

September 26, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC)

CPC Chair Chris Foss led this monthly meeting at Caroga Town Hall from 6:00 PM to 7:23 PM.

Committee members present were: Chris Foss, Rachel Simonds, Anita Long, Jeremy Manning, Dave Cummings, and Jim Hale. Doug Purcell was unable to attend, but he gave input via email. Council Member Barb DeLuca also contributed via email. No other people were present for this monthly meeting.

1. Approval of Prior Meeting Minutes

- The committee voted 6-0 to waive reading and accept 8/29/2024 monthly meeting minutes.

2. Old Business: Comprehensive Plan Website

- Jeremy Manning emphasized, “Rachel, I like what you did a lot, putting something together to show everything for everybody. To do a new website, we have to host it. I wonder if it’s easy just to have a page or link off of <https://caroga.town> or https://townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan?”
- Rachel Simonds responded, “The one I did at <https://carogacomprehensiveplan.wordpress.com> was free. So, if it’s linked on <https://caroga.town>, then it would make it easier for us to update it.”

3. 2025 Town of Caroga Budget Request

- Chris Foss reported, “The Town is putting together the budget for next year. The only thing there for this project is \$1,000.00 they carry over every year for the contract with Fulton County Planning.”
- Via email, Council Member Barb DeLuca agreed that we need more funding, and she will need to justify a request. For example, she pointed to a website and mailings, and she asked Chris Foss to get an estimate from Fulton County Planning Director Scott Henze for additional consultation services.
- Jeremy Manning underscored needs to get something to the Town Board by **Monday, October 7** at 6:00PM, when they have their next budget work session and adopt the preliminary budget for 2025 (see https://townofcaroga.com/finances/2024-09-17_2025tentative.pdf).
- Chris Foss also noted \$10,000.00 matching funds for a potential NYS smart growth grant application.
- When asked to clarify, Anita Long said that the 2024 NYS DOS smart growth community planning grant program RFA had a minimum request of \$75,000.00 with 90% of costs covered for planning and engineering consultation and so on (see https://townofcaroga.com/notes/rfa_sgcp_2024_final.pdf). Ultimately, strong and specific comprehensive plans set up other grants for success. So, for a \$100,000.00 DOS SGCP grant, the town must show the ability to cover 10% or \$10,000.00. Certain expenses count for a match. “Say, we think the \$1,000.00 10-hour county planning contract is not enough, and we need 100 hours, for instance, then we need about \$10,000.00 to hire the county planners to be part of this process. That might fulfill the match and also meet basic needs...Plus, there are bigger future items—that part depends on getting a grant funded—to hire people to do consulting. That includes planning and engineering consulting, to help specify projects and setup readiness. There, collaboration is not only with county planners—for at least \$100.00 per hour—but also engineering consultants. In the 2025 Budget, the Board increased the Engineering Contractual Expenses line item to \$100,000.00. After turning down a grant application opportunity to pursue State funding, they’re planning new municipal projects by making big budget increases that depend on property taxes. That’s how numbers can add up to \$100,000.00+. When I drafted the June grant proposal, I just volunteered to try to help make the numbers and process work with less burden on all the community taxpayers.”

