the greatest degree possible. This means public transportation, development of more local shopping facilities and greater opportunities for working locally through telecommuting and home businesses.

**Respondent 2:**

1. Best use of the Town owned property (church on Young Street) (the Day property).
2. Promote the 236 Industrial Zone.

**Respondent 3:** Too much traffic. What to do about commercial/industrial development-I prefer to see none. How to maintain small-town, rural flavor.

**Respondent 4:** Taxes are too high. Limit residential development and increase business development which may have a direct tax impact --i.e., fewer kids in school

**Respondent 5:** Broadening the tax base. We have to cut the budget, can't keep going back to the taxpayers for more money.

**Respondent 6:** Control of taxes and services.

**Respondent 7:** It is becoming very expensive to live in South Berwick. People who have lived here all their lives are considering leaving and the young people who have grown up here are in many cases unable to stay and raise their own families.

**Respondent 8:** Taxes-we need to take care of the tax base. We need business. Industry. I prefer to see multi-business (diversity).

**Respondent 9:** Deliver services people expect within a budget people can live with

**Respondent 10:** Traffic, high taxes, lack of economic and commercial development and lack of leadership in Augusta.

**Respondent 11:** Taxes have increased dramatically. Neighboring communities are doing better. Downtown Traffic is bothersome, and is the bottleneck of the entire area.

**Respondent 12:** Trying for 30 years bringing new business and jobs to town. New business and jobs. Smaller tax hikes of 1-2% not 11% jumps. Provide good quality of life, education and security for citizens.

**Respondent 13:** Growth, controlled growth.

**Respondent 14:** Conflict between increasing commercial development and how it may affect town character, traffic

**Respondent 15:**

1. We need to change our way of thinking towards getting new business in town and out of town.
2. Make changes in traffic problems.
3. We need lower taxes.

**Respondent 16:** Retain small town character while supporting a strong local economic base

**Respondent 17:** traffic/parking affordable housing elderly housing

**Respondent 18:** "The continued traffic in the downtown." -"A Council working for the good of South Berwick."

**Respondent 19:**-"Are we adequately prepared for certain growth to come?"

"Reduce polarity or polarizing influences between interest groups (we aren't working together toward accepted goals)."

Define economic development and relationship to community development."

"Support and encourage more citizen based activities to deepen our volunteer forces."

**Respondent 20:**

"Stable tax base and ability to provide/acquire capital maintenance and costs."

"Keeping Downtown (DT) viable/successful/vibrant with good business drawing people."

"Maintaining quality of education

"Keeping good teachers because of the challenges associated with New Hampshire's tax system.

**Respondent 21:** "Keeping municipal and school budgets under control."

**Respondent 22:** I can see three things happening that will severely affect the town.

First, an increasing # of people will be leaving the Northeast because of the high cost of heat. These are the ones without strong roots in the community.

Second, many of the people from Massachusetts who moved here because of the lower housing costs will rethink that decision because of the cost of gas and mind numbing commute. People will move closer to where they work over time.

Third, seniors will be moving back in with their children because they will not be able to support a house alone. Maybe not a bad thing, These responses to economic conditions will increase the # of houses on the market, lower property values and erode the tax base.

**Respondent 23:** Higher Taxes, Traffic problems downtown.

**Respondent 24:**

a. The national economic situation will have an impact on the town and on individuals in town. The Town will need to respond by using resources wisely. There will be a lot of pressure to hunker down and not do anything new or to start new initiatives. I think this is the wrong thing to do at this time. I believe this is the time to think about what kind of future South Berwick wants and begin moving forward on it so that when the economy improves we are ahead of the curve.

b. South Berwick is in a unique position of being in the middle of a very economically and culturally healthy region yet we have not been over developed. It will be a shame if we mindlessly develop so that we become like “anywhere” USA. We need to think about how we can develop but keep our unique identity.

c. Our dependence on fossil fuels will be a growing challenge that will be seen in higher costs for transportation, home heating, food, and consumer goods. We must think about how to make South Berwick and our region less dependent on fossil fuels. We should be looking at renewable energy options for Town buildings and commercial and residential users. We should be looking at how to improve the energy efficiency of Town buildings as well as the housing stock in town. If we want to support the small businesses that are here, and attract new ones, we should be assisting in making sure that commercial buildings are energy efficient. Economic development efforts should focus on development that reduces the need to drive everywhere like creating more businesses and services so that more residents can shop, work, and recreate in town as well as creating public transportation options for getting to work and shopping. We also should be encouraging telecommuting and recognizing that we already have many people who do work at home via the internet.

**Respondent 25:** To provide services including education without a tax rebellion.

**Respondent 26:** Try to find direction for growth. Find how to mature as a town, eg, get a new library!

**Respondent 27:** How are we going to position our community to attract new businesses and mature current ones?

**Question 2: In broad terms, what do you think the town government in South Berwick should be doing to address these issues?**

**Respondent 1:** We should develop a town-wide energy strategy. We should work closely with/MDOT and surrounding towns in ME & NH on transportation strategies. We should make high speed internet available throughout the entire town. We should begin revamping the curriculum at MSAD 35 schools.

**Respondent 2:** 1. Proper evaluation. 2. Good judgement. 3. Common sense. All in the interest of the Citizens they represent.

**Respondent 3:** Listening to the people. Take a more bottom-up approach. People need to be heard and feel respected (even if their ideas don't end up being used)-otherwise, they get angry. Be fiscally responsible, as far as possible, within this vision.

