

MEETING SUMMARY – SEPTEMBER 12, 2012 MEETING

TOWN OF LANSING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE

Members Present: Supervisor Kathy Miller, Chair; Jase Baese; Larry Beck; Tom Butler; Maureen Cowen; Jeremy Dietrich; Dave Ferris; Ruth Hopkins, Town Board Member; Susan Miller; Richard Prybyl, Planning Board Member; Philip Snyder; Amanda Steinhardt; Susan Tabrizi; Sarah Thomson.

Others Present: Jonathan Kanter, AICP, Planning Consultant; Dan Konowalow, ZBA

Chair Kathy Miller called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Introduction of Committee Members: Kathy thanked Committee members for agreeing to participate in the Comprehensive Plan Update process. The Town Board officially appointed members to the Committee at the September 5th Town Board meeting. Committee members introduced themselves and indicated why they were interested in being on the Committee.

Purpose of Committee: Kathy indicated that the purpose of the Committee is to review the 2006 Town of Lansing Comprehensive Plan and make recommendations to the Town Board regarding updates and revisions to the Plan. Jonathan added that the Committee is a “special board” appointed by the Town Board, as authorized by NYS Town Law, and has been given the responsibility to update the Comprehensive Plan. The Committee will work on drafting updates/amendments to the 2006 Plan, seek input from the public, and hold public information meetings and at least one public hearing. The Town Board will ultimately be responsible for adopting updates and revisions to the Plan and will also hold a public hearing at the end of the update process.

Meeting Schedule: The Committee agreed to hold a regular meeting once per month, normally on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. The exception will be in November because of the Thanksgiving holiday schedules (when the Town Board is meeting on the second Wednesday). The meeting schedule for the remainder of 2012 will be Wednesday, October 10th, Tuesday, November 13th, and Wednesday, December 12th, all at 7:00 p.m. The 2013 schedule will be set in the beginning of 2013.

Why Prepare or Update a Comprehensive Plan: Jonathan gave a brief presentation on comprehensive plans, what they are, and why it is important to prepare and update them. Sources referenced in the discussion included the Tug Hill Commission Technical Paper Series, entitled “Why Prepare a Comprehensive Plan?”, “Land Use Learning Program for Local Officials Tutorial II – Comprehensive Planning” available on the New York Planning Federation website,

and “A Practical Guide to Comprehensive Planning” published by the New York Planning Federation. Highlights of the discussion included the following: the planning process provides a process for citizen involvement in shaping the community’s physical and economic future through Committee meetings, community surveys, public information meetings and hearings; the plan provides a legal foundation for and coordinates land use regulatory activities; the plan coordinates capital projects carried out by the community; the plan can position the community advantageously for grants and loans for projects and programs; the plan informs other agencies and levels of government of the community’s desires; the plan can be a tool for promoting an appropriate image of the community; and the plan can and should include strategies for implementation.

Roundtable Discussion – Key Issues Facing Town of Lansing over Next 10 to 15 Years: Committee members held a round-table discussion regarding the key issues facing the Town of Lansing over the next 10 to 15 years. A summary follows:

Public sewer: The proposed public sewer project is an important issue, and the 2006 Plan does not have much detail about it. Public sewer could have a positive impact on water quality of Cayuga Lake. Sewer would be important to serve the Town Center and the school. What is the cost impact on residents? Sewer raises questions about future development densities, housing, and impacts on schools. The lack of public sewer has meant that houses have to have large lots to accommodate septic systems – that contributes to sprawl and eating up agricultural land.

Tax base: With the unknown future of AES, the Town needs to think about other tax revenue sources. Taxes in the area are higher than many other parts of the U.S. and school taxes are going to get worse – how do we attract and retain residents given the high taxes in the area?

Density and types of future development: The Town has an opportunity to control how development will occur. There have been lost opportunities regarding community aesthetics and visual impacts of development (e.g., area around Scoops). Design standards for new development could help. Density was a big issue when zoning was first established in the Town – how do residents view that now? Residents want to have access to stores and services. There should be a mix of housing, commercial uses and other services. Mixed use development including businesses can help the Town’s tax base.

Town Center: The Town Center should be defined, and we need to think about how to encourage its development. Why would people want to go to a Town Center? It would need to have things to attract people from other areas, including Auburn, Genoa, not just Ithaca. The Committee should get input from residents on what they want to see in the Town Center. There will be a demand for stores and services in the Town Center as it develops. The “main street” concept suggested in the Town Center report would help to calm traffic and the nearby

intersections could be modified and improved. We can look at what other places have done with developments like the Town Center. Higher density is necessary to support new services and businesses.

Protection of agriculture: There has to be a balance of preserving agricultural resources along with new development. Organic agriculture provides a new economic base in the area – we should promote that. Farmland is beneficial to the Town’s tax base. Discourage encroachment of single-family housing into agricultural areas. Preservation of agricultural land is good from an environmental perspective (e.g., provides wildlife habitat). Some places use carbon credits to compensate farmers for farm land not developed - this encourages farmers to keep farming. The Comprehensive Plan should encourage and protect agriculture in the north part of Town. The “Guide to Local Planning for Agriculture in NYS” by the American Farmland Trust is a good resource.

Preservation of natural resources: Conservation easements should be utilized to protect natural land. Channel development onto land that is less environmentally sensitive. Salmon Creek is an important natural and recreational resource – it is a popular place for smelt fishing, it also has sedimentation problems that should be addressed.

Transportation and traffic: Traffic is a problem in many parts of the Town. Will new development add to that problem? More bus service could help reduce traffic impacts. Creating a more walkable community and adding pedestrian connections, bicycle paths and bike lanes would help.

Recreation: Recreation programs and facilities in Lansing are great resources. The abandoned railroad bed should be converted to a recreational trail. The Town of Ithaca has a great system of small parks and trails – it has a Park and Open Space Plan that shows where trails and new parks should go, where trail connections are needed, etc. The Town should require developers to provide parks and trails when they develop land. The Town should have consistent regulations that apply to all developers and that support the work of the Planning Board.

Cayuga Lake: The area has tremendous assets centered around Cayuga Lake (e.g., wine trail, cheese trail, locally grown foods). Lansing can become a focal area for tourism, amenities, bed-and-breakfasts, designated bike paths or routes around the Lake.

Sustainability: Lansing should become a sustainable community. Encourage use of alternative energy, such as solar, wind, etc.

Hydrofracking: How does the Comprehensive Plan deal with hydrofracking? Need to consider the impacts of high impact industrial uses on the Town. The Town has a moratorium on gas

drilling – the Comprehensive Plan should consider how to address the impacts of such industries on the Town.

State facilities: What are New York State’s plans for the youth facilities in the Town – does it plan to close them, how could they be reused, could the State give them to the Town?

Other Business: Committee members expressed interest in the following: can a Town of Lansing Zoning Map be available at meetings, can a microphone system be set up at meetings so that the public can hear the Committee’s discussions, can name cards with Committee members’ names be provided to set on the table at meetings, and can a link to Tompkins County Unique Natural Areas (UNA’s) be provided? Two upcoming workshops were announced: one on Comprehensive Plans at Tompkins-Cortland Community College to be held on October 25th and one on Local Perspective on Hydrofracking at Albany Law School on September 28th.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 10, 2012 at 7:00 p.m. The main agenda item will be for Committee members to review the 2006 Plan prior to the meeting and list the 5 most important things in the 2006 Plan that should be updated or revised (and why).

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Prepared by Jonathan Kanter, AICP