

**Board of Selectmen
Listening Tour
Businesses
October 2, 2012**

Select Board

Charlton Ames
Tracy Murphy
Robert Peabody, Town Manager

Geoff Parker
Ken McKinley
Scott Bickford, CEO/LPI

Public

Mike Robertson – Rhino Services
Tom Farley – Farley & Son
Joe Ryan – Adventure Advertising
Ginny Ryan – Adventure Advertising
Justin Ford – On the Water in Maine
Tiffany ford – On the Water in Maine
Meg Weston – Maine Media Workshop
Elizabeth Greenburg – Maine Media Workshop
Sharon Stone – American House Styling
Dan Stone – Nice Stuff Antiques
Rich Ruggiero – Judith Grossman Decorating
Karen Ruggiero – Judith Grossman Decorating
Allen Mitchell - McCormick & Assoc.
Erik Lautsen – Danica Candleworks

Jan Rosenbaum
Carol Gartley
Will Gartley – Gartley & Dorsky
Bill Glover – Rockport Steel
Charles M. Foote III – Wavesource
Joshua Carle – Rockport Granite
Jason Haynes - Rayr
Bob Duke – Floor Magic
Michael Callaway – Rockport Way
Bill Hahn – Country Inn
David Herrick – Herrick’s Garage
Owen Casas – Study Hall
Richard Remsen – The Foundry
Representative Joan Welsh

Mr. Parker opened the Listening Tour at 7:01 p.m

- A. Residents were reminded of the Tax Club. The voter approved tax club is paid in 12 monthly installments at no interest. Anyone interested should contact Town Clerk Linda Greenlaw.
- B. Any e-mail addresses listed will become public information.

What makes Rockport a special place to do business?

- “Can’t find any place else where the taxes are so high”
- Good mid point between Camden/Lincolntonville and Rockland/Thomaston
- Beauty of the harbor and location
- Traffic/easy access for people to get to
- Stop sign in Camden is a “plus”
- Affluence of the residents – seasonal and year round

Downside of doing business in Rockport

- Signage restrictions too limited
- Downtown signs should be smaller
- Going at 55 mph can’t see signs
- People can’t find businesses because can’t see signs
- Sign size should be more liberal on larger routes

- A tastefully done sign is not a detriment if properly done
- Multiple businesses on a ladder sign have minimal space (square footage of sign is dividing by the number of businesses on the site)
- Signs on buildings are limited to one row and do not allow logos
- Ordinance as written tends to be confusing to business owners - should help people to understand
- Do you get enough help at the Town Office – “absolutely”
- Business perception is that the town working against them
- “smacking with ... government control”
- It would be useful for the Town to do a tutorial with sign makers
- Rockport needs to decide if it wants to be business friendly or not

What does Rockport do to make it unpleasant for business?

- Size of buildings – to keep big boxes out
- 6,000 s.f. is too small – need swing room for trucks
- More cost efficient
- Rockport lost businesses because of the size restrictions
- Have not reached a balance
- Lot coverage has changed through the years.

What is it like to go through the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals?

- “Mr. Ford doesn’t want to talk about it (application)”
- “Disturbed with what happened with Pen Bay regarding natural gas”
- Not appropriate for Planning Board to decide swing room for a large truck
- “Excruciating to watch.” Plan torn apart with what they wanted to do
- “Going on for many years.” “Sitting on the board was excruciating.”
- Too much personality.”
- People were playing both sides of the fence in 1980s and 1990.
- Economy was growing fast – how to slow down and put brakes on it
- “Attitudes are lingering on”
- Town needs to be business friendly

Any other ordinance problems or where Town is keeping you back?