**Respondent 4:** *(edited). Get good town staff.*

**Respondent 5:** We have to involve quality of life with what we can raise in taxes. SB has been doing the same as the state, hasn't done anything to attract growth, business. Business doesn't have to mean big chimneys, we can have smaller business and industry, 2-100 employees.

**Respondent 6:** Thinking outside of the box. A master plan in conjunction with the comp plan could set a path for the Town to follow regardless of who's elected or change in Town Manager. The MP could lay out a time frame with cost estimates that the Town could then properly plan from and budget for.

**Respondent 7:** Something needs to be done to keep costs, like keep taxes down. The solution to lower taxes should not come out of the pockets of taxpayers in a different form.

**Respondent 8:** Better marketing of ideas--educating the public--around broadening the tax base. Town should be proactive rather than defensive. Get information (about project ideas) out sooner, because once the wrong information goes out, you can't get it back.

**Respondent 9:** I'd like to see the broader issues coming forth, like, what will the town look like in 5-10 years. Gather ideas about how to get there. We need to work on zoning ordinances since they affect what goes forward. We need to take a more holistic view instead of going with isolated ideas.

**Respondent 10:** A lot of the current mess is out of our hands. Created by the State of Maine. Taxes funneled down to towns and businesses. Be Pro Business!

**Respondent 11:** All services should review for cost cutting. The bypass is the only long term solution.

**Respondent 12:** Everything they can do to bring new business to town. Set up a TIF zone to attract businesses.

**Respondent 13:** Make good planning decisions, based on the comp plan. Take advantage of SB's assets: picturesque downtown, good school system, "a great place to live".

**Respondent 14:** talking to the community and its leaders is good listening to all the town voices opportunity for townspeople to express their ideas and concerns is fundamental

**Respondent 15:** Hire a good town manager and give him the guide lines and tools to work with and let him do his job! Make it possible to get rid of council members who have their own agendas.

**Respondent 16:** encourage, support and attract small independent businesses that support the community support recreation and public cultural events eliminate parking regulations in the downtown open store hours no trucks walkable community

**Respondent 17:** More public input less closed door decisions open government

**Respondent 18:** -A feasibility study for a one way loop. Essentially, creating an in-town by pass to help deal with traffic. -"Portland St. 'roundabout'/constrictor to slow traffic."

**Respondent 19:** The response was using a drawing of a pyramid showing four layers. Movement is from the base (1) to the peak (4). Layer 1: Inventory and Survey with maximum public output Layer 2: Sift, filter, and allow what makes sense to bubble up. Layer 3: Categorize what has formed from below. Layer 4: Ordinances evolve to help define the vision. "Adhere to the process."

**Respondent 20:** -"Long term planning, i.e., zoning ordinances revisited, good in-fill development." -"Economic Development (ED) must be regional." -"Promote visions on how to improve DT, i.e., Historic District work, grant monies, etc." Establish programs to attract desired business within the vision.

**Respondent 21:** Combining services between towns, eg. "Fire fighting equipment and solid waste disposal". There seems to be "a natural progression of government becoming bigger. Consolidate jobs across towns"

**Respondent 22:** There are many people who would like to move forward on projects that can change the way we live and start building the communities of tomorrow but because they are not cost effective at this time, they lack the resources necessary to move forward and continue to think and invest for the short term. It's up to government to break this cycle.

**Respondent 23:** Stop spending and borrowing. Ease ordinances to allow new development. Build a by-pass.

**Respondent 24:** The Town government should be providing leadership on these issues. By that I mean that both elected and appointed government officials should be thinking ahead toward the future, seeking information and examples of what other towns have done, informing and educating citizens about promising options, building consensus among citizens about how to move ahead and then advocating and seeking approval for well thought out plans that are backed up by data, research, and community input. In the past, it has seemed like a very small group of people have made decisions and tried to push things through based on their own interests without a lot of knowledge or communication resulting in angry citizens who then voted things down. Specifically regarding the challenges facing South Berwick I think government should begin having a “plan ahead” mentality instead of just reacting to change; the Town should begin being more proactive and select our future and make plans to move toward it. Also the Town government should be taking the lead on making the town more energy independent. All the other towns around us are doing innovative things.

**Respondent 25:** Develop a different property base.  
Utilize people who can assist the town in developing a plan to change the tax base.  
Remove the politics from the planning.

**Respondent 26:** The town council needs to get educated. Needs to understand the Charter, maybe get the MMA to put together a short course. Town Council form of government is a good one, but lately they break all the rules, run the town any ole way they want. T council is responsible for very important issues, need to get busy with the bigger issues.

**Respondent 27:** Step one was forming the EDC to address economic development and step two is the plan to implement this work.

**Question 3: Is economic development – defined as helping existing businesses to grow and expand, and attracting new businesses to move into the community – an important priority for the community? Why or why not?**

**Respondent 1:** Yes. It's important to encourage business growth that is in keeping with the town's size and character. We need to be clear that under the current state tax structure economic growth will not reduce local property taxes for many years. But a thriving economy has other benefits, such as providing jobs for town residents.

**Respondent 2:** Yes. So. Berwick needs to be business friendly to present businesses and to potential new business that have interest to locate in So. Berwick.

**Respondent 3:** I prefer no new business; support what's here. Businesses have to feel supported, just as individuals do. Should have their needs addressed when the council is making decisions.

**Respondent 4:** Yes, We want to encourage them. With no control of traffic we will have no control of downtown. Not enough space to develop downtown and there are too many zoning restrictions.

**Respondent 5:** Yes, an important priority. Get some business, others follow. E.g., Liberty Mutual brought downtown Dover back to life.

