

Suggestions from Dave Cosson and action taken for CP

Memorandum

To: Georgette Cole

Peter Nagrod

From: David Cosson

Subject: Comments on 2022 Draft Comprehensive Plan

First, the scope, substance and detail of the 2022 Draft are a testament to the long hours of dedicated effort by the contributors and editors of the Draft. All residents owe their gratitude to them. Second, I recognize my comments are arriving very late in the process and that substantial revisions in structure are probably not practical at this stage.¹ Aside from a couple of substantive comments, I will offer notes that may be of assistance in your final editing.

¹ I recognize the difficulty of assembling a document from many different while avoiding duplication and minimizing the length of the document. I will try to limit comments to areas I noticed where the overlaps are inconsistent. The time required to develop the documents also means some statements become obsolete.

I should also note that these comments are submitted my personal capacity and not as an elected official.

The Planning Commission thanks Dave for recognizing the effort which has gone into the CP. He has done a thorough and thoughtful review of the entire CP. Since his comments cover many areas and are very specific the PC has replied to each in turn in blue.

Humpback Bridge. (pp 28, 41-43(d),(e)) The Humpback Bridge is both dangerous and inadequate. It is dangerous because the steepness of the “hump” means that there are points where drivers cannot see the vehicle directly in front of them, much less the pavement, so they won’t know if the preceding vehicle has unexpectedly stopped or there is a patch of ice. Further, vehicles coming to the “T” on Deer Park are at risk of going over the steep embankment. It is inadequate in that it offers only one way vehicle traffic, is often blocked by trucks whose drivers ignore the length limit signs, is unavailable for safe use by pedestrians or cyclists and creates unnecessary back-ups on Railroad Street. Nor does the appearance or design of the bridge have any particular aesthetic appeal.

The bridge should be replaced with a structure that does not infringe on the Town, but that substantially reduces the risks of collisions and road blockage. I therefore propose the recommendation to seek further historic protection should be deleted

from the Comprehensive Plan. I understand that some may believe historic designation would better arm the Town to resist replacements that infringe on the Town, but given that we have sufficient other means to resist such solutions and that the present bridge is unsafe and inadequate, the balance should be struck in favor of safety and improved traffic flow.

The PC recognizes both the current listing of the humpback Bridge on the MC Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites and the strong feelings of many in Town related to retention of the bridge. In addition to its historic status, many residents feel the bridge acts as a “traffic calming device” in that area. It will be up to the Town Council to accurately gauge the sentiment of the residents in moving forward with any plan of this nature. The PC understands Dave’s concern as a resident, but does not elect to change the current language.

Miscellaneous Notes by Page

7. Delete “in a natural state” as parks aren’t natural. Change “encroaching urbanization” to “intensifying nearby development as “encroaching’ implies within town boundaries and urbanization implies high rise buildings. [Accepted.](#)

9. Delete “and Workgroups” as all are now Committees. [The Sustainability Workgroup listings we had missed changing to Committee have been changed. Workgroups assembled for the CP process were retained as such.](#)

13. Should the map show the WG Conservation Meadow as part of the Town since it is owned by the Town? [No, it is not yet within our corporate boundary and is therefore labeled as a growth area.](#)

14. State law, item 3, is said to require encouraging development in areas designated for growth. The map, p. 12, shows WG Meadows as a growth area, but neither we nor MNCPP intend there to be economic development there (p.77 preservation as meadow “highest priority”). Should the map be changed? [No, it is labeled as FR forest and recreation.](#)

16. Reference is made to Blocks 28 and 33, but no reference is made to a document or map locating those blocks. [Reference deleted.](#)

21. Not all drainage goes to East or West Woods. As mentioned elsewhere the water coming down Brown Street goes into Muddy Branch. (p. 77, Sec. 3.2.2, Sec.

