

MEETING SUMMARY – FEBRUARY 13, 2013 MEETING
TOWN OF LANSING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE

Members Present: Jase Baese; Larry Beck; Tom Butler; David Ferris; Ruth Hopkins, Town Board; Lynn Leopold, Village of Lansing Board of Trustees; Susan Miller; Rick Prybyl; Philip Snyder; Amanda Steinhardt; Susan Tabrizi.

Others Present: Jonathan Kanter, AICP, Planning Consultant; David Durrett, Freelance Reporter.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Member Comments/Concerns/Announcements: Amanda Steinhardt and Rick Prybyl asked why the Town is moving ahead with planning for the Town Center, including sending out a Request for Proposals (RFP) when the Comprehensive Plan Committee is supposed to be considering how the Town Center could develop. Jonathan Kanter suggested that the Committee wait until the Town Center discussion later in the meeting to get into this discussion, and he assured the Committee that the RFP does not commit the Town to anything. Susan Tabrizi indicated that she attended a recent meeting of the Lansing School District about finances and suggested that the Town communicate more about things like the Comprehensive Plan. Jase Baese mentioned that the School District seems to be supportive of the Town's proposed sewer project because the School's septic systems are failing, and that the School District is also hoping that higher density development such as in the Town Center that could be encouraged with the sewer project could offset future losses in tax revenues from AES. Susan Tabrizi added that the School District has been cutting programs and wondered how long it can continue this trend without looking at other ways to increase the tax base. Ruth Hopkins indicated that the Town Board has been working on ways to get the cost per EDU (Equivalent Dwelling Unit) down to make the sewer project more affordable to Town residents, and that development in the Town Center would help this. Jonathan Kanter indicated that a development company named NRP has entered into a purchase offer agreement with the Town to acquire a portion of the Town-owned land across Route 34, and another developer, Calamar, has expressed interest in another portion of the Town land for market-rate senior apartments. The agreement with NRP provides the Town with oversight of how development would occur, including site plan review and design guidelines to be developed to control how development would occur. Jonathan suggested that the Committee consider setting up a sub-committee to focus on considering design guidelines for the Town Center.

Draft Meeting Summary – January 9, 2013: The Committee had no comments or revisions regarding the January 9, 2013 Meeting Summary.

Draft Meeting Summary – January 24, 2013: Amanda Steinhardt asked that the January 24th draft meeting summary be revised to include a reference that it will be important for the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee to communicate and coordinate with other Committees. The Committee agreed to add this to the January 24th meeting summary.

Community Survey: The discussion regarding a community survey started off with several members expressing the concern that the purpose of a survey is questionable because so many things the Town is working on are already set and moving ahead. Jonathan indicated that many of the issues such as the Town Center and the proposed sewer project were already considered in the 2006 Comprehensive Plan and should be fleshed out during the Plan update. Questions on the survey should for instance not ask whether there should be a Town Center, but what should it look like, what mix of uses should it have, and how should it be designed. Jonathan suggested that the Town is not interested in stopping work on things that have already been discussed in the previous Comprehensive Plan, but that the Plan update should hopefully focus on providing the Town with more direction on certain things, and that the Committee would have to prioritize what items should be focused on in the update.

Susan Tabrizi asked the Committee to focus on the proposal outline provided by the Survey Research Institute (SRI). SRI proposes doing a phone survey as the primary method with either or both a written/mailed and/or web-based survey as secondary means of obtaining input from residents. SRI has indicated that a phone survey provides the most pure and accurate sampling. Susan added that if a phone survey is supplemented with a written and/or web survey, the databases and analyses should be kept separate. Susan added that the surveys would not be the only ways of obtaining public input during the Comprehensive Plan update process, as there would be other opportunities, such as public information meetings, focus group meetings, etc. Jase Baese observed that mailing costs would be high if a written mail survey is done. Susan suggested the following: that a phone survey be the primary survey method, with a secondary web-based survey on the Town's website, and that a written survey form could also be available at Town Hall, at meetings, etc., for residents to fill out, but not mailed out. Larry Beck asked how survey sampling handles residents who have cell phones from other area codes. Susan responded that she is not sure, but we can check with SRI on sampling methodology. Susan Miller asked if there is a budget for the costs of a survey. Jonathan responded that the Town Board would have to authorize the specific funding for the survey, but that Supervisor Miller had indicated that she would request such authorization from the Town Board.

Other discussion regarding the proposed survey followed, including whether the number of questions on the survey could be somewhere in between 30 and 50 outlined in SRI's proposal – Susan Tabrizi said yes; that SRI would help with preparation and wording of questions; and that a draft survey would be tested on members of the Committee. Lynn Leopold indicated that there was some discussion between the Town and Village of Lansing about doing a combined survey, since the Village is also in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, and that some issues in the Town and Village are quite

different, but that there are also some issues that the Town and Village have in common. Jonathan added that the Village would have to decide very soon if it wanted to be involved in a survey with the Town. Lynn said that the Village would have to decide if it wants to do a survey.