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- Jeremy Manning added that in addition to DOS grants, DEC has smart growth planning and project grants that may have different or no match required, but it is good to show matching funds to score points in a grant review process. With no match, a proposal is less likely to be funded. He added that DEC alternates project and planning grants. In 2024, DEC had project grants. In 2025, DEC may have planning grants. He said, "If we get enough work done between now and when they announce that, then we want to show allocation. It would be something worth targeting."
- Anita Long said, "Grant applicants must show both plan readiness and commitment. Right now, we do not have that. The Board allocated only 10 hours of planning consultation and cut other funds."
- After the committee discussed possible survey expenses for printing, mailing, and direct mailers, Jeremy Manning clarified, "There is a printing and mailing line item [A1670.4 \$5,000.00] in the town budget, not specific to this project. I don't know how much room there is in that to include this in it."
- Chris Foss said, "For a 2025 budget request, I think we need to give the Board some kind of itemized list. For example, maybe we can start by saying \$2,000.00 or \$3,000.00 for mailing and printing?"
- Dave Cummings asked, "Does the town have a special rate for mailing? If you're looking at 1,200 to 1,300 residents, and you want to get a survey out, then step one is postage x residents for each one."
- Jim Hale clarified, "1,500 x \$0.68 is \$1,020.00, just for postage for each survey mailed."
- Rachel Simonds added, "What's our plan for a platform for an electronic Survey? I looked at Survey Monkey. With the free plan, you can have 10 questions and only 25 responses. That makes no sense. Then their next plan up, if you want to use it, is like \$500 a year [\$39 per month, billed annually for \$468]. It's up to 15,000 responses with unlimited questions...Or Google Forms is free."
- Jeremy Manning noted, "You'd want to put that in the budget, for sure. Some people will turn these in physically, as well, but a lot of folks are going to do it online. It's way more efficient." He added, "It's also really nice if you can incentivize it. Like we put everybody's name into a drawing for a free t-shirt that we pay for from a budget. Say, 'If you fill this out, you may get X', for something of value...The theme is that you want to prioritize responses, and motivate people to want to do it."
- Anita Long asked, "So for now, we just need a budget line-item request. Can we justify \$3,000.00 for printing and survey, \$2,000.00 for community profile, and \$10,000.00 for consultant hours? So, we end up with a \$15,000.00 request for the Comprehensive Plan line item in the 2025 Town Budget?"
- Chris Foss asked, "You're saying an amount for the line, rather than a separate \$10,000.00?"
- Anita Long replied, "Right. So, the budget line item for the Comprehensive Plan is A8020.41."
- Jeremy Manning noted, "A grant match only works if you spend the funds during the award period. Anything before that does not count as a match. Still, you could say you need more in 2026."
- Anita Long responded, "So maybe we need +\$15,000.00...The Board seemed to think that 10 hours of Scott Henze's time would be sufficient for the entire year, but clearly it is not—regardless of a grant."
- Jeremy Manning added, "We'll need quite a bit of consultation time. They clock phone time and emails too. There's going to be a lot of back and forth with the county people."
- Dave Cummings asked, "So, every time we use Scott Henze's office, he catalogs hours per town?"
- Jeremy Manning replied, "Yes. For the project, if it's for a specific thing. For planning, for example, he's supposed to log that. You get only so much of his time from the contract with the Town."
- Chris Foss said, "We've got to say that this is going to cost money. If you want this updated, that isn't just done by me on a legal pad. You've got to pay something. Do they understand that?"

- Jeremy Manning said, “It’s worth going for \$15,000.00 and seeing what happens with that. This Board has their priorities that they care about. You’ll see where this falls in that hierarchy of priorities.”
- Dave Cummings added, “Let’s be assertive...If you don’t ask, then you’re not going to get anything.”
- Chris Foss added, “I’ll run it past Barb and see. It was kind of thrown at me as if I was a Department Head, but I don’t consider myself Department Head. I’ll run it by Barb and see what we need to do. We’ll do what we can to take care of it.”