7.3.1 re drainage under Railroad St. and the CSX tracks) [Addition of Morgan Park and the lower Brown Street catch basin \(as described in 7.3\) to page 21.](#)

28. As the existence of a park on Oakmont is not obvious to a passerby, a map of this area would be helpful. [This will be considered for the next update to the Comprehensive Plan.](#)

33. Not clear what is meant by City of Gaithersburg undertaking major new development in Old Town Gaithersburg as the area along Diamond Ave. appears to be in serious decline from loss of businesses. [Our description correctly reflects what Gaithersburg has done even though their goal has not \(yet\) been achieved.](#)

34. Emergency use of walkways. The Fire Department has advised it does not plan to drive its heavy equipment on the walkways because they appear not to be able to bear the weight. [The Fire Department does not currently use the walkways, but ambulances may do so. Keeping the walkways clear enough for emergency access is still prudent.](#)

44-45 To the extent that improving Center Street between Gove Road and Maple Ave. would reduce transit times for emergency vehicles, the Plan should not cite additional trash by the maintenance shed as too much of a burden if the result saves lives and property. There would be significant expense however in redoing the culvert that crosses the drainage ditch, as well as improving at least part of the roadway. The better approach is to consult with the Fire Department as to whether they would go that way if available and what specifications would be required for the roadway/culvert to carry their vehicles. [Additional language added p 45 to explain PC rational.](#)

48. The first sentence of 4.1.1 that the electrical system has been modified to “meet current demands” seems inconsistent with the second sentence regarding lights dimming when A/C comes on. [Changed to “meet the majority of current demands”.](#)

60. Are the undeveloped lots adjoining Knott Park Town property or privately owned? If the latter, should the Town be seeking to acquire them? [Town land.](#)

65-66. The statement that Maple Spring no longer feeds Maple Lake appears inconsistent with the statement at Section 6.3.2 on page 76 that “Maple Spring is the primary source for Maple Lake.” Is the answer that Maple Spring is now

supplemented by a well? Page 65 changed to “At one time Maple Spring was...” and on p76 “Maple Spring once was...”

82. The assurance that WSSC has an adequate supply of water to supply the town “for the foreseeable future” rests on a 2008 statement from a WSSC employee. Given the development and climate changes in the last 14 years, is it time for renewed inquiry? PC assessment: save investigation for the next plan iteration.

In 7.2 the statement “initial private attempts failed” apparently was intended to refer to building sewage but seems to be missing a word or two. Information amplified/corrected on p 82.

83. The principle is stated that flow rate for water leaving the town should be no different that if the area were undeveloped. This seems to require that that all the rain falling on roofs, driveways and streets must be held somewhere to soak in, such as catch basins. But other than at the end of Brown Street, there are none in Town and no obvious locations for such basins. Should this principle be stated more as an aspiration than a distillation of legal requirements? “...trying to achieve...” added.

86. Change first sentence, first full paragraph to read “...rain that falls between Grove Ave and Ridge Road....” Runoff into the East Woods begins at Grove Ave., which is a bit higher than Grove Rd. Accepted.

87. Engineering studies still in planning.
A school is well under construction in Kelley Park.
Updated language.

91. Change 7-Eleven storefront is plain to “was” plain Present tense is correct since the reference is to an area (now the front of the Post Office) which has not changed.

93. Any landscaping of the Commercial Corner should be carefully planned so as not to obscure the view of traffic leaving the parking lot. The Border Committee is aware of this. The area is County right of way and they will be involved in the decisions.

115. The additional salt barn construction has been completed and was built much higher than the drawings shown to the Town by the County. PC does not feel this additional info is needed.

132. Re (b) seek means to remove racial covenants, substantial progress has been made and at least some have been removed, thanks to effort of Charlie Challstrom. Recommendation modified to add “Continue to work with residents...” to this sentence.

136. The County has rejected the proposal to install a solar field in the lower meadow. Added p 137 “however, the County has rejected the proposal at this time.”

139. Recommendation (b)(1) to only use heating and cooling during building use needs to recognize that buildings with plumbing need to be heated all winter, or the systems shut down, drained, and anti-freeze added. Heat can be reduced below levels comfortable for humans, however. Also, there is considerable lag time between when a building is to be used and when the heat or cooling needs to be turned on. Commonsense (and the Town Maintenance Councilmember) will dictate what is done.

145. The Sustainability Workgroup is now a Committee (2d bullet, 2d para.) changed p 146.

150. Per discussion above, delete (d). See comment on p 2 of this document. Recommendation 3.6 d has been retained, but the decision to “seek full historic preservation designation of the existing historic humpback bridge” will be at the discretion of the Town Council.