

Master Plan Survey Summary of Comments

Business & Economy Section

What type of retail shopping would you use in Canaan if it were available?

The survey responders are seriously divided between no businesses and virtually any reasonable business or retail shopping. But, by far the majority of responders favor local stores of all kinds especially a grocery store. However, to a large majority any kind of store or business one might use regularly seems to be acceptable. Most people want better grocery choice.

What kinds of professional offices should we have in Canaan?

Here again the survey responders are divided between none and virtually any reasonable business or professional offices. But, by far the majority of responders favor any kind of professional office one might use or create jobs. Medical, doctor's office and attorneys most mentioned

What kinds of professional and business use parks should we encourage in Canaan?

Here again the survey responders are divided between none and virtually any reasonable professional or business park. The number requesting no professional and business use parks was up significantly here, but nowhere near the majority. Parks which bring jobs and add to the tax base were mentioned.

What type of businesses, (commercial, retail, manufacturing, etc.) if any, would you like to see discouraged in Canaan?

Once again, but with an addition, the survey responders are divided between none and virtually every business. A significant number answered any or all businesses. Most everyone who did not respond none had one or two specific businesses they do not wish to have locally. Businesses and types of businesses mentioned more than once were bars, liquor stores, adult shops, gambling-casinos, polluting, pool halls, noisy, big box, chains, non small, storage, smoke shops, strip joints, malls, chemical plants, gun stores, dirty, junk yards, oil refineries, race tracks, shooting ranges, ATV parks, industrial plants, loud, manufacturing, nuclear plant, paper mills, chemical weapons, trailer parks.

Landscape Section

Recreational Conservation

Most overwhelmingly (41 notations) listed Canaan Lake and beach, a few of these included Goose Pond and Clark Pond. The next most mentioned is Williams Field (16) with mention of the playground (5), need for a playground (3) and a need for more children's recreation. 12 people noted the Rail Trail. There were single comments concerning hiking trails, Cardigan Mountain, and ski trails, forest area, and Mascoma Lake.

Churches and Historic Buildings

The Meeting House was the highest site with 30 mentions; followed with 3 sites all tied at 17, Canaan Street, the churches (notably the Methodist Church) and museum. Nine votes for “all” and 9 for Library. Grange, downtown, RR Station, Cardigan Mountain School all were mentioned.

Attractive Residential Areas

More than half (49) stated Canaan Street and Historic District. Mentions were made for Goose Pond, Sawyer Hill, and Gristmill Hill. Fourteen people commented negatively on the dumps/junk yards especially entering from the west on Route 4 and on Route 118.

Scenic & Open Spaces

There were 10 responses for “all”. It was pretty evenly split for Canaan Street and beach, Cardigan Mountain, and farms and fields (between 13 and 17). Also mentioned were the cemetery, Rail Trail, Grafton Turnpike, lakes and views.

Ponds & Streams

Twelve voted “all”, (38) Canaan Street Lake, (33) Goose Pond, (26) Mascoma & Indian Rivers, (23) Clark Pond. Also mentioned were Mud Pond, Bear Pond, Orange Basin, and Mirror Lake. Respondents stressed keeping these resources clean and litter free.

Other

A few supported a Recreational Shooting Range. Comments for improvements: restore docks, clean up trash, youth/adult recreation building, downtown area, bike trail, library, La Salette, agriculture, woodlands. Again we received numerous comments about the eyesore of Route 4 coming into Canaan

Comment box following wind and solar questions

This box was only available to those who took the online survey, as the hard copy survey didn't ask for comments. Those who responded cautioned that wind and solar should be approached with careful study, as the subject is complex. Location, cost, taxes, views, and more need to be considered. Some people used this box to discuss many other issues including junk areas, zoning, dog parks, vehicles on lake ice, recreation, and more.

Communication Section

Several methods for increasing communication in town were proposed as follows: Canaan listserv (10), more town emails (10), local Mascoma area newspaper (8), newsletter or flyers mailed to residents (8), put bulletin board on town green (4), town social events (3), Facebook (3), and forum on town website (2). Several other ideas were proposed which deserve further consideration, such as posting draft selectmen's minutes promptly after the meeting, police/fire open houses, and holding quarterly town administrator public meetings for interaction.

Future Section

What do you think are the three (3) most serious issues facing Canaan in the next 5-25 years?

The answers run the gamut from preservation of rural life to the condition of "junk yards" and "appliance cemeteries". Quite a few people answered that the condition of the high school and education were the most serious issues. An aging population, property taxes, roads and growth were quite frequent answers also. These answers seem to sum it up – "attracting good and decent people to live and make their home in Canaan" and "growth that is harmonious with the environment".

Housing Section

How can we create or encourage housing for low income or moderate income families?

