

# **YOUR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE NEEDS YOUR HELP!**

By Lynn Parsons, Member  
Castine Comprehensive Planning Committee

We live in an age in which public face-to-face interactions are in decline. People still watch movies, but more in their homes and less in the theaters. People still go to church, but less so publicly and more so privately at home on TV. People still discuss politics, but less in person and more on blogs and e-mails. Public participation in general is down, as can be seen in the declining voter participation (especially at the local levels) and dwindling attendance at public hearings and town meetings.

So it was with some trepidation that we, the members of your Comprehensive Planning Committee, decided to hold our “Community Visioning Meeting” at Emerson Hall at 4pm on November 12, a football Sunday. (However, the Patriots’ game will be over by then.)

But we Committee members need to be able to reflect as accurately as possible the views of the community we represent. This means that Castiners, whether full-time or part-time, and in spite of the trends just alluded to, need to re-assert and re-enforce the New England tradition of public participation. Can we still do this?

Several years ago, the Heartland Center for Leadership Development produced some twenty “Clues to Community Survival.” Space does not allow for reproducing all of them, and some don’t apply to us anyway. Here are the top ten:

1. Evidence of community pride.
2. Willingness to invest in the future
3. Active economic development program
4. Strong presence of traditional institutions integral to community life
5. Sound and well-maintained infrastructure.
6. Participatory approach to decision-making
7. Deliberate transition of power to a younger generation of leaders
8. Knowledge of the physical environment
9. Strong belief in and support of education
10. Conviction that, in the long run, you have to do it yourself.

Perhaps the most important of these “clues” is the last one. Communities traditionally are run either by small groups who have the leisure and ambition to influence the rest, or by the general population who themselves are willing to direct the leaders in a coherent and thoughtful way. Your Committee favors the second approach. We need your help next Sunday at 4pm.