

Mayor Hughes and the members of the Town Council,

The purpose of this letter is to request that the extension of the deadline for the Citizens Comprehensive Plan Committee be moved from September 9, 2011 to February 29, 2012.

The members of the Citizens Comprehensive Plan Committee have worked diligently for the past three months to evaluate the proposed 2010 Comprehensive Plan and come to a consensus on both wording and content. Representing a broad cross-section of the populace here in Hampden, we feel our debates and discussions have been tremendously helpful in refining the 2010 Comprehensive Plan Draft to become a document that both honors the hard work of the original drafters of the plan, as well as respects the views of concerned citizens. Due in great measure to the skillful leadership of facilitator Rich Rothe, who engenders an atmosphere of respectful and professional debate, we feel the Committee is making significant progress, but needs more time to fulfill the goal set before us.

The charge and the timeline for this committee was ambitious. The original crafters of the Comprehensive Plan worked for 18 months to finalize the plan. The charge of the Citizens Comprehensive Plan Committee was to provide suggestions for revision within a three month time period; basically six meetings. To date, in the first six meetings we have painstakingly reviewed and suggested revisions for the following sections of Book 1: The Overview, Employment and Economy, Housing, and Transportation. Changes and suggestions are online for your view. Our discussions have been thorough and thoughtful, with Mr. Rothe guiding us to consensus or voting on items (with the votes recorded for your consideration). We also spent a significant amount of our last meeting discussing the results of our initial extension request to the Planning and Development Committee, and creating a plan for future work. Twelve sections remain for our review.

As much of the controversy regarding the plan lies with the land use sections that have yet to be covered, we respectfully ask for an extension of the original timeline set before the Committee. It is our understanding that the deadline for completion of a new Comprehensive Plan to replace the 2001 plan is December of 2012. Therefore, we respectfully request that the deadline for completion of our review of the 2010 Comprehensive Plan Draft be set to no later than the end of February 2012. Such a deadline would provide a realistic timetable to thoroughly assess all areas of concern, yet would enable the Planning and Development Committee, the Town Council, and the Planning Board eight and a half months to fulfill its obligations both for State review and for approval of the new plan by the December 2012 deadline.

After an initial presentation to the Planning and Development Committee in August, we engaged in further research to address four specific concerns of that committee:

Question 1: How much time is needed to both review the 2010 Plan in committees and send it to the State Planning office for consideration? (There were members of the Town Council who felt they could not approve an extension without further information regarding a timeline.)

The State Planning Office has 45 days to complete its review after determining the plan is complete in its submission. Since the State Planning Office has technically already approved the 2010 Comp Plan and found it consistent, they would only be looking at revisions /and or additions made by this committee. (Information provided by Dean Bennett) 45 days

Notice for public hearing / agenda / for Town Council meeting to approve the 2010 Comp Plan changes. 30 days

Time for the Planning Board and Town Council to review the proposed changes / revisions to the 2010 Comp Plan draft as submitted by the Citizens Comprehensive Plan Committee. 45 days

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Minimum time needed -- 4 months or 120 days

Time remaining after CCPC extension to 2/29/2012 -- 8 1/2 months or 255 days

Given the amount of information to cover, the CCPC (Citizens Comp Plan Committee) has developed the following timeline and recommendations:

12 Sections left to review -- estimated time needed -- minimum 30 more meeting hours

Continue meeting bi-weekly, but extend scheduled meeting from 6 - 9 p.m.

All sections that have been reviewed / revised are online for Town Councilors and members of the Planning Board to review as we go through this process. This would allow them to highlight any areas of concern in preparation for their final review. However the CCPC would like to revisit areas if needed and retain the right to submit the final recommendations at the end of this process, rather than piece-meal.

Question 2: Will we have enough time to work with the 2010 Comp Plan if the State finds it is not consistent with State standards?

Elizabeth Hertz from the State Planning Office assured us that should any comprehensive plan be found inconsistent with State guidelines, a town has a full 2 years (beyond the December 2012 deadline) to make any revisions to address this issue. Since the CCPC is following all State Minimum guidelines, we do not anticipate that this will be a problem.

Question 3: Can the Land Use Section be done now (out of order), and then be sent to the Planning Board?

It might seem at first glance that to simply address the land use section immediately might be the answer, but this course of action was overwhelmingly rejected by the Committee. The consensus was that the Committee is addressing issues of concern with all aspects embedded in the Comprehensive Plan; to pick and choose areas to cover in order to fulfill the initial deadline seemed to be defeating our purpose, and unnecessarily arbitrary. Items within virtually every other section refer to the Land Use Section. The Comprehensive Plan needs to be reviewed in its entirety. For purposes of continuity and consistency, the Committee rejected this path.

Question / Concern 4: The review of this Comp Plan by the CCPC might delay construction on the Coldbrook Road. (Councillor Brann brought up this concern in light of a conversation with a prospective developer.)

After discussions with Bob Osbourne (who was questioned during one of our CCPC meetings), and office staff, there is no evidence that there are permits filed for construction on the Coldbrook Road at this time, nor did they know of any proposed requests. Nor were any permits for new construction on the Coldbrook Road filed between the months of October 2010 and April 2011 when the current 2010 Comp Plan was assumed to have been in place and approved (prior to the development of the CCPC.) There was no indication in their memory that a prospective developer had lobbied either the Town Council or the Planning Board to speed up the process for rezoning. Understandably, new zoning would be required on the Coldbrook Road in order to approve building permits, but if there were prospective developers lobbying the Town Council and the Planning Board to proceed with the zoning process, there should have been some public record of this in the 5 months since the 2010 Comp Plan was known to have been in place, or in time prior to that. If a developer had been pushing for a change in zoning in preparation for the 2011 building season, it seems reasonable to assume that there would be some public indication of that. In the time that the CCPC has been in place, no citizen has officially approached the Town Council, Planning and Development Committee, Planning Board, or Citizens Comprehensive Plan Committee to lobby a speedy resolution to this process in order to facilitate development on the Coldbrook Road.

Since there were no permits filed for the 2011 building season, nor anyone on public record pushing for a speedy rezoning process, the CCPC does not feel that our review delays or compromises any existing construction plans. We respectfully request that the Town Council weigh the scope of this review process in revising a Comprehensive Plan that will guide this community for a decade against the possibility that there is a developer that might be delayed from building throughout this coming fall and winter.

In conclusion, after much discussion and research, the Citizens Comprehensive Plan Committee requests that an extension be granted to February 29, 2012 in order to thoughtfully and thoroughly review the 2010 Comprehensive Plan Draft. Given the amount of public concern voiced regarding this plan and the excellent progress made by a team of citizens with widely divergent backgrounds, we feel the continuation of the CCPC's work will both ensure a document that reflects the diverse needs and

concerns of a broad base of citizens in Hampden and will ensure a solid plan for our future. It is our request that you give this thoughtful and lengthy consideration, knowing that many citizens of this community are invested in this process and look to you to provide wise leadership in allowing a process to continue that has already healed much of the division and distrust that erupted this past year. We hope that you will recognize our sincere efforts with regard to this task, and that you will honor the gains we have made toward its fulfillment, by approving our extension request.

Respectfully submitted by

The Citizens Comprehensive Plan Committee -- September 19, 2011