**Respondent 6:** Yes. Sustainability. All entities can not continue to provide the existing services without increasing taxes or user rates. Residential dwellings/subdivisions do not cover the true costs of providing these services. Without diversity, services are reluctantly diminished or costs have to go up.

**Respondent 7:** Yes, it is because not only would it stabilize taxes, but such growth would provide employment opportunities for residents and would encourage others to come into our town to live, shop and work.

**Respondent 8:** Yes! I've seen how the town has helped existing businesses, eg, by providing parking, not putting in a street light so they didn't lose any parking. (Parking is a hindrance though; perhaps the St Michael's property will introduce more parking.

**Respondent 9:** Yes, but not in terms it's ordinarily thought of. I mostly want to see less interaction with the town rather than more. The town should get out of the way. The role of government in E.D. is to provide infrastructure. The regulatory structure (zoning) should be more purpose-driven rather than rule-driven. Allow the planning board more movement within the zoning ordinances, but require it to justify its decisions. Eg, expand conditional use permitting.

**Respondent 10:** Yes, residential only does nothing to off set tax base. It is a problem that this town has had for years. Houses do not cover the cost of schools/town services.

**Respondent 11:** Light- non polluting industry is fine.

**Respondent 12:** Can't afford to live here without new jobs.

**Respondent 13:** It IS, but the right type of econ dev. No huge GE plant in the middle of SB.

**Respondent 14:** yes balance to find the right king of growth Research true tax impact in the region

**Respondent 15:** Yes, We need to be able to attract new businesses. The historical part of town is important, but should not be top priority.

**Respondent 16:** yes, if they are a scale and nature of business we want in town and a service to the community mixed use housing and businesses

**Respondent 17:** Yes help town to prosper growth is good if down correctly

**Respondent 18:** The definition is OK. -"Its important to attract new business." -"Help business to grow and expand." Need parking, public lots, etc. -"Run water and sewer to Industrial Zone." Float bond?

**Respondent 19:** Does not agree with definition. No to the question. "First role of government is to protect the citizens. Government should assess needs of community and address them." Assess strong and weak points to shift and support strong ones. "Economic development is a low priority."

**Respondent 20:** -"Yes, but what is appropriate?" -"Yes, but regional development will provide the most benefit to the Town."

**Respondent 21:** "OK with definition" No. Because South Berwick (SB) is too close to New Hampshire (NH). Specifically, " because of the tax structure and available development sites already in NH." Existing available space in SB is limited. The return on the investment will not benefit the Town.

**Respondent 22:** I guess the answer depends on what kind of community we want. Do we want to keep on growing and alter our lifestyles or do we want to remain a small town and have a simpler life. I personally live here because I don't want to live in a larger community. I've been there, done that. What we have here is something very special that doesn't exist anywhere else in the country. We have seen growth because others see what we have and want to be part of it but in the process are changing it. I want to be able to know and trust my neighbors. I don't want to be put out of business by a major corporation. I certainly don't want to work for one. Once again, been there, done that. Yes, attracting businesses can generate tax revenue to give municipal leaders more money to spend. But what's the real cost.

**Respondent 23:** Yes, helps keep taxes lower.

**Respondent 24:** I believe economic development should be part of overall community development that includes the development of the people, the natural environment, and the cultural environment. I think a community is a holistic system where all the parts have to work together. Economic development as defined here should both reflect and support the people who live here. Economic development should not harm the natural environment but be a reflection of the place we live. Economic and cultural assets (i.e. schools, recreation, libraries, nonprofits, the built landscape) work synergistically so that we have to nurture both. So, yes I do believe economic development is an important priority, however I think if it is the only priority we will end up in failure -there are too many small towns across the country who in a single minded quest for economic development have sold out the soul of their town, resulting in ugly strip development, ghost town main streets, and even worse economic despair than when they started.

**Respondent 25:** Yes - To insure a vitality in South Berwick and to have services available to community members. Development will provide for the distribution of the property tax burden.

**Respondent 26:** I don't believe it should be. Every town does not need to be mixed use. We should do what we're good at--be a residential community. Pay attention to things that are important to res. communities--library, sidewalks, community centers. Then get more upscale housing which pays for itself, tax-wise. Keep it rural, using 5 acre zoning and cluster zoning. Force this, if need be.

**Respondent 27:** Yes, we want existing businesses and what would attract new business.

**Question 4: Here are some reasons for economic development. Which matter the most to you?**

Here are some reasons for economic development. Which matter the most to you?		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
a) To keep tax rates down?	64%	16
b) To provide job opportunities for young people?	36%	9
c) To have a lively and interesting downtown?	44%	11
d) To encourage economic innovation and prosperity?	56%	14
e) Other?	16%	4
Comments		22
<i>answered question</i>		25
<i>skipped question</i>		2

**Respondent 1:**

- To keep tax rates down - It won't, this is a false choice.
- To provide job opportunities for young people. To have a lively and interesting downtown. To encourage economic innovation and prosperity. - All important.
- Other? - to provide opportunities for people to work close to home.

**Respondent 2:** : no comment

**Respondent 3:** : no comment

**Respondent 4:** need concept and assistance but let the private sector take the risk  
Downtown is not a viable growth area, no expansion options

**Respondent 5:** #4, econ. prosperity, covers all of them. It's what we all want. We all have to make a living. You make relationships where you work; where you live is not just where you hang your hat at night. You support the other businesses where you work. Businesses in a town are important. When you need donations for the football program or whatever, you don't go to residences, you go to the businesses.

