



Economy, Population & Housing Subcommittee

Meeting Agenda

Wednesday, May 31, 2023 – 4:00PM

Location: Remote via Zoom (pursuant to the Committee's adopted [Remote Meeting Policy](#))

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us05web.zoom.us/j/89445137711?pwd=MkdscG9RMHhNWRTZJOCs4dEZYYVYk5OT09>

Meeting ID: 894 4513 7711

Passcode: 04543

Subcommittee Members Present: Adam Jeffers, Dan Hunter, Andrea Keushguerian, Rachel Collamore

Also Present: Jenny Begin, Isabelle Oechsle (Consulting Planner)

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting began at 4:11pm.
2. **Review of Draft 1: Population & Demographics Topic Area:** Isabelle provided a brief overview of this Topic Area, provided for review in the meeting packet. She asked the group to focus on the following questions: Any questions about the data provided? Any additional data that they'd like to see? Does the data provided jive with their understanding of existing conditions in Damariscotta?

Regarding this Topic Area, Dan Hunter noted that an analysis of why population growth slowed down between 2010 and 2020 would be helpful, if we know. He also pointed out that Lincoln County Regional Planning Commissions' Housing Study underscored some unique attributes about Damariscotta: we have a lot more rental housing available than other communities in the county, and we are the second least wealthy. Generally, it would be helpful for readers of the Comprehensive Plan to understand our demographics compared to other surrounding towns in Lincoln County. He also suggested that we highlight the fact that we are a service center community (which could explain the higher amount of rental housing), and that the Town has had an almost 50% turnover in population since 2000 (based on the in-migration data provided). It was also noted that, per the County's Housing Study, surrounding communities like South Bristol are projected to grow even faster than Damariscotta but, as a service center, we'll need to plan for their growth as well (in terms of impacts on Damariscotta infrastructure).

Jenny Begin asked if there was any data available to show the population changes in the community even since the 2020 census, which anecdotally would be a lot of change. Isabelle noted that she could likely find estimates from American Community Survey data or even by reviewing property transfers and would provide that in the next draft. Jenny also noted that it seemed (in the 2014



Plan) that elderly females were the primary focus, especially in regards to housing and demographics, but clearly the demographics are changing. She asked that the Population by Age Group bar graph be changed to be more understandable in presentation.

3. **Review of Draft 1: Economy Topic Area:** Isabelle asked the group for their reactions on this data. Dan Hunter asked that the Topic Area be revised to emphasize the role of the labor market more, noting that the community is currently at a critical juncture regarding the provision of housing and that without providing additional workforce housing, the economy has the potential to be hollowed out.

Rachel Collamore noted that we need to emphasize both living and working in Damariscotta to accomplish our goals; we need to build housing that will attract a workforce, including a future workforce (such as teenagers to fill summer jobs). She emphasized that Damariscotta is a bifurcated town, noting that we have lots of people who live here who don't work here (either because they commute out of the county or because they work remotely) but we also have a high-percentage of low-income renters who depend on local jobs. She also noted that she was most interested in ensuring that we can "continue the magic of Damariscotta" by making sure that young people can continue to stay here and work here (providing affordable housing). It was also pointed out that the survey results received thus far have hardly included lower-income folks or young people, so we do not have a good understanding of what they need.

Jenny Begin asked if we have data on self-employed individuals, suspecting that that number is higher in Damariscotta than in surrounding communities. Similarly, do we have data on the number of people working remotely in town? Do we know how many seasonal workers are in Damariscotta/can we get data on J-1 visa workers? Those would be important to understand the existing conditions of the Economy.

Dan Hunter asked if we could pull in highlights from surrounding Town's Comprehensive Plans, so that we could compare our existing conditions to theirs but also in terms of planning for the future, noting that some surrounding towns are not desirous of growth and that Damariscotta's role as a service center may mean we need to take a disproportionate amount of that growth on.

- a. **Discussion of businesses to have 1-on-1 meetings with:** The group suggested the following businesses to have 1-on-1 meetings with: LincolnHealth, restaurants or other tourist-based businesses, Hodgdon Marine, Mobius or another social services provider.



Discussion will continue at the next meeting to finalize the list of businesses that subcommittee members will interview.

- b. Review of draft Business Interview questions:** Isabelle presented the draft business interview questions. Dan Hunter suggested that the conversation will likely flow and providing questions to circle / canned answers likely isn't necessary. It was suggested that the shorter the survey the better to allow businesses to communicate their answers. It was suggested that the survey be sent to the list of businesses in advance to help prepare for the meeting.
- 4. Committee/Public Comment:** Jenny Begin noted that, for the forthcoming Housing Topic Area, it would be helpful to understand the existing short-term rental situation in town to understand its impact on affordable housing. Isabelle noted that the Census as well as AirDNA (a website that tracks Airbnb and VRBO listings) might be able to help us estimate that, but without a requirement for short-term rentals to register with the Town, it would be difficult to get an actual number. She suggested that a potential strategy could be requiring registration of short-term rentals.

Rachel Collamore noted that housing for minimum wage workers is important, but so is transportation (including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, and public transit) so that those same workers can get to work. Noted that WCAP has buses that run in Damariscotta. She also noted that we need to provide rentals in order to keep our schools going and to not run into a situation like Boothbay has run into with too many children leaving the school district. Suggested running sewer down Biscay Road for more housing.

Discussion occurred around the role of public sewer and water in the construction of new housing or businesses. It was asked whether Great Salt Bay Sanitary District has a strategic plan that they'd be willing to share. Rachel called the superintendent of GSBSD and was told that they do not have a strategic plan; their focus is on maintaining existing infrastructure. Isabelle noted that GSBSD has a role in reviewing new construction projects and the authority to negotiate to get private developers to expand sewer lines, and similarly, GSBSD is willing to accept maintenance of new lines but is not willing to pay to install them. Meaning the Town (through a TIF or similar) or private developers could invest in creating this infrastructure and GSBSD may accept and maintain it in the future.

- 5. Set next meeting date (to review Housing Topic Area in detail):** Isabelle will follow up with subcommittee members who had to leave in order to set a date for the next meeting.



6. **Adjournment:** Adjourned without objection at 5:45pm.