

**Machias Comprehensive Planning Committee Minutes**  
**Monday, April 21, 2025**  
**At Machias Tele-Business Center**

Ann-Marie Evans called the meeting to order at 6 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Ann-Marie Evans, Joshua Spencer, Aaron Ackley, Carole Porcher, Julie Barker, Frank Rodriguez. Also attending were: Sarah Craighead Dedmon, town manager; Patricia Tilton and Tora Johnson, planners from Sunrise County Economic Council, and Sharon Mack, recording secretary. Members not attending were James Jackson, Wendy Schoppee, and Chris Meroff.

**Approval of Minutes :**

Joshua Spencer moved, Frank Rodriguez seconded and the April 7, 2025 minutes were unanimously approved.

**Business:**

1. Patricia Tilton asked for input on the survey and a discussion ensued regarding the technical aspects of how to upload comments. Sarah Dedmon asked that a question be included regarding how residents and visitors are using the town facilities now and what else they would like to see. Ann-Marie Evans said all the questions don't have to be in a single survey, that it could be broken down in sections. Other question suggestions were 'Where do you work?' and 'What medical services do you require?'

2. Using a projector, Tora Johnson showed demographics as part of the Historical section of the plan. Frank Rodriguez said that such demographics, particularly on population, would be the cornerstone of the plan. Patricia Tilton said that Machias' population was 2350 in 2000, 2013 in 2018, 2076 in 2023, and was expected to rise by 2040. She asked the committee how a population increase would affect the town? It was agreed that existing housing issues will continue. Ann-Marie Evans said that even very slow growth will strain resources. The discussion centered on what is currently available for rentals, how to easily find these opportunities, and what population is able to rent the current housing stock. It was mentioned that housing for families is going to be vital as school populations show lots of growth on the elementary school age level. Julie Barker said Machias Memorial High

School graduated 50 students last year but 64 eighth graders attended step-up day. Tora Johnson said the demographics show Machias' median age as 40, while the rest of the county is 48. Machias is younger than the rest of the county, however it appears poorer and as the service center and county seat it has challenges to serve both the younger families and the older population. It was noted that there is a lack of assisted living spaces, no staff for elders to age in place and only one nursing home. Accessibility for elders, such as sidewalks and transportation, will also be key. Tora Johnson said she will compare the age of the populations in the surrounding communities.

3. Sarah Dedmon said that Machias is only 14.4 square miles but it is the central service area. Who comes to Machias, what services they need is key. She said she would like to see comparisons with other rural county seats as Machias taxpayers can't shoulder the responsibility for every non-taxable entity, such as the county buildings, the hospital and schools. She suggested the committee and Machias leaders need to begin thinking about regionalization.

4. There was a long discussion regarding housing availability. Tora Johnson said over half of Machias people are renters. She said many seniors are living in large houses that they are physically and financially unable to care for yet have nowhere to go and no one to take care of them. As a result, Tora Johnson said mid-age home seekers have no family ready homes to buy. People are living in the wrong type of housing, she said, and there is a great need to "churn" over the current housing. Sarah Dedmon said the area needs an elder navigator to assist people in making these choices and options.

5. The discussion turned to buildable land and Tora Johnson said there are plenty of lots available. Sarah Dedmon said the town is looking at sewer and water grants to help contractors with expenses of development.

6. The topic of seasonal population was discussed.

7. Also discussed were strategies to avoid local businesses shutting down in winter months. Tora Johnson said that was a very big challenge and would require people with vision to invest in the community. Tora Johnson pointed out the success of Belfast, which

invested in its sidewalks, parking, lighting, zoning, a walkable downtown and community building activities.

8. A discussion of what Machias needs/desires included: childcare options, an urgent care facility, veterinarian, dentist. Belfast and Milbridge were mentioned as success stories that Machias could build on.

9. The topic of development in sensitive areas was deemed a non-issue. Tora Johnson said the only problem is high water flooding in the downtown area.

10. The topic of the exposure of climate change on elderly or other populations was deemed a non-issue.

11. Patricia Tilton asked the committee to look over the survey questions before the next meeting and submit their comments.

**Schedule Next Meetings:**

Ann-Marie Evans set the next two meetings for May 5, 2025 and May 19, 2025.

**Adjourn:**

A motion by Joshua Spencer, seconded by Aaron Ackley, to adjourn was unanimously passed at 7:45 p.m.