4. Plan Review: Revised Census Data

- Chris Foss summarized, “Scott sent me an email, taking what was in the *2011 Comprehensive Plan Profile* previously and updating it. Anita kind of took it and reorganized it a little bit” (see https://townofcaroga.com/comprehensive_plan/caroga_demographic_profile_draft_09-20-2024.pdf).
- Chris Foss continued, “Looking at it, I think the general thing is that we may be growing slightly, but we’re getting older and having less kids. That seems to be the whole gist of the Census data. What’s probably not yet showing up in the 2020 Census data—the last real Census we had—is the amount of new year-round homes that have been built or rehabbed and people have moved up here. Just looking at my road, there’s a stretch of 10 houses—maybe 15—since 2020. It’s showing where the Town is going. The questions become, ‘Is that where we want to go? Or is there something we want to regulate more or be more careful with? Where do you take the data and how do you use it?’”
- Jeremy Manning replied, “There’s a lot to think about. What’s the direction to take the entire town, if that’s the way the population’s going? What does that mean for the future of Caroga in 20-30 years?”
- Chris Foss added, “With more people but less kids, is that eventually going to close the school down? If you don’t have enough people going to the school here, can you continue to have teachers?”
- Jeremy Manning said, “Now some class sizes are 7 to 14 kids in some grades: maybe 100 kids in grades K through 8. It’s definitely a big concern.”
- Anita Long responded, “I think there are 3 separate issues. One is doing a community profile that just describes the data. A second level is interpreting it and making recommendations. With regard to the later, I think that there are sort-of two parts to that. On the one hand, it’s accepting that we have an older population, and Caroga has been remarkably successful in recruiting retirees. That’s part of what’s driving the higher median age. So, there are things like the AARP Age-Friendly Community Certification Program (see <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/>), and that shows examples of how towns can plan, support, and develop a thriving community—such as promoting volunteering and other goals—to add value to the town by focusing on people’s needs.”
- Chris Foss added, “Plus, there’s higher property values and assessments, if people are tearing down and rebuilding homes. The property assessment goes with that.”
- Anita Long continued, “Exactly. The retirees are a wonderful part of that. At the same time, there are fewer children. So, there are also best-practice planning strategies about recruiting new residents, especially young people and families. For example, the Northern Forest Center is great on that—Barb DeLuca and I worked with them to submit an unfunded 2023 capacity building grant application and Jeremy Manning collaborated with them on trails and community building—and they have people in the Adirondacks who did a really fantastic planning report about recruiting young residents (see https://northernforest.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Attracting_New_Residents_to_the_Adirondacks.pdf) That work cites the report *The Adirondack Park and Rural America: Economic and Population Trends* (see <https://adkreports.org>) and other reports that show that these issues of higher median age and

fewer children are things that are not specific to Caroga. It's happening across the entire Adirondack Park and the entire US in rural areas. So, I think that it's beautiful that the Northern Forest Center is really working on a multi-strategy planning approach to recruit residents to address the challenge. That includes housing initiatives, grant writing, and a whole host of specific things that could possibly be explored here and perhaps applied in Caroga, following the lead of what's shown to work in the Adirondacks more generally."

- Anita Long circled back, "At this point, we can just do the Profile—staying descriptive and focusing on summarizing demographic data. Later, we can think about interpretations and recommendations."
- Jeremy Manning related, "That ties into a Survey too about the community. With a Survey, you get a composite of what everybody is looking for, right? Then you have the data. The data say what is actually happening here. How do we go from what's actually happening to where people want to take it? What do you have to do to make things occur, given what the data show? What major tenets of a community do you have to have in place? What do you protect and advocate for, given the facts that the population is aging and people are not having kids here? If that's reality, how do you push against it a little bit?"
- Anita Long added, "I think that the Survey is a big part of it. Before we move into it, though, I'm still unclear about whether people on the committee want to stay with the basic format of the *2011 Comprehensive Plan Profile*? Do you like that? Is it readable? Or do you think that some of the other ideas that I threw out there with a rough draft Profile are something that you want to pursue, edit, and develop, or not so much?"
- Jeremy Manning asked, "As far as the revised Profile is laid out? To me, it's super clear."
- Via email, Doug Purcell noted, "I personally found Anita's presentation of the data to be easier to follow and can easily be updated as additional information becomes available. I found updated data for 'unoccupied housing units' from Fulton County Planning to be hard to believe."
- Anita Long said, "I tried to make it clearer and simpler without losing the specificity of the data. But I think it's really important that the committee members contribute to how we want to revise it."
- Jeremy Manning replied, "I like the narrative. But most people are not going to look at this and pour through the data. They're just going to read the summary of it. For most people, that's helpful."
- Anita Long responded, "I think the last plan did not summarize data into a readable narrative."
- Jeremy Manning agreed, "Having a narrative is really, really important. Just having a bunch of tables with numbers on them less so. For some, that speaks to them. For most, it's like, what is this?"
- Chris Foss added, "Even Scott Henze said that maybe we pare those tables down. Do we really need the data from 1910? Is that cogent or germane to exactly what we're doing here?"
- Anita Long replied, "Maybe. My approach was to say, well here's a century of data for population, and here's a half century of points for age and income and such, because we are at the 50-year mark in Caroga. Formal planning started around 1974, and the last survey was 1975. So, in some cases, I added more table columns to capture and summarize that 50-year window. The question now to members of this committee is, 'Well, does that work for you, or is that just overload?'"
- Jeremy Manning gave his impression, "For the people who want to read that, then it's good that it's there. It's good to be able to geek-out and sit there and look at it. Not everyone is going to. But it's nice to have it, I think. If you care about that and you want to read it, then it needs to be there."