- Big concern – maybe should look somewhere else – not looking to do something that has been done before
- Quonset salt sheds are okay for the Town but not for anyone else
- Height restrictions and roofline requirements for buildings
- Consistency throughout Town
- Planning Boards in other towns are easier to work with. Rockport Planning Board is “painful” and should not be. Combination of ordinances and personality (on the Board) but “mostly personalities”
- Some of the Board members do not understand the ultimate goal
- Too much time spent on things not important
- Planning Board “should be obligated to follow standards”
- Board should “use common sense”
- No one wants to upset neighbors, they want to look good and attract public to business
- The Route 90 Business Association is helping the businesses
- Rockport is a “home and healthcare destination”

- Number of empty businesses
- Camden is doing nationwide searches to attract business – Rockport is not doing anything to attract business.

What would you like to see the Select Board do?

- Need adequate parking
- Town could help to showcase what is here
- Town could invest bringing in fiber optic cable. Pursue grants to connect fiber optic cable
- Village does not have businesses
- Can Rockport connect to natural gas lines that will be coming down 17 to the hospital and prison
- Select Board should champion as a Town of Rockport all towns should look into it
- Economic realignment - Looking at how to locate economic development in this area
- Small loan program.
- Promote growth through area that everyone is happy with, even if resistant to business in village
- Town should promote what is already here for a cultural center - benefits everyone here

Comments on existing or future sewer systems

- Cost is negative
- All of Route 1 needs to be addressed – also water
- Sewer stops at the Town Garage and picks up at Pen Bay Medical
- Priorities should be “shoved up a bit”
- Retired one of the big debts
- Could save with sewer to Rockland or Camden
- Need to build up reserve – section is 20 years old
- There are no current proposals for the sewer system

How do you feel about the RES buildings?

- All buildings will be removed and whatever can be recycled will be
- By Pop the Cork 2013 – there will be no buildings and minimal landscaping
- Lot of potential on number of fronts
- Lot of properties for sale – “do we want to compete with the private sector or keep the land for open space
- We advertise for everyone on that corner – do nothing on that corner for Rockport
- Should turn into most artistic emblem for Rockport
- Camden has signs that point to interesting businesses in Town. Rockport should do same
- Sign for “Rockport Village Ahead”
- Do something iconic/architectural
- Leave as wide open space or for others to rent
- Move library there, since Library can’t be expanded
- Community center
- Any interest from private donors
- Lot of organizations want to donate
- 20% of Rockport is non-taxable

What Other Services can Rockport Provide?

- The Planning Office should educate a person on the opportunities and challenges of opening a business in Rockport so there aren't surprises
- One resident said it was "nice to know she had more hand holding through the process"
- Another resident did not feel "cynical at all" about the Planning Office process
- The "personnel/personality supports is okay but the ordinances are a pain"
- "good experience – not highly formal – good intention – lack of knowledge and experience but the office wanted to be helpful" – not sure if they had all the necessary tools
- Experience with Planning Office should not need difficult - should be easy and smooth - straight forward – link is missing
- Recommends using a checklist for projects
- Highly recommends "fast track" be readdressed and reinstated
- Pre-application process seems helpful
- Rockport makes more money from applications than any other surrounding towns.
- Example – landscaping, first and foremost – outrageous
- Screening entire thing – no one can see from road
- Needs to be a balance
- Planning Board requires a certain amount of vegetation
- Select Board should look at ORC to make changes to screening on Routes 1 & 90.
- Personal Property taxes are required by the State
- "How many times do you need to buy something?" A resident is still paying personal property taxes on something 25 years old. There should be time limit on paying for something.
- Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of Assessment Review are quasi-judicial and are overseen by the State. Members could be "a little more friendly and human."
- Need complete turnover on Planning Board. Always will be personalities.
- Residents vote on the ordinances. Personal feelings should be left aside.
- Residents should recruit people to be on committees
- Ordinance Review Committee meets for two to three months per year. The meetings begin at 7:00 am
- 168 notices were mailed to businesses regarding tonight's meeting.
- Would you go to web site daily (for updates)? "No." Reminder e-mails would help 2-3 days in advance of a meeting.
- At one time the "other" side of Route 1 did not count (the Route 90 side).

Mr. Parker thanked all present for attending the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Melody Sainio
Recording Secretary