

Comprehensive Plan Update

A few weeks ago, when I arrived at the first of the Public Visioning meetings that comprise a central part of our update of the Town’s Comprehensive Plan, my immediate reaction was of overwhelming relief. People showed up! A lot of people, enough to fill to capacity the meeting room at the Library.

In my experience over the years, attendance at meetings held to obtain the views and advice of the public has been discouraging. This is wholly understandable. People are busy. We must look after our families and personal business. We need time to relax after a day at work. It’s a big deal to give up an evening to a public meeting.

So when I entered the Library, standing-room-only conditions told the story of the seriousness of purpose of Pittsford residents and their dedication to the idea of planning as a community for a future built on shared values and aspirations.

After an overview of the purpose of comprehensive municipal planning and work undertaken to date, participants formed working groups of seven or eight. Each group worked on summarizing the concepts and policies it judged most important in shaping Pittsford’s future. I can tell you that of all such “workshop” exercises in which I’ve participated, the quality of ideas produced by this one has been the very best.

The first thing I learned from it, possibly the most important, is the breadth of consensus among residents in support of certain fundamentals. As each working group reported its conclusions, we heard again and again about making Pittsford more walkable, with sidewalks and by other means, especially in the central area of the Town. About planning and design for streets and roads that incorporate needs of pedestrians and cyclists as well as cars. About calming traffic in key areas. About configuring open space, for which the Town can negotiate in approving new development, in a way that best retains the look and feel of Pittsford’s traditional landscape. About policies that might encourage new businesses in the Village such as a small grocery, a hardware store, a drug store. About renovating our Spiegel Community Center.

These concepts fit hand-in-glove with many of the policy initiatives and projects we’ve pursued in Town government over the past two years.

Beyond that, now that I’ve had several weeks to reflect, the results of the Visioning Meeting reveal a common theme. There’s something about life here that I can only describe, clumsily, as having a human scale to it. I sense it in the rhythms and experience of everyday life in Pittsford. I wish I could express the idea more clearly, but perhaps you understand what I mean. I think it’s something many of us prize most highly about our community. Something important enough to motivate a lot of people to give up an evening, to help shape the Pittsford of tomorrow as a place where life may be lived on a human scale still.

We’ll be scheduling another public visioning session and I hope you can participate. I think you’ll find the experience worthwhile. As always, you may contact me any time – on this or any other issue – at bsmith@townofpittsford.org or by phone at 248-6220.