Don't

A substantial minority commented that Canaan doesn't need any more lower income housing, i.e., poorly maintained properties, mobile homes and trailers. We should be attracting higher income residents to improve the community. Allow the market place to select economically viable alternatives. Lack of zoning already encourages lower income families to live in Canaan.

Reduce Taxes

One of the two most frequent suggestions was to lower property taxes to reduce the cost of living in Canaan.

Develop multi-family homes and rental properties

The other most common suggestion was to encourage cluster development, apartment buildings and condominiums. Build another Indian River Housing project with a cooperative ownership structure where the occupants have a stake in the upkeep. Work with Andrew Winter at Twin Pines Housing Trust in WRJ VT.

Seek Grants, State and Federal Subsidies

HUD programs are recommended. Hanover's Gile Hill moderate income housing is cited. The Town should rent out homes it owns that were seized for tax delinquencies. Create a fund to make loans to help residents buy homes that must be repaid when that house is sold.

Jobs and Transportation

Without increased local jobs or improved transportation for commuting to out-of-town jobs, lower income housing initiatives are doomed to become welfare havens.

Need for Improved Services

The Town's Sewer and Water District must be expanded for lower cost housing. Improve local health care, social services and education.

Open Space & Recreation Section

There were a variety of comments with several requesting that tax dollars not be spent developing or running recreation activities. Fees were suggested if people wanted to be part of a certain team or sport. Intramural leagues were felt by several people to be of interest. There were several comments concerning the use of grants or private monies. The comments included a community garden and a multi-purpose facility to be used for recreation or all ages. There was a request to install docks at Canaan Street Beach and reduce beach use by non-residents. Several people requested more activities for children and teens.

Planning Section

A number of people expressed concerns in this area and others about the "look" of the town, especially areas that are run down and/or full of junky materials. Additionally, people struggle with remaining a nice rural community while still attracting younger families and businesses to bring in revenues. There were a number of ideas about generating income for the town. Topics discussed included roads, safety, noise, schools, regulations, zoning, water, sewer, elderly, and the economy.

As always, the community feels taxes are too high, and unaffordable, however, there is still a desire for better services. One person summed up nicely:

"Consider the type of people you want to attract to Canaan. What kinds of people do you want to move into the area and make their home? How can we make the area attractive to young couples who want to start a family and send their kids through our school system? How do we preserve the integrity of our small, rural town and still move into the future?"

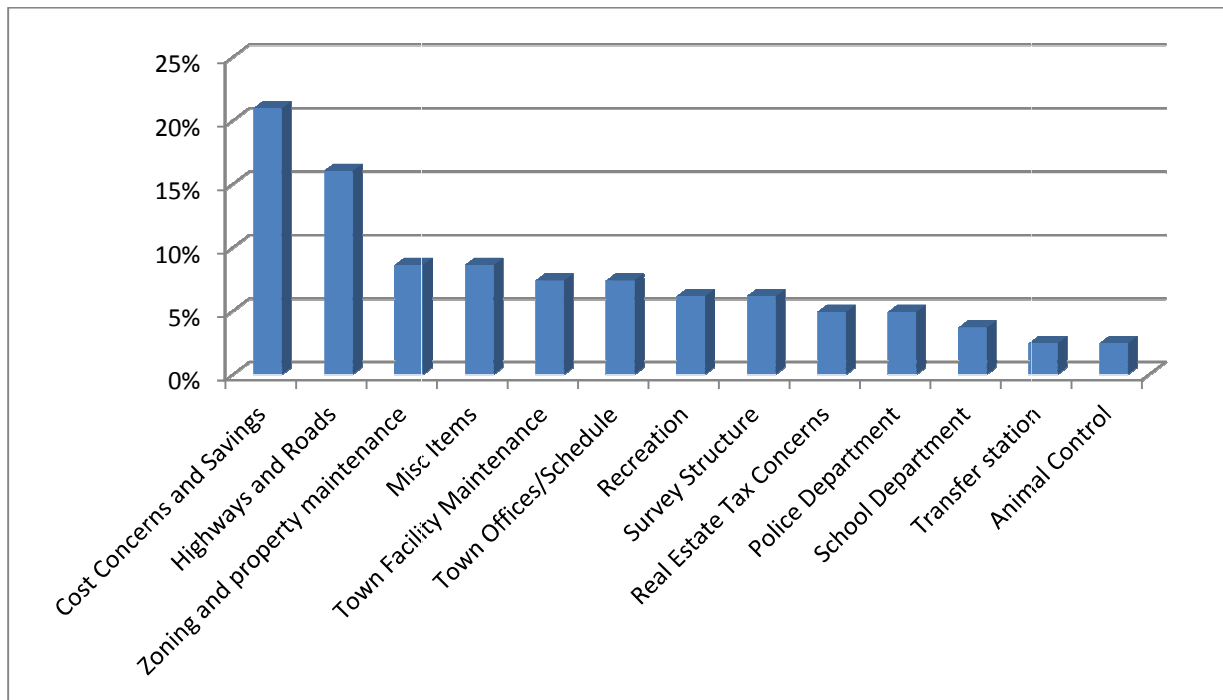
Residential Growth Section

Nine are unsure and need more information about impact fees and possible growth. Eight are opposed to additional land use regulations. Three indicated homes are not being built to existing building codes and are unsafe. Six complained about the junky properties near the high school