**Respondent 6:**

Not to confuse the issue, an expanded business/industrial zone will further enhance the existing down-town and make it even more vibrant.

**Respondent 7:** no comment

**Respondent 8:** Tax rates most important. I know people who are moving out of SB because they can't afford to live here any longer. I have family members that can't afford to build. A lot of people work out of town; perhaps they could work from home. If we want good quality of life we have to deal with taxes. If we don't people who can afford it will move here. That's fine, we need new ideas, but we want old residents here too, as they can pass on the history of the place-that's important. Older residents can also help make good, careful decisions when change needs to happen.

**Respondent 9:** E.D won't keep taxes down. Job opportunities for everyone, cross out the "young people". A lively downtown is not so much a purpose as a result. It's not about the money. We want to increase the vitality of the community as a whole.

**Respondent 10:** Taxes 1st, innovation 2nd, jobs 3rd, and downtown 4th.

**Respondent 11:** downtown 1st, innovation 2nd, and taxes 3rd.

**Respondent 12:** Middle class will have to move out without jobs. We need jobs. Downtown can have business like Freeport.

**Respondent 13:** Don't believe econ dev will do much to keep taxes down. We have jobs, and we have young people, not a problem. Take advantage of the area, encourage independent business, eg Stonewall Kitchen. Don't be trying to attract huge factories.

**Respondent 14:** both are related

**Respondent 15:** : no comment

**Respondent 16:** create a diverse community minimize travel to work and retail, walkable community that will protect the environment

**Respondent 17:** create jobs that can support families

**Respondent 18:**

- a. Rated 3. "Unless you get a Pratt & Whitney, you're not going to offset tax rate."
- b. Rated 1. "If you bring new business, especially retail/restaurants; its work for kids. But none for adults, really."
- c. Rated 2. "Downtown fits my needs."
- d. Rated 4. "No."

**Respondent 19:**

- a. Rated 5: "False Premise."
- b. Rated 4: "No way can South Berwick deliver on this."
- c. Rated 2. "Private sector thing."

- d. Rated 3. "Not government but private sector."
- e. Rated 1. "Encourage tourism and eco-tourism based activities."

**Respondent 20:**

- a. Rated 1. "Of course it does."
- b. Rated 4. "This is not a high priority. Not an issue for us here."
- c. Rated 1. "It would attract good development."
- d. Rated 1. "Yes, needed to keep stuff rolling."

**Respondent 21:**

- a. Rated 4. "No. Doesn't matter, not attainable."
- b. Rated 1. "Matters. If not in SB, then in Maine."
- c. Rated 3. "No, ridiculous."
- d. Rated 2. "Important."

**Respondent 22:** Economic development for the sake of economic development doesn't make much sense to me. What makes sense is developing a community with a purpose. Our world has changed because of the automobile and the ease of transportation. Our community was built before the automobile and has been able to stay somewhat intact. People used to be able to walk to church, to the store, to school. We need to get that back.

**Respondent 23:** To keep tax rates down.

**Respondent 24:** Well planned economic development could have positive impacts on all the reasons listed and any development effort should be assessed for what it adds to the community and what its potential "costs" are so that we can pursue options that, on balance, add to the community. For me personally, my priority is living in a town where I can work, shop, engage in recreation and cultural activities is really important so I would like to see development that brings businesses, shops, restaurants, and cultural institutions that make this a vital and nice place to live. I would like to see more mixed use development in the downtown area adding to and using the existing built environment to see a more vital downtown. I know there is a big cry for lower taxes, but for me, lowering taxes is not the highest priority if it means sacrificing the people, natural environment, and cultural assets of the town. I do not have a high income but I am willing to pay a little more in taxes if it means that I can live in a nice place and can do most of my living in South Berwick. It would be a shame if South Berwick gets transformed into one of those Maine towns that has a strip development with a bunch of second string national chains and a dead Main St. because all of the independent businesses have been driven out.

**Respondent 25:** To provide a place for our children to work and remain in this community as adults.

**Respondent 26:** Downtown is the only one here I'd buy into, because we are talking about commercial, not industrial. Encourage walk-in businesses, not offices, which only have employees who aren't supporting the downtown businesses, who take up the parking spaces all day.

**Respondent 27:** All above are important but making progress will allow growth of employment. Keeping Tax rate down is the no. one issue above with prosperity no. 2

**Question 5: If you were to pick two or three ideal economic development project for South Berwick, what might they be?**

**Respondent 1:** Establish an alternative energy industry which could include design, manufacture and installation of solar, wind and geothermal energy systems in our region. Expand the mixed-use zone in the downtown area.

**Respondent 2:** Light manufacturing.

**Respondent 3:** Support downtown business. Build a new library. Make the town more walkable. Somehow engage young people (15-30 year olds). I see keeping/making the town a livable community, a place that people want to spend time in, as economic development because it helps the town stay lively.

**Respondent 4:** No strip or shopping malls, small scale steel buildings with various light industry, condo industrial units, elderly, over 55 housing

**Respondent 5:** Expand business in the Norton St area, by the old Cummings Mill, town garage, and the old ballfield, much of this area already town-owned. Funnel traffic down Norton St (allow no left turn onto Portland St from Main, coming up from Fogarty's, instead have traffic make their left onto Norton, then right past vet clinic back onto Portland, with a light both there and at the main intersection). Purchase of St Michael's was a good idea. Use that area for parking and additional businesses. Maybe turn Central School area into a larger business.

