

SPO



Maine State Planning Office

Executive Department

JOHN ELIAS BALDACCI
Governor

MARTHA E. FREEMAN
Director

November 1, 2010

Ms. Teresa Viselli, Board of Selectmen
Mr. Dan Ackley, Planning Board Chair
Town of Cooper
223 Cooper Highway
Cooper, ME 04657

Dear Ms. Viselli and Mr. Ackley,

The State Planning Office wishes to thank the Town of Cooper for submitting its proposed comprehensive plan for review for consistency with the Maine Growth Management Act (the Act) in accordance with our Comprehensive Plan Review Criteria Rule.

We've completed our review and are pleased to report that we have found the 2010 Cooper Comprehensive Plan to be **complete** and to be **consistent** with the Act.

The successful completion of your plan reflects a tremendous amount of work and cooperation of which you can be justly proud. Our finding of consistency is based on our recognition of the plan's many strengths and our finding is not conditional. Nevertheless, we urge the Comprehensive Planning Committee to consider making the following revisions:

- Expand the Growth Area to include the Low Density Residential/Home Based Business district. The LDR/HBB overlays two of the town's most densely-settled areas, it allows the highest density of any district in town, and it's contiguous with designated Growth Areas. All three of these attributes are typical of a Growth Area district and we believe the Plan will be stronger if the LDR/HBB is designated as such. This change will promote greater efficiency in the delivery of municipal and commercial services by fostering residential growth near the service providers. Proposed municipal capital projects in the adjacent Civic Services/Facilities districts will, thus, be more likely to gain state funding and the Limited Commercial district will be more attractive to private investors.
- Sharpen the density distinction between the Growth and Rural Areas. For some districts, collapsing the currently-proposed minimum lot size range down to a specific size can improve the efficacy of the Plan. For instance, by stipulating a minimum lot size of ½ acre in the LDR/HBB, rather than the current ½ to 1 acre range, the Committee can assure that the future zoning ordinance is more, rather than less, encouraging of new residential development in this district. Similarly, given that the Plan includes strong support for "cluster" development in the rural areas, an unambiguous 2-acre minimum lot size in the Very Low Density Residential/Home Based Business (VLDR/HBB) district will do more to curb development sprawl than the smaller minimum size that may result from the Plan's current "1 to 2 acre" benchmark. The practical impact of any minimum lot size standard on the owners of existing lots that are smaller than the minimum is always important to consider. If the Committee anticipates significant negative impacts to those owners, it can include a call for those impacts to be eliminated or ameliorated through the non-conforming lot provisions of the future zoning ordinance.

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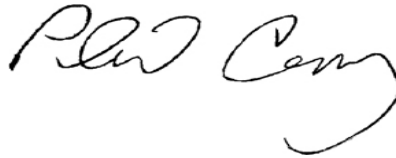
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The revisions suggested in this letter, as well as any that address points raised in the attached written comments from the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife and the Department of Transportation, can be made(or not) without further review by SPO and with no effect on the Plan's "consistent" status. Please note, however, that for the life of the Plan, any other revisions must be submitted for SPO review in order for Plan's "consistent" status to be maintained.

Again, we want to congratulate you and all the members of Comprehensive Planning Committee, the Committee's consultant, and the citizens of Cooper who have worked so hard on the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. Having met with Cooper citizens five years ago on the topic of de-organization, I'm very impressed, though not surprised, by the resurgent civic engagement that this plan represents. We hope that your efforts will be rewarded at your next Town Meeting with the adoption Cooper's first comprehensive plan.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or comments regarding this letter or steps you can take towards implementing your comprehensive plan.

Congratulations and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil Carey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Phil Carey
Senior Planner
Planning and Land Use Program

Cc (via email): Judy East, Washington County Council of Governments
Jeremy Gabrielson, Washington County Council of Governments
Elizabeth Hertz, Director, SPO Planning and Land Use Program