and elsewhere. Seven wish to preserve rural character, forests, and streams. Several people proposed application of the impact fees to only certain types of property, but state law requires a degree of uniformity, so this would need close examination. Likewise, different tax rates for different property types were proposed, and this also needs to be examined relative to state law. Strong opinions were expressed both for and against zoning. Zoning proponents favored zoning to reduce the chances of noise or a junk site bringing down neighborhood values. While opponents did not want any regulation to interfere with any future activity they might undertake. There were comments about roads, including town acceptance of private roads, and inadequate existing public and private roads. Finally, some said taxes are too high, while others said we need more services.

Town Services Section

There were 81 comments filed with the Town Services survey questions. Of these, by far the largest number of comments focused on the costs of town services and savings opportunities (21%), plus the highway department (16%).



Other areas with significant numbers of responses were Zoning/Property Maintenance (focusing on the bad impression made by RT 4 businesses and residences), Town Facility Maintenance, and Town Offices/Schedules.

Costs Concerns and Savings

Seventeen of the comments focused on the importance of managing town services costs and suggestions for reducing costs. Only one comment indicated that such costs should be increased, while eleven said that Canaan should reduce spending wherever possible. The remaining comments focused on suggestions for such reductions, mainly by combining departments and/or supervisory roles and by regionalization of services.

Highways and Roads

All thirteen comments focused on poor condition of town roads, in particular those that are dirt. One comment noted the inability to operate their 2 WD drive during portions of each winter, due to the bad condition of the road and poor town maintenance. Additionally, one fourth of the comments focused on Canaan Street and Goose Pond road as being in very poor condition. Other comments focused on the need to better manage the highway department staff and resources, noting that trucks often re-plow the same bare roads, while neglecting others that need attention.

Zoning and Property Maintenance

Some of the strongest statements focused on the lack of zoning and the adverse impact of what would be non-compliant properties on the appearance of the town. More than half mentioned that RT 4 creates a very poor impression due to business and residential junkyards as people enter the town.

Town Facility Maintenance

Seven percent of the comments focused on the need for better maintenance of town owned facilities, including buildings on Canaan street, the Museum, and the Meeting House. One comment mentions the need to maintain reserve accounts for such maintenance and another mentioned that Canaan should use local contractors, not out of town vendors.

Town Offices and Schedules

Comments focused on coordinating schedules across various offices to eliminate the need for multiple trips, and the desire to group offices together. One noted that the town office is small and somewhat dingy.

Recreation

Five comments, all indicating the need for more recreation opportunities, perhaps getting together with Enfield.

Survey Structure

Five suggestions for improving the survey structure.

Real Estate Tax Concerns

Four comments, noting the taxes are too high and not getting much for them. To suggested cutting services to reduce taxes, one noted better efficiency.

Police Department

Four comments, three of which note the police force is too large and not providing much value, one of which noted that the Chief should not be an elected position, but rather appointed by the selectmen.

School Department

Comments split between more/bigger and cutting...pretty much matching the recent votes.

Transfer Station

One positive (new flow), one negative (staff behavior)

Animal Control

Both comments requested more/better controls, in particular leash law.

Transportation Section

List the roads in Canaan, if any, which you feel are inadequate to serve existing traffic.

Canaan St.	23	West Farms	4
Goose Pond	23	Talberts Hill	4
Rte 4	22	Stevens	4
Grafton Turnpike	13	Sawyer hill	3
Fernwood Farms	12	Prospect hill	3
Rte 118	11	Back Bay	2
Switch	8	Clark Hill	2
Codfish Hill	8	Choate	2
South Rd	8	Stark	2
Jerusalem	6	Mud Pond	2
Roberts	5	Potato	2
		Others	10

Many complaints on dirt roads pertained to mud season problems. Canaan Street, Route 4, and Route 118 are maintained by the state.

What would encourage you to use the bus more?

Over a third of the people said expanded schedule with more trips throughout the day. Also suggested were conflicting requests for more pick-up/drop-off locations and quicker travel times. Expanded routes within Canaan and destination communities would increase ridership. Limited parking at some bus stops is a deterrent. Switch Road bus stop parking is a problem, especially in winter when Old Switch Rd. is not plowed.