- Dave Cummings asked, “But can you put it in an Appendix versus the document? I’d love to see the Appendices kind of concept. I mean, I really thought it was interesting as a resident of the county to look at other towns, but what’s that got to do with the Town of Caroga? Three things that really struck me. They were median age, median household income, plus the point of 1.3 people per household. I mean, there’s about 1,200 people and 1,600 households. That’s a lot of single folks.”
- Anita Long asked, “Well. I had a question there. What numbers are year-round and which are seasonal? The 1,205 is only the year-round residents included in the 2020 decennial Census. I’d like Scott Henze at county planning to verify that 1,616 household number. I got that household number in the Community Profile Summary from the household housing units in the Housing Trends section. Is it right to call housing units ‘households’? What’s the source? Was it ALL housing units, or just year-round? How were seasonal household numbers derived? How is ‘vacant’ defined? I’d like Scott Henze to clarify the Table 8 Housing Trends and double check those numbers pulled into that Community Profile Summary. [Doug Purcell’s email also asked for Table 8 data to be checked and clarified by Scott Henze. The numbers don’t make sense now. Some are hard to believe, given our experiences.] Also, as you say, Dave, to clarify whether we can say 1,205 /1,616 or 0.75 people per household and 1,616 /1,205 or 1.3 households per person. Are both numbers just year-round?”
- Anita Long circled back, “I also liked the point you made about options of: (a) staying with the prior Plan’s Profile, (b) going with the structure of the revised Profile within the Plan, or (c) moving a lot of the data and tables to an Appendix, with the Plan itself much more condensed, but data are there.”
- Chris Foss replied, “You can do that, I think, with something more like the narrative you’ve come up with, and then write, ‘for more information, see Appendix A.’ You can do a short written summary with something like, ‘The Census data show that the Town of Caroga is generally aging with smaller households’ and so on.”
- Dave Cummings added, “We need to answer the question: Who are we?”
- Chris Foss laughed, “We’re a bunch of old people with no kids at home, just grandkids.”
- Jeremy Manning added, “And living by themselves.”
- Dave Cummings added, “And everybody’s on staff, and right close to it. It’s a bifurcation. It’s always been part of Caroga. There’s that conflict, or bifurcation. It’s still there. But let’s work together.”
- Chris Foss said, “By observation, what I’ve seen is that I’ve grown up here by staying here in the summers. Since I was born, I’ve been here every summer. I can remember, it was always Labor Day, and you’d see or all you’d hear on the road were cars going by with trailers, pulling their boats out and heading home somewhere else. The next weekend, you’d come back up, and there wouldn’t be anybody here. Now, more and more people, I think, are staying longer, even if they are seasonal. They’re staying through October or November. I also know people who leave after Christmas and spend 4 months, 3 months, or 2 months in warmer climates.”
- Dave Cummings joked, “Now further south is Meco. There’s less snow. It’s important to embellish and answer who really hangs out in this town? What’s the definition? Who’s a tax-paying resident? Who’s also paying taxes elsewhere? Like do bills for Wheelerville get mailed to Schuylerville? If I have a PO Box here in Caroga and elsewhere, how do you not lose me in the database? How’s it defined?”
- Jim Hale agreed and asked similar questions about living in both Caroga and Scotia.

