

Town of Eaton



Master Plan

2015

ADOPTION OF MASTER PLAN EATON, NEW HAMPSHIRE

The Planning Board of the Town of Eaton, New Hampshire, in accordance with the provision of Chapter 674:4 and after holding a Public Hearing on July 9, 2015, does hereby adopt the Eaton Master Plan of 2015, including findings, recommendations, goals and policies contained in this Plan to aid the Planning Board and other Town Boards in the performance of their respective duties of guiding and accomplishing the coordinated and harmonious development of the Town of Eaton, New Hampshire.

Paul Savchick, Chairman
Dennis Sullivan
Frank Holmes
Thaire Bryant
Richard Fortin
Peter Klose

Date September 9, 2015

The original certified copy of Eaton's adopted Master Plan of 2015 has been filed with Suzanne A. Raiche, Town Clerk of Eaton, on September 10, 2015.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Which way you ought to go depends on where you want to get to...”

--Mad Hatter (Alice In Wonderland)

The 1986 Master Plan was a comprehensive document that provided meritorious historical data, land use information and a detailed survey of people's opinions at the time. An update since then confirms several key findings of that report: a significant conservation/environmental ethic, a preference for slow growth, and a widespread enjoyment of being able to live in such a beautiful community. The challenge for the Planning Board has been and continues to be, how to accommodate changes while holding true to the core values.

During the process of the Master Plan update, the Planning Board held multiple Public Hearings and also solicited public input by means of a questionnaire (1). This information was then utilized to formulate and prioritize the goals and objectives set forth in this Plan.

There are several key factors that have changed since 1986. First, there has been an increase in the population of the Town, an increase in the median age of the Townspeople, and a sharp reduction in the number of school children. Second, there is a much greater awareness of the importance of sustainability, the fragility of the environment and the consequences of climate change. Finally, the digital age presents many opportunities for both governments and people to work together more effectively.

In terms of format, the 2015 Master Plan differs from earlier versions. The primary purpose of the Master Plan is to lay out a framework for action looking forward. The goals and objectives begin on page 3 and supporting data and rationale are available electronically. To access this information, the reader clicks on the numbers [ie. (1)], which opens up another file. When the reader is finished reviewing that information, closing that new window returns you to the Master Plan document. This approach permits a much larger body of information to be available to the reader than would ever be possible using print alone. As an example, both the original 1973 Master Plan (2) and the 1986 version (3) are included in their entirety, together with many other reports that have guided the Town to its present state of ambiance. For those readers who choose to review the Master Plan in strictly written form, an appendix is provided with either the full documents or reference to what they are and where to find them.

Inn at Crystal Lake



Snowvillage Inn

QUALITY OF LIFE



Little White Church



Eaton Village Store & Post Office



Camp Waukeela Girls at the Little White Church



Managing Foss Mountain Blueberries



South Eaton Meetinghouse

CHAPTER 2

QUALITY OF LIFE

“Take time for all things—great haste makes great waste.”

--Ben Franklin

The vision for Eaton is to protect and enhance the quality of life as it is now while preserving it in preparing for the challenges ahead. Life in Eaton is rural in character, epitomized by open spaces, scenic vistas, lakes and streams, stone walls, narrow winding gravel roads, traditional New England architecture, little traffic, no traffic lights, no gas stations and lots of trees and wildlife; where the noise is lower and the pace is slower than more urban areas.

Preservation of such attributes faces challenges both immediate and at some uncertain time in the future. While the economy in recent times has been poor and growth in the area slowed dramatically, New Hampshire in general, and Eaton in particular, are very attractive places to live.

Defining rural character is a complex issue but one of the major components is what the Town looks like and what can be seen from the Town. The main road through Town is Route 153 and traveling either north or south along it is to see New England scenic byways at their best. One of the future challenges is to constrain attempts to widen, straighten and level local roads.

Much of the spirit of a community reflects how well its citizens are informed. The internet and the Town web page are a significant advance over what used to be available. The Town could facilitate communications within pocket neighborhoods and make a greater effort to assimilate new residents into the community.