**Respondent 6:** Professional/service type business/industry. Light industry, innovative, hi-tech companies.

**Respondent 7:** Affordable shopping area, professional buildings like medical and business.

**Respondent 8:** Contract zoning. Industrial park. Traffic light in downtown. Deal with traffic problem in general.

**Respondent 9:** Extend sewer and water down 236. Put together a master vision for downtown.

**Respondent 10:** Industrial Park, and re-zone R-1 to B-1 from Dunkin to Bridge.

**Respondent 11:** High tech manufacturing, light manufacturing.

**Respondent 12:** industrial commercial development on 236, fast food restaurant for kids to work at. Small Mall for offices, stores, and jobs.

**Respondent 13:** Finding ways to foster growth of small, diverse businesses. Finding ways to preserve the unique charm of downtown SB. Develop "Lower" Main St.

**Respondent 14:** not living in the area long enough to speak to this

**Respondent 15:** Attract small businesses, of many kinds, such as, dentists, doctors, lawyers. Larger businesses, such as, machine shops, construction, rite aid, hardware, developers.

**Respondent 16:** Renovation of the downtown business block to become more attractive and economically vibrant with more retail create a mixed use are with library and community center in the center of town increase recreation activity around powder house hill, ice skating and other sports

**Respondent 17:** library parking problem not third item

**Respondent 18:** -"Develop 'gully' into elderly housing or low economic housing." The 'gully' is land filled adjacent to Railroad Ave. and opposite Cummings Mill. -"New library built on purchased property."

**Respondent 19:** "South Berwick should define reasonable goals. My preference is to take advantage of our geography and augment/supplement activities that establish our town as an unique destination."

**Respondent 20:** -"High Tech Business Park." -"A business with a capital intense infrastructure creating a high tax assessment."

**Respondent 21:** "Storage facility. To encourage economic development SB should run sewer line down Rt. 236 to Industrial Zone." Plan this as a future capital investment, but it seems a real commitment is needed by developer.

**Respondent 21:** All I here is we need more parking. What we need is less of a need for cars. Start thinking along that route. How can people live in a city and not need a car? Because most of their needs are fulfilled within walking distance and there is low cost transportation when they need it. Build a small city. Change setback and density requirements to better utilize the land. Offer incentives to tear down, old houses that are energy inefficient and build state of the art multi-family dwellings. Take a look at any place where land is at a premium and learn from it. As we move forward we need shorter driveways to shovel, smaller lawns to mow and less space to heat. It's not going to happen overnight but it has to start happening soon. Make recycling easy. How inefficient is it to have every single household go to the transfer on a weekly basis. If you want to encourage people to recycle, pick up the recyclables, Make them go to the transfer station with their waste or better yet, make them pay someone to come pick it up. We also need a local composting alternative, As much as I applaud the efforts to teach people to compost on their own, people are lazy and only a handful will continue it for the long haul. Encourage local farming. I'm not sure how, but it's a shame to see it disappearing.

**Respondent 23:** no response

**Respondent 24:**

a. South Berwick as a regional tourist destination: First, I think South Berwick has an opportunity that it has not made the most of. If you ask people in this region what they think of South Berwick, they mention that it is a pretty little town and they know about places like Sobo Books, Pepperland, Hamilton House, hiking to Orris Falls, and Fogarty's. We will probably never be a national tourist destination, but I believe we have an opportunity to become a regional destination for people who want to experience a small town in a lovely natural setting where they can patronize local independent restaurants and shops. If you draw a twenty mile radius around South Berwick, the number of people is nearly 200,000, we could draw many more of those people here to spend a day or a few hours. There are many people in this area who will drive a small distance to get away from the hustle and bustle of route one in the summer or to get away from the same old chain restaurants and stores. I would like to see:

- 1) a marketing effort that presents South Berwick as a regional destination, 2) an effort to try to lure more independent restaurants and shops to the area, and
- 3) an effort to foster more cultural and recreation events in South Berwick.

If we can build our reputation as a good place to visit, we could bring dollars to town using the resources and assets we already have. I think we could also build on the concept of South Berwick as a regional destination for weddings. With Springhill, Outlook, and Hamilton House, South Berwick is hosting weddings nearly every weekend. Restaurants and shops are probably already reaping the benefits of this. If we had more lodging options like B&Bs and small inns we would see more people coming to spend a whole weekend in South Berwick to attend weddings, giving us the opportunity to capture more tourism dollars. Also, if we became a wedding destination it might lure and benefit local wedding related businesses (bakeries, caterers, photographers, wedding planners, musicians, florists, etc).

b. Bring back "the point" – Lower Main St. already has many assets including Fogarty's, Monkey Business Bakery, Margaux, and Lassel Architects. I would like to see a focus on increasing the mix of small businesses and restaurants in that area. It would be great to try to seek out public or private funding to beautify the streetscape, address parking, and market that area to small businesses. It is a nice link between downtown South Berwick and downtown Rollinsford. With the Salmon Falls Mills that area is starting to get a reputation for arts and artists. We could build on that reputation to try to attract creative businesses like architects, web and graphic designers, and other designers. The point used to have its own identity and was a vital economic area. We should work with the historic development commission, OBHS and others who support conservation and preservation to figure out how we can honor that past and have sensible discussions about what to preserve, how to bring in new buildings that retain the character of the point, and how to accommodate current needs like parking. We could build the point back to what it used to be: a distinctive location known as a center for business and commerce.

**Respondent 25:** To provide opportunities for our number one resource ... our very bright children. Software firms, biomedical etc.