- Chris Foss added, “Maybe in the Survey part of it, we ask, ‘What is your residency? Are you year-round? Are you seasonal? How many months do you spend in Caroga?’ That would be an interesting population demographic thing to understand in the Profile and also to track in the Survey.”
- 5. Public Input Survey**
- Anita Long asked, “I have the same question about the rough draft Survey as the rough draft Profile. I put sort of everything and the kitchen sink in there. It’s too complicated as is. A big question for the committee is, ‘Is this something that you want to pursue and continue to edit together, or do you want to do it in a totally different way?’ Either’s fine.”
 - Rachel Simonds replied, “When I went through it, I saw two surveys. There was stuff generally to get residents’ priorities. And then there was really specific stuff, like ‘What do you think about this project or initiative or this thing? Initially, I think a Survey needs to stick to 20 questions or less. I think there were 50 or so in here.”
 - Anita Long replied, “Help me understand how you would parse it? Can you elaborate?”
 - Rachel Simonds responded, “I think a first Survey needs to figure out, like, what are people’s preferences for priorities? Like big picture ideas. Are they more interested in the economics of the Town? Are they more interested in municipal facility type of stuff? Then in the future, when we have priorities, then ask the more specific questions, like ‘Because you’re interested in municipal facilities, what are your thoughts about the Golf Course? Town Hall? Sewer? Energy projects?’”
 - Jeremy Manning agreed, “Right. If your goal is to get responses, then you need a short version. Or maybe like SEQR, where you have a SEQR Short Form and a SEQR Long Form. Nobody wants to complete or look at the Long Form. But with the SEQR Short Form, people are like, ‘I’ve got that! No problem!’ So, ultimately, we want something approachable, not daunting. You can do it in 5 minutes. We’ll get responses. The goal here is to get responses. Some people will have no problem sitting down and doing a survey for 15 to 20 minutes. They’ll do it. But we want as much data as possible, and that’s going to be with a short, quick survey. Separately, you can do a longer one that’s more focused, but we won’t get the same response rate on that.”
 - Anita Long turned back, “Well, there’s another reason to double the ask on the budget funding. We need two surveys. It makes sense to simplify it. Sure. Do a first short one. I get it.”
 - Jeremy Manning specified, “Yes. Real light. What do you love about Caroga? What are your priorities? From there, boom, then you come into something way more detailed later.”
 - Anita Long added, “I also think Dave made a great point previously about how open-ended questions sometimes don’t get much. Plus, Doug—in his email response—reiterated that too. He’s not a fan of open-ended questions. So, I guess, one of my questions to the committee is, ‘What do you think of the example of a question about what do you like best about Caroga, and instead of an open blank, there was a list of 15 things and asked for a rank? Do you think that works? Or is it too directive?’”
 - Jeremy Manning replied, “The draft was too specific. Some are even a bit loaded. Some might be flash points. So, instead of being so specific, be more, like, just say ‘recreation’, ‘lifestyle’, ‘way of life’, or something not so specific to a project, for example.”
 - Anita Long clarified, “So, you like the lists or checkboxes, but it needs to be more general?”
 - Rachel Simonds responded, “Yes. I think they need to be more general, and less leading.”