The modern age no longer permits Eaton to be isolated and independent of its surrounding environment. Be it schools, trash disposal, or emergency services, the Town is increasingly part of a regional approach to common issues. That trend is likely to continue.

GOAL 1

To preserve and enhance the rural character and scenic qualities of the Town.

Objectives:

- Maintain existing viewsheds, scenic vistas and focal points (1).
- Develop incentives or acquire easements for keeping and maintaining scenic vistas on private lands open (2).
- Develop criteria for determining which roads should be classified as scenic roads (3).
- Work with the NH Department of Transportation and other agencies to ensure that the scenic qualities of the entrance roads (Route 153 and Brownfield Road) are maintained.
- Encourage the use of underground utilities whenever feasible (4).
- Determine if new regulations are needed regarding cell towers and wind turbines (5).
- Develop land use regulations that encourage maintenance of the rural character of the Town (6).

GOAL 2

To improve communications with the citizens of Eaton and improve access to information and services.

Objectives:

- Utilize technological advances such as the internet to provide easier access to Town Hall information and services (7).
- Review television and internet access for the Town and the need for the community to have improved and expanded service (8).
- Develop a welcome package for new residents and actively encourage their participation in community affairs (9).

GOAL 3

To network more effectively with other groups and organizations in the Town, in the surrounding communities and in the region.

Objectives:

- Communicate and cooperate with other organizations in Town such as the Community Circle, the Little White Church, the Eaton Village Preservation Society and the South Eaton Meeting House ([10](#)).
- Work cooperatively with municipal organizations in neighboring towns such as Selectmen, Conservation Commissions and Planning Boards ([11](#)).
- Continue to work cooperatively with local and regional organizations with common interests such as the Green Mountain Conservation Group, Upper Saco Valley Land Trust and Tin Mountain Conservation Center ([12](#)).

GOAL 4

To preserve and protect the historic resources of the Town.

Objectives:

- Continue to make historical information in the possession of the Town accessible to the public ([13](#)).
- Encourage the preservation of historic structures ([14](#)).

GOAL 5

To enhance the unique character of village districts and neighborhoods in the Town.

Objectives:

- Review existing parking availability and explore possible solutions to problems posed by parking at Town Hall, Town Beach, Little White Church, Eaton Village Store and Inn at Crystal Lake.
- Determine if new ordinances are needed to regulate commercial signs and lighting in Town ([15](#)).

ROADS



Foss Mountain Road

CHAPTER 3

ROADS

“Everything in life is somewhere else and you get there by car.”

--E. B. White

Public transportation issues have little relevance to the Town of Eaton due to the fact that residents are, for the most part, dependent on the automobile for transportation. There is not enough population density to warrant a public transportation system along the Route 153 corridor. The location and condition of roads, how they are maintained and how they may be integrated with new developments is critical to the future of the community.

Roads serve many different purposes. They provide access, open up scenic views, govern the speed of transit and are used by vehicles, bicyclists, joggers and by children. Different roads have different functions. The function of roads can be classified according to their jurisdiction or hierarchy. Class I through Class III roads are maintained by the State. Examples of these classes of roads include Route 153 and the Brownfield Road (1). There are no Class IV roads in Eaton. Class V roads are maintained by the Town. Class VI roads are not owned or maintained by the Town. In most cases, there is a prescriptive right for public access over these roads. A road map (2) is provided.

The hierarchy of roads consists of Arterial, Collector, Subcollector and Access Roads. Route 153 and the Brownfield Road are examples of Arterial roads conveying through traffic to other communities. McCormack Lane to Stewart Road to Bush Road (or Bull Pasture) to the Brownfield Road illustrates the transition from Access Road to Subcollector to Collector to Arterial Road (3). Access Roads are neighborhood roads providing access only to residences.

Currently Eaton has road design standards that new developments are required to meet. Acceptance of roads has been delegated to Town Meeting with a requirement that an unencumbered title be conveyed to the Town and the condition of the road meets the current road standards. The constraints imposed by the Town on the acceptance of roads ensure that the taxpayer does not finance the shortcomings of private developments.