Susan Tabrizi indicated that the next step would be to get Committee agreement on hiring SRI to help with the survey. Dave Ferris made a motion recommending that the Town hire SRI to assist with a phone survey. The motion was seconded by Jase Baese. During discussion of the motion, an amendment to the original motion was made by Phiip Snyder to have SRI also assist with a web-based survey as outlined in its proposal. The amendment was seconded by Rick Prybyl, and the amendment was approved unanimously by the Committee. A vote on the amended motion (recommending that the Town hire SRI to assist with a phone and web-based survey) followed and was approved unanimously by the Committee. Susan indicated that the sub-committee would talk further about specific questions on the survey and that she would contact SRI to let them know about the Committee's recommendation.

Discussion Regarding Town Center: Jonathan gave a brief overview of the history of the Town's planning for the concept of a Town Center, including the goals and objectives in the 2006 Town of Lansing Comprehensive Plan, the concepts outlined in the HOLT Architects/Trowbridge & Wolf 2010 report on the Town Center, and the RFP for the Town-owned land in the Town Center. Jonathan handed out an outline that he had prepared for the Town Board, titled "Observations Regarding Lansing Town Center Development" (Sept. 15, 2012). Jonathan reiterated that the RFP was intended to solicit proposals and ideas from developers on how the Town-owned land could be developed, and the Town does not have to commit to any proposals, if any are submitted. Susan Miller asked how an overall plan for development in the Town Center would come about, in the context that the Town has sent an RFP out and already has a purchase agreement with one developer and another possible agreement pending. Jonathan responded that the RFP contains development guidelines that outline the type and style of development that the Town would want to see, and it is likely that a new zoning district would be developed to control development on the Town land. Jonathan suggested that this would be an appropriate time for the Committee to get involved with recommendations for planning and design of the Town Center, and that setting up a sub-committee to focus on this would be a way to do this. Ruth Hopkins added that there are good examples of other communities that have adopted design guidelines for specific areas like town centers and corridors, such as the Town of Dryden with its Varna Hamlet Design Plan.

Philip Snyder asked why there should be a Town Center in the proposed location, and suggested that the Town pull back on this idea until there is more justification for a Town Center. Philip indicated that other hamlets in the Town developed for geographical and economic reasons, and nothing like that has happened in the proposed Town Center area. Philip continued – does it make sense to be planning for hundreds of housing units requiring an expensive sewer project. Lynn Leopold said that the Town has a

great opportunity with the Town Center – to plan it proactively in a way that makes sense, as opposed to how the Village developed haphazardly at first with strip malls and commercial strip development. Lynn encouraged the Town to continue with planning for this new concept and try to make it happen in a way that serves the Town’s benefit. Rick Prybyl asked what economic cost burden would be placed on Town residents, would the new development in a Town Center be a burden on the schools, would Town residents have to foot the bill for infrastructure costs? Philip asked whether there would be a net tax revenue benefit after considering all of the expenses? Ruth Hopkins responded that the Town has not done a specific cost of services analysis, but that preliminary analysis has indicated that there could be many benefits associated with the new sewer project and the Town Center. Dave Ferris added that with the economic climate as it is, developers would not be interested in the Town Center unless they know that it would work for them financially, including the costs of paying for infrastructure that would serve their development proposals. Ruth added that the proposed sewer would allow development to occur that would help to offset the loss of tax revenues from the AES power plant in the Town. Jonathan mentioned in response to Philip’s earlier comments about why hasn’t a Town Center already developed in this area of the Town that the area is beginning to develop as a center. The area already has a new Town Hall, a new Library and Community Center Building, the Lansing Market, a new convenience store with gas station, recreational fields, and a number of small businesses and restaurants. Jonathan indicated that this already forms the core of a Town Center, and if the Town does not plan for how this area could develop in the future, there is the potential for it to develop in a negative way as sprawl. Jonathan reminded the Committee that the Town Center is a larger area than just the Town-owned parcel, and that the idea of planning for a Town Center is to oversee development so that it is walkable, looks good, has a healthy mix of uses, etc. Jase said that the RFP will give the Town a chance to sit down with developers and work with them on an overall plan for the Town Center.

Jonathan asked the Committee again to think about setting up a sub-committee to have further discussions and make recommendations regarding the proposed Town Center. Consideration of a sub-committee can be on the agenda for the March meeting.

Other Business: None.

Next Meeting: The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 13, 2013 at 7:00 p.m. in the Lansing Library. There will be a presentation by the Pathways Committee.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Prepared by Jonathan Kanter, AICP