- Jim Hale added, “I agree. I looked at questions about, ‘How should we fund projects?’ I don’t think that should even be in there for an initial survey.”
- Dave Cummings asked, “Can we all go through questions or lines of questioning, and kick it back?”
- Anita Long replied, “Yes! I think that’s what’s really, really important. I hope people engage in that. It’s really helpful. Cut that stuff like asking how to fund projects, especially at this point in time.”
- Jim Hale added, “My neighbors also would not have a clue about where we should locate the Clubhouse: at the fire site or the town hall site? They wouldn’t have a clue what that’s even about.”
- Chris Foss agreed, “Yes. Something like that in a general survey should be, maybe, ‘Do you feel the need for the Clubhouse?’ Not where should it be?”
- Jim Hale continued, “I have a dozen golfers from outside Caroga bitch at me about, ‘Why do you have such a shitty Clubhouse?’”
- Dave Cummings laughed, “I like it. It’s easy to clean! It takes us 10 minutes in the morning! Yes. Those are issues, like, I’ve never been a biker, but, boy, I’ve got friends that are! They’re asking me about Caroga Lake! So, if you’re not into an activity, then maybe your orientation is like, ‘Well, who cares about that?’ The parallel is that I’m trying to create a centennial thing, asking, ‘What was your first experience at Nick Stoner Golf Course? It’s almost parallel. What was your first experience with Caroga? Well, I remember a hurricane when I was 5 years old up here! Is that relevant now? No, of course not, but it’s my experience, and it’s important that my parents’ house is stronger now than it was back when I was 5 years old.”
- Dave Cummings also added, “My experience working across the street [as the Golf Club Manager] is that the senior golfers, typically we have three dozen in the Monday-Wednesday league, and maybe only a third of them are the ones who disappear after Labor Day. The rest are still hanging around. But I don’t know how many—maybe 15 or so—might be considered full-time residents. How do you extrapolate that with some of our Ladies Leagues? I’m trying to develop by zip code for marketing. I’m getting people from other areas too. That means I’m drawing people and visitors from the surrounding towns and counties. Incredibly, I find a lot of them building houses. Anthony [Fancher] in the Code Office and Zoning Department is busy, busy.”
- Jeremy Manning asked, “What’s the range, do you think, for the Nick Stoner Golf Course? Is it like they drive an hour or 2 hours, or just 30 minutes? What’s the average distance people travel?”
- Dave Cummings replied, “I would say 45 minutes to an hour, typically. It’s surprising to me. A lot of people from Schenectady County come up here. Saratoga people come over. Oneida and Herkimer come in. They drive about an hour to get here.”
- Jeremy Manning continued, “Interesting. In addition to doing a Survey that includes or targets residents, we did a Survey about the trail system a couple years ago about user preferences, trends, and things like that. It went out to all users. We had one guy submit one from Spain. We got people who just visit here. Maybe we could do a Survey for Caroga Visitors. Why do you come here? So, it doesn’t have to just be people who live in the Town, but also people who come here. Why do you show up? What do you want to see more of? If you’re here, did you go to a restaurant? Did you do this? What do you typically do? Track the behavioral trends here. That’d be nice to know as well.”
- Chris Foss continued, “Maybe it’s something we could do not just as a mailer, but as some kind of card or flyer with a QR code on it. Put some at the Golf Course. Put some at different places.”

