



145 Congress Street
Rumford, Maine 04276
(207) 364-4576
Fax (207) 364-5642

Senator Teresa Pierce, Senate Chair
Representative Traci Gere, House Chair
Committee on Housing

November 14, 2023

For LD 1976, An Act to Update the Growth Management Laws

The Town of Rumford is pleased to support LD 1976 as proposed for amendment by the sponsor and with the presumption that work will continue on the bill's language in an upcoming work session as described by Rep. Sachs. The Town is especially focused on the clarification that the mandate for Neighborhood Standards will not apply to communities which do not have land use zoning.

The Town takes special note of the inclusive and broad process initiated by Build Maine and Grow Smart Maine. These proposed changes to the Growth Management Act will revitalize the comprehensive planning process in line with its original intent which is to facilitate the desired outcomes of growth and development in line with publicly adopted community standards. Over a period of years the present management scheme for the comprehensive planning process in Maine has become heavily focused on exercises in resource inventories and data collection. While the Town recognizes these exercises to be important in a community of our size there is a strong sense that as presently enforced by DACF¹ these requirements materially detract from the much more important work of encouraging the community to create a plan which expresses the public will for conservation or development within municipal boundaries.

It is especially notable to us that the Department has engaged in eleventh hour rule-making which seeks to undermine this long term initiative and attempts to avoid legislative action. This unusual course of action is in our view a sure symptom of the necessity for the cure of reform and change. We take careful note of the fact that the role of the Department is to act to ensure compliance with the standards for the creation of comprehensive plans. Leaving the future of this reform efforts in the hands of this Department would be analogous to asking a Code Enforcement Officer to work as an architect. The Department's most fundamental role in the Growth Management Act is to ensure compliance through reviews for consistency and completeness. It is not their role nor is it necessarily within their administrative capacity to support a wide ranging conversation with hundreds of potential stakeholders regarding a vision for growth management in Maine.

The Town also is seeking the restoration of the rural farmstead placetype along parallel lines to the working waterfront placetype, the deletion of the description of "rural


¹ The Municipal Planning Assistance Program of the Bureau of Resource Information and Land Use Planning at the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry is the reviewing authority.

suburban sprawl” and the accompanying language from the Rural Backlands section, and the inclusion of the joint meeting requirement and 14 day public comment period as originally proposed. We believe these minor alterations will strongly support a healthy and robust planning process going forward and will provide for extensive citizen engagement and public due diligence.

Our earliest contribution to this process was to advocate for and ensure that the critical rural areas designation remained unchanged and available due to its exceptional importance for the protection of Maine’s most vulnerable, most scenic, and most endangered rural areas.

It has been our experience and those of many other communities represented here today that the visioning process for the future of Maine’s Growth Management Act has been undertaken in a manner that is inclusive, equitable, thoughtful, and open to creativity and efficiency. The Town strongly urges the Committee to forge ahead with your work on this important legislation and to take very seriously the hard work done by so many from all across the State. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee, Rep. Sachs, the stakeholders, and any interested party in support of the furtherance of these efforts.

Most Respectfully,


Stacy Carter
Town Manager


George O'Keefe
Economic Development Director