There are some incompatibilities in the current discussions on flexible road standards and traffic calming techniques; for example, narrowing roads to reduce construction and maintenance costs and reduce storm water runoff may expose pedestrians and others to closer encounters with vehicular traffic than they would prefer. Some compromises have to be sought.

GOAL

To preserve and enhance the road network in Eaton.

Objectives:

- Perform an inventory of all roads and clearly delineate between Class V and Class VI roads (4).
- Retain the road specifications in their current form subject to new information on road design and construction, highway safety, design flexibility and the preservation of rural character.
- Consider traffic-calming techniques in population centers to improve the safety of pedestrians (5).
- Work with the State Department of Transportation to ensure that the scenic qualities of the entrance roads (Route 153 and Brownfield Road) are preserved.
- Continue to fund the Capital Reserve Fund for Bridges until all the bridges in Town pass the State inspection (6).

TOWN HALL



CHAPTER 4

TOWN HALL OPERATIONS

“A nation of sheep will beget a government of wolves.”

--Edward R. Murrow

An efficient, effective and user-friendly government is important to the well being of the community. With the State of New Hampshire’s heavy reliance on the property tax for funding services including schools, the Town needs to be perceived as providing value and quality services to its citizens. Local government needs to be seen as open and transparent (1).

Town Hall is the epicenter of municipal affairs. As a building, it is conveniently situated (2), modest in appearance (3) and has an intriguing history (4). Town Hall is also the governmental center where meetings are held, the business of the Town is conducted and where records are stored.

The two primary offices are the Board of Selectmen and the Town Clerk/Tax Collector. One end of Town Hall collects the money and the other end spends it. The major municipal boards are Planning, Conservation and the Zoning Board of Adjustment. All of these boards are appointed by the Selectmen (5). The major service provided by the Town is the maintenance of roads. There are 23 miles of Town roads and road maintenance and the associated equipment costs account for approximately 40% of the Town’s budget.

While the essential elements of town governance (the provision of services, collection of taxes, managing the fiduciary affairs of the Town, registrations of sundry kinds, land use planning, environmental conservation and regulatory compliance) have seemingly not changed over the years, the execution thereof has changed dramatically. In today’s litigious society, the liability is greater, technical requirements are stiffer and transparency and accountability are stricter (6).

The Town Hall also serves as the Emergency Center although it has never been used as such. There is an historical disposition among the residents towards independence even in times of disaster but current Federal regulations require that the Town have an approved Hazard Mitigation Plan in place in order to be eligible for Federal Emergency Management (FEMA) mitigation funds.

GOAL

To improve efficiency and effectiveness of Eaton governmental functions for the benefit of all citizens.

Objectives:

- Review the status of all Town Hall amenities with respect to additions, replacement and/or repair ([7](#)).
- Expand and develop further an Operations Manual for Town Hall operations and thereby shorten the learning curve for new Town officials.
- Further the use of the Town web site to improve dissemination and access to Town Hall services and information and to develop alternative means of access for those unable to obtain high-speed internet services.
- Take advantage of technological developments to improve access to historical documents and records ([8](#)).
- Review, and if necessary, improve security and back-up of Town Hall facilities and records ([9](#)).
- Continue to improve the landscaping around Town Hall ([10](#)).
- Continue to work with the Lower Mt. Washington Valley Solid Waste District to facilitate the removal and disposal of residential hazardous waste and to expand and develop further recycling efforts ([11](#)).
- Continue with present contracts with Center Conway Fire Precinct and the Town of Freedom for the provision of emergency services ([12](#)).
- Consider appropriating funds for additional police coverage by the Carroll County Sheriff's Department if the need arises.
- Continue to press for expanded high-speed broadband access to the internet ([13](#)).



Spring prep for the birds



Maple Syrup anyone?



Boating on Crystal Lake



Eatonfest Umbrella Brigade

RECREATION



Pumpkin Judging



Autumn picnic time



Hiking on Foss Mountain



Skating on Crystal Lake

CHAPTER 5

RECREATION

“I take my only exercise acting as a pallbearer at the funerals of my friends who exercise regularly.”