- Jeremy Manning added, “Yes. Some people aren’t going to be able to get to something online. You’re not going to get enough responses.”
- Chris Foss clarified, “You have to have something, so that people know to go do it.”
- Dave Cummings added, “Yes. The younger ones too. You know, people under 30 or 35 or so, they’re Facebookers or into websites.”
- Jeremy Manning said, “When we do trails stuff, our Facebook page is the way we talk to Caroga, but then Instagram is how we talk to everybody else. I know that a bunch of people in Caroga read the updates on the Facebook page. But few people in the greater trails network really seem to read that. Instagram is where we draw people in from the greater 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 hours away. You can hit both with different web strategies. That’s getting into more than this Survey.”
- Anita Long clarified, “There are different ways to do it. For example, how do you want to do surveys? One survey might have an additional question or space to check, ‘I’m a visitor.’ Then to specify, ‘This Survey is available online and on paper, please only complete it once.’ Or do we want multiple targeted surveys for groups? Or multiple surveys for the same people over time?”
- Jeremy Manning replied, “Maybe. Questions should not be so specific, so a visitor can complete that and submit their opinion without having to know, ‘Do I care about the Clubhouse project?’ Or this or that. People might be like, ‘What is that?’ Maybe if questions are not so specific? But more like, ‘I care about recreation’ or ‘I care about education’. Ask about things more general or vague.”
- Chris Foss added, “Ask: What are your reasons for coming to Caroga? Relatives? Recreation? Music?”
- Jeremy Manning replied, “What gets you here? Maybe be mindful of different people—residents plus those who might be a visitor or not a year-round resident—when drafting questions.”
- Jeremy Manning also made the point of designing questions that meet people where they are by putting ourselves in their shoes. Imagine residents. “What will they say when they read the question? If in your mind you hear someone go, ‘Eh!’, then you know it’s too much...Can they do it? If you ask, ‘Should revitalization be prioritized?’ they may be like, ‘Eh! What’s that about?’ Plus, words like, ‘Local Economics and Commercial Opportunities’ might be too much. People don’t understand what you’re talking about with that, but you can respectfully ask them ABOUT that in a different way. Be way less specific. We each need to ask ourselves, ‘How do we make it approachable to people?’”
- Dave Cummings continued, “The words and sentences are critical. What is asked? How specific?”
- Jeremy Manning continued, “Everybody has an opinion. They know stuff about local economics and commercial opportunities, but they don’t say it in that way. People have an opinion, and they might have a business here too, but they might not think that way or in those words. We need to find the way to phrase things, so that it meets them where they are and they come out with what they think.”
- Anita Long agreed, “Yes. It’s also like that Mark Twain quote: ‘I didn’t have time to write you a short letter, so I wrote you a long letter.’ This rough draft is obviously long, but it’s hard to write a short survey. Still, that’s where we want to end up. That’s why input from each committee member is so valuable and helpful. If you look at this and think, ‘Well, a simpler and clearer way to say this would be X’, then please write it down and share it.”
- Chris Foss summarized, “Maybe we should figure on doing that between now and the next meeting. Next month, take a few questions at a time. Take what Anita wrote. Everybody go through it.”
- Jeremy Manning agreed, “I think we should spend a whole meeting with that. Workshop it.”

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- Anita Long agreed, “Yes. I welcome that. That’s the point. Edit it. Reduce it. Redo questions. That’s great. Help make it way simpler and clearer while covering what we need. It’s a fun puzzle challenge.”
- Jeremy Manning said, “It’s helpful, because it covers everything. Let’s start with that, and go ahead.”
- Via email, Doug Purcell wrote, “I thought the compilation of possible survey questions prepared by Anita to be a source document that could be used as a menu to decide from a variety of formats to gather the information felt to be relevant for planning purposes.”
- Dave Cummings added, “Winnow it down. It says it’s a rough draft, and that’s exactly right.”
- Jim Hale laughed and added, “And remember. This version is not just 68 cents to mail.”
- Dave Cummings laughed and continued, “It’s 3 bucks! Want to drive around and deliver them?”
- Jeremy Manning added, “I still agree there are 2 surveys. One gets you interested in the process. Get familiar with what we’re doing. Get a little invested. Then later another one shows up. It’s longer.”
- Rachel Simonds added, “Plus, do a workshop kind of thing. So, if you have another longer document, then we could have a captive audience to get something more specific.”
- Anita Long agreed, “Yes. Interviews. Focus groups. Also, how do we make steps clear? Do we call it Phase 1 Survey? Or Survey #1? To help label it as such? We just want people to do each survey once, but we want to be able to cue them if there’s a 2nd one, so people know what they’re doing. If people do a first short one, then we want to be clear about when they can also do another different one too. Right? How’s that happen?”
- Jeremy Manning replied, “We could just simply explain that we’re going to do our first survey to kind of feel out the community’s priorities. Then we’ll get other input, kind of, based upon that. Right, Rachel? Was that your idea? Kind of focusing on that? Based upon the responses, we’ll get more input later that kind of focuses in a little more. Make sense?” [Rachel nodded.]
- Chris Foss added, “Yes. So, if people have done one, then we just later say, something like, ‘Now we’re looking for more detailed information. We’ll have follow-up input.’ It still won’t be everyone, but if we can get 80%, then great.”
- Jeremy Manning added, “Right. It’s responses. The goal now is getting initial responses. That’s what we want. More responses are better. They’re valuable. If you have about 20 questions. People can do that. If you hit them with 50 right out of the gate, then you’ll get some responses but might not get what we’re looking for. We’re looking for a lot of different responses at this point.”
- Rachel Simonds agreed, “With 50 questions, people start and don’t finish.”
- Chris Foss laughed and said, “Yes. I’ve done that before! What? There’s another page? Forget it!”
- Jeremy Manning added, “I still like the general part at the end, even for an initial survey: ‘What are your ideas for Caroga? Do you have any other suggestions you would like to share? What would make Caroga better? Simple things like that. Super open ended. We did that with the trails, and we got a lot of great ideas that we hadn’t thought of. People had some really cool thoughts that were like, boy, that’s a good idea. Even one or two of those, we’ve implemented, and that’s awesome! Let’s do that! So, public input can move things in a whole different direction. So, somebody might have a really good idea sitting at their dinner table one night. They jot it down. And we’re like, ‘That’s cool.’”
- Dave Cummings agreed and said, “Allow people to expand. Some might say, ‘Move back to Scotia!’ I think this effort will shape itself. We’ll find out. I was thinking, like, all of us go through the 50 questions. Pick top 10 or 15. Then redo this document. That’s a worthy goal. What do we think?”
- Anita Long agreed and added, “Yes. That would be super helpful. What’s your top 10, 15, or 20?”