**Respondent 26:** Development of town common (near the mill bldg) eg. park, gazebo. Work on creating a physical center point. Put the library on the Day property, expand the downtown that way. Capitalize on what we already have, stop trying to make SB what it isn't.

**Respondent 27:** What can we do to make the down town more attractive and what improvements are needed to the infrastructure. I do like to see the downtown busy, but who will stop there with all the traffic and parking problems.

**Question 6: What should be the Town’s role in economic development? Should it participate financially in regional efforts to promote economic development? (why or why not?):**

What should be the Town’s role in economic development? Should it (why or why not?):		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Market the community and/or region through brochures, web sites, etc.?	60.9%	14
Apply for grants to help businesses or business park developers who ask for it?	65.2%	15
Provide tax increment financing districts for businesses or business park developers that ask for it?	26.1%	6
Develop a town-owned business park through a combination of grants and town money?	17.4%	4
Develop a package of financial tools for businesses in South Berwick, such as revolving loan fund and TIF districts, as ways to encourage businesses to grow and expand?	52.2%	12
Participate financially in regional efforts to promote economic development?	47.8%	11
Other?	21.7%	5
	Comments	25
	<i>answered question</i>	23
	<i>skipped question</i>	4

**Respondent 1:**

I'm not in favor of establishing a business park. Our future lies in strengthening our village business district.

Develop a package of financial tools for businesses in South Berwick, such as revolving loan fund and TIF districts, as ways to encourage businesses to grow and expand - Possibly.

Participate financially in regional efforts to promote economic development - Only if we approach this differently than the last time.

**Respondent 2:** no comment

**Respondent 3:**

Market, especially for tourism and historical programs. Maybe don't use town resources (staff time) to apply for grants, but have town be available to businesses as a resource for this.

Don't know anything about TIFs or loan funds.

Wouldn't strongly favor regional efforts because of possible NIMBY problems.

Also, would want to know: what's the reality of the impact on my taxes? Will I really save? How much? Worthwhile?

**Respondent 4:** The town should absolutely not create an industrial park. Why should we as tax payers pay for the development of a park and then give the business a tax break. Let the private sector take care of this. WE should as town support through grants and TIFs this type of development. Once again it is the requirement of a economic development director to take the initiative and work on these ideas.

**Respondent 5:** Up to the town manager to actively solicit businesses to come to town. SB has to put out feelers, vibes, to get business to come, has to court business. Business has to feel like it has a chance. Has to feel welcome. Don't know much about TIFs. Town shouldn't necessarily own business park, look for a developer. Regional efforts fine. We have to try all avenues.

**Respondent 6:** We have the opportunity to do some unique/creative things if we can all come to agreement/compromise. Partnering with the larger land owners/developers can bring about those ideals if handled correctly. We are currently not in that position although, we are hopefully working in that direction.

**Respondent 7:** Take baby steps. Say what you mean, mean what you say. Earn the respect and trust of the townspeople and they'll trust and support your decisions. Leave ego and self serving at the door.

**Respondent 8:** Marketing not so important. I don't think the town should be a landlord. Ideally, a developer would come in and do a big project. Though I would have been in favor of the town buying the industrial park land then selling it to a developer. I don't know much about TIFs.

**Respondent 9:** These mostly favor big business. For example, contract zoning will appeal only to larger businesses that have what it takes to go through the process. So it makes an uneven playing field. I favor small business over big business, though I wouldn't discourage larger business. Large business can be a mixed blessing. It can go away at any time and leave a big hole. I'm not big on the town having a large role in E.D. The town can help business by streamlining zoning townwide, eg, fix discrepancies between subdivision rules and zoning, and fix the parking regulations to make it easy for businesses downtown. Make it easy for businesses to comply with town regulations. Don't ask small business to actively participate in E.D. activities as this takes away from small business' daily work.

**Respondent 10:** no marketing, no need. Need project to market. TIF provide jobs and future economic benefits for town. Not necessary for current businesses. Build industrial park first and attract larger businesses.

**Respondent 11:** Don't know who to market to, or know enough about any business plan. TIF maybe case by case. Don't support regional project, each town has different needs.

**Respondent 12:** Vaughan Woods Park, old town forest tours, and biking and hiking on Mt. A. marketing. B&B development, small hotel. Help developers. Don't think regional park will work.

**Respondent 13:** We don't need to be looking at a business park. We don't have the space for it down on 236. I don't see how it would work, or fit in with the town's character. It's not the way to develop SB or SB's tax base. I do like the idea of TIFs for small businesses. We had a good opportunity to develop near downtown with the old Cummings mill bldg, but we lost that when the bldg became apts. SB can get involved with regional efforts, but SB is not a good location for a big project. York is a good example of a place with a busy business climate without big industry. Nothing wrong with being a bedroom community; it does not mean higher taxes.

**Respondent 14:** Marketing is desirable to focus on what the community has to offer Partnering with other communities is good

**Respondent 15:**

1. This would attract more businesses.
2. This would attract more business.
- 3 This would attract more business.
- 4 This would be expensive for the town.
5. This would attract more business.
6. This might not help the town of South Berwick.

**Respondent 16:** Attract not only tourists to town but also residents who live regionally the town should not be in the business of business

**Respondent 17:** any help to support new business development is good help start ups

**Respondent 18:**

- a. "No. I think it markets itself. We have a little utopia here. Yes, if we want to help merchants in downtown."
- b. "Yes. We have in the past, and should continue this."
- c. "No. I think if you give them TIFs they come and then they leave."
- d. "No. Too much upfront money and it takes too long to see any real return." Too close to NH and the tax associations.
- e. "No."
- f. "No."