--Mark Twain

Children in Eaton used to participate in the Town of Conway's recreational programs but due to increased fees, our Recreation Committee worked out agreements with Madison and the North Conway Recreation Center to accept Eaton children at a more reasonable rate. The Town beach is much used during the summer and the requirement for beach passes restricts its use to Town residents.

The Town owns 2,327 acres of land. This constitutes a huge and valuable open space resource. It is, however, a resource that is often unknown and underutilized by many of the Townspeople. In addition, the Town owns other properties, such as the Beach at Crystal Lake and the cemeteries in Eaton Center and Snowville and buildings, such as the Town Hall, that contribute aesthetically, culturally and emotionally to the well being of the Town.

For many years, the Conservation Commission has been actively involved in maintaining access to Foss Mountain and managing the blueberry fields. This has included trail work, burning of the blueberry fields and erecting an informational kiosk at the new Foss Mountain trail. The new trail was constructed in 2014 and is located north of the original location and has a larger parking lot. Work has also been done on maintaining Class VI roads, particularly the Willis Bean Road, that have been used for snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and hiking. Given the fragility of the Foss Mountain environment, the Town instituted a permitting procedure that limits the size of groups visiting the area. Opening up the Town lands to greater use invites more damage and increased road maintenance costs.

GOAL

To increase citizen awareness of town-owned land and recreational resources.

Objectives:

- Identify and map wildlife areas, trails and open spaces (1).
- Manage Town lands to protect natural, visual and aesthetic features and guard against litter and destruction (2).
- Review the permitting and fee system for group uses of Town lands in keeping with the primary need to preserve and protect Town lands (3).
- Consider controls and regulations for the use of OHRVs, mountain and dirt bikes, snowmobiles and other recreational vehicles on Town lands (4).
- Maintain and improve the blueberry fields on Foss (5).
- Monitor the use of the Town Beach and associated facilities to assess for safe and efficient use of the facilities (6).

LAND USE



CHAPTER 6

LAND USE

“When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.”

--Aldo Leopold

Eaton consists primarily of single-family homes with two pockets of population in Eaton Center and Snowville. Land use regulations provide the regulatory framework that govern changes in the Town and its future growth and development. The regulations, therefore, should be in accord with the community’s stated objective of preserving and enhancing the quality of life.

Zoning was first adopted in 1973 and has undergone extensive and regular changes since then in adjusting to changing needs. There are three zoning districts: the Village District covering Eaton Center and Snowville, a small Commercial District bordering on the Conway line and the remainder of the Town designated as the Rural Residential District. The Subdivision (1) and Site Plan Review (2) Regulations have changed relatively little and continue to serve Town needs. In contrast, the Zoning Ordinance (3), changes frequently as needs arise.

Out of a total of just under 17,000 acres, the Town itself owns approximately 2,500 acres. Since 1986, the amount of land in Current Use has risen from just over 7,400 acres to just under 10,000 acres, representing close to 70% of the land available for development (4). This large amount of undeveloped land is an important feature in determining the Town's character.

Opportunities for expanding the tax base are limited since the terrain protects against premature and scattered development and is unattractive to commercial development. Approximately 70% of the terrain is steeper than 15% grade. Growth is likely to be slow. The regulatory requirement that subdivision be based on soil types (HISS – high intensity soil surveys) rather than acreage also serves to protect the Town from overdevelopment. In addition, any new roads will not be accepted unless they meet the current road standards restricting the Town's costs to maintenance and repair. The scattered placement of single family homes is likely to continue although there are areas in Town where significant subdivisions could occur. The Town has Cluster Regulations in place but they have yet to be used (5).

Employment for most people is either home-based or out of Town. The cost of property and its distance from schools and diverse employment opportunities may well account for the aging population and the decline in student numbers.

