

Monroe Comprehensive Plan Committee

Minutes

January 15, 2026 6:00pm

Monroe Comprehensive Plan Committee

Attendees: Grace Johnston-Fennell, Eric Bunker, Ray Wirth, Lyndsey Marston, and Ryan Wing (6:15pm).

Lyndsey called the meeting to order at 6:10pm.

Action Items:

1. Grace will continue to look into historic research, connecting again with archivists, contacting Charlie Biebel, and posting a notice in the Midcoast Villager.
2. Lyndsey will make preparations for a “focus group” meeting on 1/26.
3. Lyndsey will research farm and forest land in order to get a total count and acreage on both. She will also research what defines a community forest.
4. Review Population & Demographics (and possibly Economy) checklist questions, and plan requirements.
5. Review Brooks and/or other local plans for the sections above.

Old Business:

A. Review/approve December meeting minutes

This item was initially postponed until a quorum could be reached. After the New Business items were concluded, at which time a 5th member was in attendance, the Committee returned to this item. Ray **made a motion** to approve the December minutes. Eric seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

B. Updates on December Action items

1. Grace did not have any new updates on historical/archaeological research or establishing a focus group.
2. Lyndsey created two google surveys and posted them to the website. One is asking for support with historical research and the other is asking for feedback on scenic views. They are both posted on the home page and on the comprehensive plan page.
3. Ray provided an update that the Conservation Commission met in January. They were uncomfortable answering the water resources questions for a few reasons: they did not feel qualified, they were concerned about political issues, and they were not certain that providing responses were related to their mission. Since then, Lyndsey and Ray discussed the roles of a Conservation Commission as outlined by State statute and it is apparent

that the Conservation Commission is not currently meeting those requirements. Ray noted that they plan to look back into the votes when they were established to determine if they need to change their practices to those required by a Conservation Commission or change their name to better reflect their purposes. In the meantime, the Conservation Commission was not comfortable hosting a meeting themselves to answer the water resources questions. Instead, we will host a “focus group” meeting on January 26th at 5:30pm. Lyndsey agreed to chair the meeting. Ray has posted it to the website and will put up a flyer in the Town Office.

New Business:

- A. Information Checklist review: The next topic area is Agriculture and Forest Resources. Lyndsey reviewed the GIS map she created and shared as a web map. It includes agricultural soils, farmland cover type, and forest ownership type in addition to wetlands, pfas, and other data previously reviewed.

Lyndsey shared census data by county and a few data points for Monroe specifically. While the number of farms, acreage in farms, and market value of products sold in Waldo County has decreased since 2017, data shows the opposite for Monroe. Since 2007, the amount of land in agriculture has increased from 78 to 91 (assumed parcels). The number of farms operating on 50 to 499 acres has increased from 2 to 4. The number of farms making between \$50,000 and \$249,999 annually has increased from 2 to 5.

The forest harvesting data provided by the State showed that timber harvesting has drastically decreased since 1991. There were 5171 acres harvested in 115 reports from 1991-2003 versus 1258 acres in 37 reports from 2019-2023.

Lyndsey reached out to the State for current use data. There are only 657.8 acres registered in Tree Growth across 9 parcels. We have map/lot and ownership data for these so we can map them. There are 7936.51 acres in farmland classification across 4 landowners, including 2326.81 in tillable and pasture lands with the rest as farm woodland acres. Lyndsey needs to tally the total acreage of farmland and forest land in town.

The Committee then reviewed the questions in the information checklist. In regards to large tracts of land that could be sold for development, 19 survey respondents answered yes to this question, but we do not have information on ownership, acreage, or intended development plans. The questions ask for a map/and or description of farms, forestland, and managed forest lands. Lyndsey will reach out to State resources to try to quantify each.

There is some need for clarity on what is considered a community forest.

B. Next Steps/Timeline

- a. Visioning session timing. Lyndsey noted that we have been reviewing one topic area per meeting, but the next few topics may be quicker to manage. We do not need to cover Marine Resources, but if we stick to one per meeting, we'll be looking at fall 2026 for visioning. That will at least align with school being in session. Since we won't be done with inventory/assessment before the June Town meeting, we'll need to think ahead to any budget considerations for June.

C. Other

- a. Statute information questions. After the last meeting, Lyndsey sent an email with statute information regarding comprehensive plans after the last meeting. Statute 30-A 4352 states that "A zoning ordinance must be pursuant to and consistent with a comprehensive plan adopted by the municipal legislative body". Act 247 LD 1803 item 1 further clarifies that "any portion of a municipality's or multimunicipal region's rate of growth, zoning or impact fee ordinance must be consistent with a comprehensive plan." Other planning documents and government organizations imply that all land use ordinances require a comprehensive plan, so there is still some room for clarity depending on how an ordinance is written and what tolerance the Town has for risk.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07pm.