**Respondent 19:**

- a. "Yes, tourism and eco-tourism."
- b. "Not a blanket yes. Not unless these activities blend effectively with planning activities." Goals need establishing...

- c. "No, but perform pro-actively, i.e. urban compact with Maine Dept. of Transportation (MDOT) controls our streetscape. Change this."
- d. "No and No Again!"
- e. "No. The proven payoff for the initial risk."
- f. "No. Bad memories take time to heal."
- g. "Non-profit activity?"

**Respondent 20:**

- a. "Yes, but only with regionalism."
- b. "Yes, but needs to be done regionally."
- c. "Yes, but through a regional authority."
- d. "Yes, but through a regional authority."
- e. "Yes, but Town should participate in a regional authority to accomplish this"
- f. See a-e.

**Respondent 21:**

- a. "Not necessary. No big enough potential."
- b. "Yes. If done by staff. No matching grants."
- c. "No. I think it would cost taxpayers money."
- d. "No. I think it would cost taxpayers money. People (developers) would not come." See #3.
- e. "No. Same as above." See #3.
- f. "No." See #3.

**Respondent 22:** We are not a big enough community to undertake such a large project on our own, We should be looking at economies of scale in all town services with other communities, How many police cars, and fire trucks are there between the Berwicks, Why does each community need its own manager, planner, tax assessor, code enforcement officer, public works director or economic development committee. Maybe its time to stop thinking about how we can get more money to spend and start thinking about how we can live within our means.

**Respondent 23:** No comments.

**Respondent 24:** In general I think the town should be a leader, advocate, and promoter of development by being in the forefront of planning and consensus building toward economic development.

- a. Market the community Yes, I think this is a role for the Town to play, however I think it should be done in coordination with the York Chamber of Commerce and other entities that are also doing this. I think local businesses and nonprofits should take a bigger ongoing role in this than the Town, but the Town could help stimulate and coordinate efforts.
- b. Apply for grants Yes, if it is for public/ private partnerships or in support of private development.

- c. Provide TIF districts I think South Berwick should be wary of giving big tax breaks or other incentives to lure businesses here. If we provide TIF districts we should carefully assess the benefits and risks before committing.
- d. Develop a town-owned business park I do not think there should ever be initiatives where South Berwick is the owner of a business or industrial park. I believe those efforts should always be public/private partnerships.
- e. Develop a package of finance tools for businesses in South Berwick Yes. I wish we had a loan fund for businesses that need to increase the energy efficiency of their businesses. For some small businesses this can be a make or break issue.
- f. Participate financially in regional efforts to promote ED Yes, absolutely, especially with Eliot, N. Berwick, and Berwick and Rollinsford.
- g. Other: Here's a few more:
- Develop Zoning and Design Review standards that allow for more mixed use development in the downtown core and preserves the character of the built environment by limiting size of buildings, encouraging adaptive re-use of buildings, encourages an esthetically pleasing streetscape, and increases the walkability of the downtown area.
  - Develop a plan for the St. Michael's property that enhances the downtown core and links that site to the rest of the community. Provide leadership in getting a new library.
  - Continue pursuing a downtown by-pass that does not take traffic too far away from the downtown core but alleviates some of the through traffic pressure on the 236 and 4 intersections.
  - Encourage more cluster housing. Encourage senior housing options ( low and moderate income and market).
  - Promote public transportation efforts. Promote walking and biking options.

**Respondent 25:** Develop a package of financial tools actually answered as a maybe - would need to know more about where the money is coming from Interviewee sees a missed opportunity to target an audience that would appreciate the connection to Sarah Orne Jewett - author dinners, literary tours.

**Respondent 26:** Yes, market SB as a livable community. No big business, no business park! No TIFs! Sure, regional okay. Don't take on new projects, having trouble enough trying to do what's already in front of us.

**Respondent 27:** Comment: a. yes our community has many highlights and events to market b. yes, developers should review our plans with a positive attitude c. this is key to growth d. yes, create more business opportunities for this area e. yes f. yes

**Question 7: What is the easiest way for the Committee to communicate with you and other citizens going forward (i.e., mailing, website, post at transfer station, email, etc.)**

**Respondent 1:** All the above.

**Respondent 2:** Website, email.

**Respondent 3:** Email, bulk mailings (postcards), 236 diner blog

**Respondent 4:** mailings, email website

**Respondent 5:** -

**Respondent 6:** Mailings are the most productive. Web-site and e-mail are also a good communication tools but, so as not to hinder transparency, a mailing in conjunction with electronic communication reaches the broadest of the public.

**Respondent 7:** Mailing, website and email.

**Respondent 8:** transfer station, Quamphegan It's important to be proactive and get the word out! People should be contacted personally when they will be affected. E.g., no one out in the R5 zone knew about the comp plan proposal to require 5 A lot minimum. Advertise, and use the words, whatever the subject is. Talk peoples' language if you want them involved.