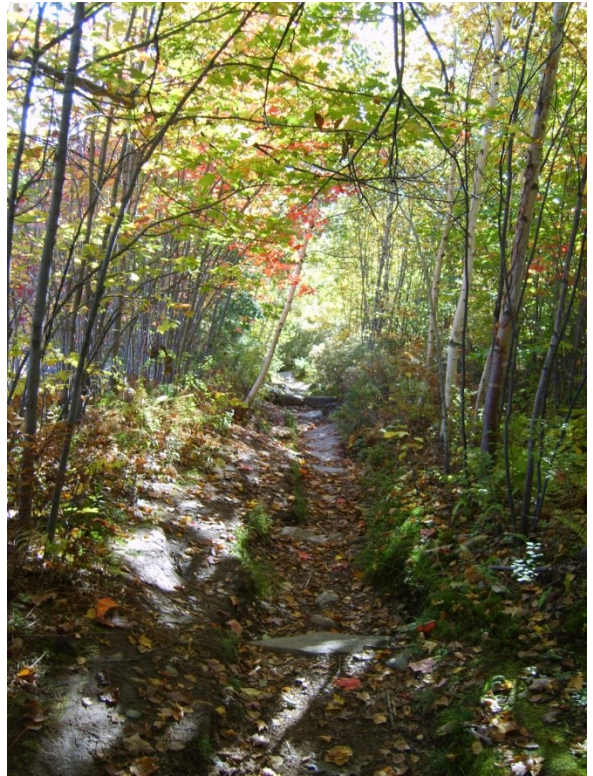
GOAL

To develop land use regulations that are flexible and innovative which work to the benefit of the individual and the community.

Objectives:

- Review the Town's Shoreland Protection Ordinance and determine if it is adequate for protecting the water resources of Eaton and is consistent with the State Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act ([6](#)).
- Determine the applicability of performance-based standards when considering revisions and amendments to the Zoning Ordinance ([7](#)).
- Facilitate, through examination of the land use regulations, the further development of home-based businesses while preserving the rural character of the Town ([8](#)).
- Determine whether commercial and business opportunities in the Town should be expanded through changes to the land use regulations ([9](#)).
- Determine the applicability of specific land use innovations to the future growth of the Town ([10](#)).
- Review and revise cluster development regulations as needed ([11](#)).
- Adopt a proactive approach to retain traditional patterns of building location, architecture, landscaping and reuse of old buildings, particularly in Snowville and Eaton Center ([12](#)).
- Identify a land use category in both the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations that addresses the need to preserve the visual and aesthetic qualities of hillsides and ridge lines identified as important to the scenic qualities of the Town ([13](#)).
- Explore a land use category in both the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations that addresses the need to preserve the visual and aesthetic qualities of the major road entrances (Route 153 and Brownfield Road) to the Town ([14](#)).
- Investigate the applicability of incorporating conservation design themes, landscaping architecture and open space considerations as obligatory components of subdivision applications ([15](#)).

NATURAL RESOURCES



CHAPTER 7

NATURAL RESOURCES

“The totality of life is a membrane of organisms wrapped around the Earth so thin it cannot be seen edgewise from a space shuttle.”

--E.O. Wilson

There have been two major studies on the natural resources of Eaton. The Comprehensive Management Plan for Town Lands was completed in 2001 (1) and the study by the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust of the whole Town was completed in 2012 (2).

The Comprehensive Management Plan was initiated following the ice storm of 1998 which generated extensive damage throughout the Town (3). The study was funded by two grants from the State of New Hampshire and carried out by Natural Resource Consultants LLC and the James Sewall Company. The study developed a comprehensive management plan for timber cutting on Town lands; it also catalogued the wildlife habitat and provided an inventory of the timber available.

The second study was carried out by Dan Sperduto and Peter Ellis and represents Phase I of a Strategic Conservation Planning effort by the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust (USVLT). Future phases will build on the foundation of the Resource Inventory by soliciting input and engagement from local conservation partners and stakeholders, considering additional resource values not explicitly incorporated into the Resource Inventory, and prioritizing among conservation opportunities.