- Dave Cummings added, “Plus, some of the other questions might be really good for a verbal interaction or interview discussion, once we have open meetings and ask people, ‘Please come around and chat.’ We don’t want to lose it. The thought process is all there. But where to start?”
- Anita Long agreed and said, “I think it’s great to distill and simplify it at this point. Makes sense.”
- Jeremy Manning added, “Everything there has to be asked and answered by someone. In the initial survey, let’s do it in a different way with simpler words and phrases. All the ideas in there are going to be asked in some way, shape, or form. Ultimately, we, as the committee [or perhaps in collaboration with planning personnel or working with consultants] can take those things and reshape them and refocus them later. Maybe we can look at all the responses that come in and do summaries [with numbers and narratives], or even pass them through that other set of survey questions? So, maybe use it as a filter to look at things. Now, the draft is so detailed that it’s something more for us, I think. Like, ‘Where should we prioritize revitalization?’ That’s a question for us, informed by public input.”
- Via email, Doug Purcell also asked how will community data be entered into a spreadsheet? If responses are on paper, it’s not automated. It must be entered. All of the responses then need to be compiled for analyses and summaries. [One example summary is Caroga’s 1975 survey report 50 years ago.] He pointed out, “With a successful response from the community, a significant volume of data will be generated that needs to be compiled for analyses.” Who will do that? Paid personnel? A team member volunteer? How will we translate responses to inform plans?
- Anita Long added, “I’d also like to know how committee members answer questions. Plus, over time, how will we come together to understand Caroga’s issues and needs as we explore them in this process and understand them with community input? Figuring that out will be fun and interesting.”
- Chris Foss added, “That could be one of the first things. Pare it down. Then everybody here takes it.”
- **The goal for the coming month is for each committee member to find their top 10 to 20 questions. At the October meeting, we’ll workshop questions together to design the initial public input survey.**

6. Next Meeting

- **The next meeting date will be October 24, 2024** at 6:00PM to discuss public survey questions.
- Dave Cummings will be in Charleston, South Carolina. He asked questions about how to participate. While away, he will definitely follow along and put together input via email. Also, is zoom feasible?
- The November meeting date will be set in October, perhaps the week before or after Thanksgiving.

Respectfully submitted,

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