**Respondent 9:** -

**Respondent 10:** Sentinel newspaper, 236diner.com, mailings.

**Respondent 11:** email.

**Respondent 12:** Website.

**Respondent 13:** email (I forgot to ask for an email address-will call and get back with that-M)

**Respondent 14:** email and weblink

**Respondent 15:** Mailing.

**Respondent 16:** postage and email

**Respondent 17:** email postings downtown and at transfer station

**Respondent 18:** website

**Respondent 19:** email, newspapers

**Respondent 20:** email, newspaper articles

**Respondent 21:** Email

**Respondent 22:** Walk across the street and talk to me

**Respondent 23:** no response

**Respondent 24:** For me, web site and email but I also think it is vitally important for the town to have ongoing face to face opportunities to talk about these issues. I wish we could have discussions on economic development where we could bring in people from other communities that are doing economic development projects to talk about their experiences. I think some of the polarization that has arisen in our community come from people not having an idea about the full range of options so we end up fighting about false choices like development/no development and keep the old buildings/bulldoze the old buildings. There is a middle way if we will take the time to explore all of our options.

**Respondent 25:** email

**Respondent 26:** town newsletter (Quamphegan)!

**Respondent 27:** email, newsletter website

**Question 8: Do you have any final comments or suggestions for the Economic Development Committee?**

**Respondent 1:** Let's improve what we already have, which is a wonderful town center. I would like to see a renovated downtown with underground utilities, refurbished store fronts, more retail outlets (hardware store, clothing stores, etc.) and an expanded mixed use zone around the current B1 Zone.

**Respondent 2:** Communicate ideas and info to Council in report form.

**Respondent 3:** Whatever decisions are made, keeping a sense of community is huge. Because of the way of the world, we are too disconnected, too isolated. Feeling heard and respected, feeling like we belong, is an important value.

**Respondent 4:** Lower water and sewer costs, these are seen as high for many developers (*personal comment edited out*).

**Respondent 5:** I love living here, always have, all my life. I love living in the country. I like going to the dump. I don't expect lots of services. We can't base the need for services on what 5% of the population expects and can afford; we have to look at what most of the people can afford. Have to find a balance between econ dev, housing. Sometimes it seems that the people who make legislation are basing their decisions on what they can afford, not what most people in town can afford.

**Respondent 6:** Public/Private partnerships with the availability of TIF's, Pinetree Zones and possibly CDBG's and or other funds. A master plan for the business/industrial zones would be helpful. High tech, innovative and professional/service orientated businesses would be a great addition to the Town which in turn will bring other business/industry. There appears to be two distinct "zones". The downtown and the industrial zone. Both can be pursued together. Enlarging our business portfolio with the augment of TIF's and Pinetree zones for tax sheltering purposes and off-sets to SAD 35 funding appears to be a win/win situation. We are currently behind the curve and need to start this process now rather than later.

**Respondent 7:** Just listen to the people. Be a welcoming, people friendly committee. Leave your differences inside the boardrooms. Respect people's opinions and their right to voice them.

**Respondent 8:** No comment

**Respondent 9:** Give a higher profile to the comp plan.

**Respondent 10:** This town is very divided, pro and anti-development, find a majority support for any economic development or will be pushing a large rock uphill.

**Respondent 11:** Surveys, focus groups, and follow up.

**Respondent 12:** This town needs business and jobs. Do whatever you can to attract business.

**Respondent 13:** It would be good for the town to expedite the process for opening a small business. Look at the current regulations, look at creating more parking, perhaps behind the downtown businesses. Think about doing some more work with historic districts: controversial, but can really add to the value of an area.

**Respondent 14:** Great step to building consensus using this survey

**Respondent 15:** 1. Be open minded to any new business, large or small. 2. Work with the town manager and council.

**Respondent 16:** glad to see that the town leaders has shifted their priorities and invite public input and thoughts and inclusion in town governance glad to see open public discussion on the economy

**Respondent 17:** survey is good idea this will help get the ideas and the word out

**Respondent 18:** -"I enjoy seeing your picture in the paper for ribbon cuttings."

**Respondent 19:** See James Skerritt's comments from January 1969 and his drawings. Hope to supply. "In other words, make South Berwick a more beautiful and attractive place and business shall take care of itself."

**Respondent 20:** "One step at a time. Get support for your program. This is driven by Town government."

**Respondent 21:** - "No."

**Respondent 22:** I can't begin to tell you how many surveys I've filled out over the years. For the most part they've all been exercises in futility. When you start thinking that growth and development is a good thing, take a drive up route 4 and look at the mess that Sammy Mick has created. It brought a tear to my eye to see so much waste and destruction in the name of greed and progress. Growth will come. We don't need to encourage it, we need to control it.

**Respondent 23:** no response

**Respondent 24:** Just a couple of thoughts that don't fit elsewhere:

1.. Route 236 south of town offers opportunity for bringing some business or industry to South Berwick. However if the development is not thought out it could end up creating more negatives than positive consequences for South Berwick. I hope approval or promotion of development would take into account the number of curb cuts, the roadside esthetics, the impact on the

environment and traffic of any development-I would not want the South Berwick part of Route 236 to end up looking like the Eliot stretch of Route 236 (numerous dangerous driveways and side roads, ugly parking lots, ugly buildings, and ugly signage).

2. If South Berwick tries to lure businesses here I hope that we will target businesses of the future, like green technology, internet based companies, medical services, all businesses that have been identified as growing in the future. I also think we should target businesses that are environmentally “clean” and ones that provide jobs that pay a living wage.

**Respondent 25:** We should not pay a town manager for not working.

**Respondent 26:** To keep taxes down, stop adding more staff at the town hall.

Stop voting, at town meeting, to over-ride the state tax cap for the schools.

The traffic light downtown: don't do it. Will just bring more traffic, encourages traffic, makes pedestrians the smaller player. Having no light, crosswalks, traffic cop, makes pedestrians equal players.

**Respondent 27:** It is great to have an economic development committee in place, but the main goal is to follow through with ideas and plans.