The study incorporated twelve GIS data layers in the subsequent report. They were: Aquifers; Brook Trout Headwaters; Farmland and Other Openings; Great Pond Shorelines; Important Bird Areas; Natural Communities and Wildlife Habitats; Open Wetlands; Prime Farmland Soils; Productive Forest Soils; Riparian Zones; Rare Plants, Animals, and Exemplary Natural Communities; and Unfragmented Forest Blocks. This plan is being analyzed for use by the Town to project build-out over the next 50 years. Reservations have been expressed about using these data for projections 50 years in the future.

There are three watersheds in Eaton: one flowing north to Conway Lake and the Saco River, a second flowing south to Ossipee Lake and the third flowing east via the Shepard River to the Saco River. Water quality in the lakes in Eaton is very good and has been monitored by the Conservation Commission for a number of years. A detailed description of the geology and vegetation of the Town is provided in the 1986 Master Plan (4).

GOAL 1

To protect, preserve and enhance the natural resources of the Town.

Objectives:

- Continue to research, identify and conduct a natural resources inventory of the Town (5).
- Review, update and revise as necessary, the Comprehensive Management Plan for Town lands (6).
- Identify any areas or resources in need of protection and preservation and develop plans to do so (7).
- Continue to explore the use of easements and other legal instruments for the purpose of protecting important natural resources (8).
- Continue to support the Land Acquisition Fund to procure and protect important ecological objectives (9).
- Determine if a water resources protection plan should be developed and if the current Shoreline Protection Ordinance adequately protects the resources of the Town.

GOAL 2

To communicate and collaborate with others on the importance of protecting the environment.

Objective:

- Promote and encourage communication and collaboration on environmental issues between all land use boards, the public, outside agencies and other municipalities.

GOAL 3

To further investigate and develop the potential of Town lands to generate income for the Town.

Objectives:

- Continue to conduct income-generating sustainable timber harvesting programs on Town lands (10).
- Monitor the blueberry fields on Foss Mountain (11).

IMPLEMENTATION



CHAPTER 8

IMPLEMENTATION

“The sailor cannot see the North, but knows the Needle can.”

--Emily Dickinson

The objective of the Master Plan is to guide the future growth of the Town. It is important, therefore, that procedures be adopted for implementing the goals and objectives proposed, as well as reviewing and revising the Master Plan itself as circumstances require.

Although the Planning Board, by statute, is responsible for writing the Master Plan, the Board of Selectmen are the overseers of the Town with direct responsibilities far broader than those of the Planning Board. Responsibility for the implementation of the Master Plan, therefore, lies more properly with the Selectmen.

Since all the land use boards have responsibilities for implementing various segments of the Master Plan, it is important that there be excellent communication between them, as well as with the Townspeople. Towards this end, the Town should reinstitute an annual joint meeting of all the land use boards. It is also vital that any communications between Town officials be in accordance with the significant constraints imposed by the Right-to-Know law (RSA 91A). Meetings should be well advertised, new proposals widely disseminated and positive outreach be made to acquire all the relevant information necessary for informed decision making.

The Planning Board's responsibility is to keep the Master Plan up to date and to be particularly cognizant of developments at the regional and state levels that may impact the quality of life within the Town.

GOAL 1

To ensure that the goals, objectives and policy recommendations of the Eaton Master Plan are implemented.

Objectives:

- Review by each governmental body and land use board annually its own goals and objectives as outlined in the Master Plan Implementation Checklist (1).
- Hold a joint meeting of all the land use boards annually to review accomplishments and issues arising from the previous year and define and coordinate objectives for the coming year. It is recommended that the meeting take place after Town Meeting and be held in late March or early April.

GOAL 2

To ensure that the Master Plan remains current and relevant to the future growth and development of the Town.

Objectives:

- Revise the Master Plan on an ongoing basis with one or more sections chosen for review each year.
- Keep current with legislative changes that may impact the future growth and development of the Town (2).
- Review the results of the latest census and analyze the data to determine how the demographics of the Town are changing (3).
- Study the results of the above analysis and determine what actions, if any, should be taken to preserve the Town's quality of life.
- Determine the impact of issues of contemporary concern on the quality of life of the residents of the Town. Such issues include, but are not limited to, sustainable growth, smart growth, traffic calming, energy independence, broadband access, affordable (or workforce) housing, global warming and environmental protection.