

**TOWN OF ULYSSES
STEERING COMMITTEE FOR ZONING UPDATES
MINUTES
Monday, 11/2/2015
7:00 PM**

Approved: 12/10/15

Present: Rod Hawkes, Darby Kiley, Sue Ritter, Elizabeth Thomas, George Tselekis, and Nancy Zahler; CJ Randall and David West of Randall + West.

Call to Order: 7:03 p.m.

Introduction to the Project, Public Outreach Strategy, and Existing Plans discussion

Ms. Kiley said the Town applied for NYSERDA's Cleaner, Greener Communities Program grant in the summer of 2014 and was ultimately awarded \$40,000, with a \$15,000 match from the Town. The funds will allow the Town to update parts of its zoning law. Recent zoning changes in the Town's Lakeshore and Conservation districts were undertaken in-house, which proved to be a challenge, Ms. Kiley said. This time, an outside consultant will assist in zoning updates targeting agricultural land, the Jacksonville Hamlet and existing Town commercial districts. Specifically, ag land is a priority for this project, she said, as is determining how to handle development districts in zoning updates. Other items of potential focus, as recommended by the Town Planning Board, include design standards outlined on page 8 of the Town's Statement of Work for the Cleaner, Greener Communities (CGC) program. The timeline of work for the Steering Committee will be from now until June 2016. During that time, the Committee will be pulling together draft zoning amendments, with the plan of adopting changes by June 2017.

Randall + West were introduced. The local group responded to the Town's RFQ and were selected to assist with zoning updates, Ms. Kiley said. Ms. Zahler added the Town considered three different firms that responded to the RFQ, and, in her view, Randall + West was the consensus choice because of their energy, creativity, vision, willingness to research, and their experience in working in both urban and rural settings. Ms. Kiley said Randall + West was brought on to be a conduit between the Town and the community during the Zoning update process, reaching out to stakeholders and getting feedback from community members. There were some initial concerns that the Steering Committee lacked member representation from both the agriculture and Jacksonville communities. Ms. Thomas said it was difficult to choose members for the Steering Committee, and some people already feel left out. Some residents will not pay any attention to the Committee's work and recommended changes, but there are also others who want to be involved. She expects good feedback from community members.

Mr. West said he and Ms. Randall are excited about brainstorming creative ways to engage with people. The pair intends to visit local places where people get breakfast, for instance, and have an informal open-house meeting as opposed to setting up an evening meeting. We want to engage people who would not otherwise show up for something like a zoning update meeting, he said. The Steering Committee will help guide the pair to the best areas in the community to

engage with local residents. Ms. Randall said social media and email have made it much easier and faster to reach large audiences, but we have lost focal points like the grange, for instance, where all the area farmers used to go to interact with each other. The pair will look to the Steering Committee for suggestions on local places and activities to interact with the community. Ms. Kiley added that the Town Comprehensive Plan represents a lot of community input, and now is the time to put that information into a zoning document.

Ms. Zahler asked if the Hamlet of Waterburg would be considered as part of the zoning updates. Ms. Kiley said that it would not be a focus, but changes might be recommended as an outcome of the project.

Mr. West circulated a first draft of the Public Outreach Strategy, which is required as part of the NYSERDA grant and was developed by the firm along with Ms. Kiley. The Committee's charge will be to review it and expand on it. Pointing to the section on outreach targets, the Committee suggested changing "Elected Officials" to "Appointed Officials", since members of the Planning Board are appointed. A brief discussion ensued about public input and whether or not to have a Privilege of the Floor or a quarterly community meeting. Some residents may have valuable information to share, but, as Ms. Thomas pointed out, there also might be others who could potentially take over a meeting. Ms. Zahler thought it might be wise to reach out to stakeholders early in the process before any sort of official launch or public meetings. People function best in informal settings and might be more willing to express ideas and concerns. She thought such an approach would yield good information from the public and show them a courtesy by reaching out to them early in the process.

Mr. West said how interactive the Committee intends to be with the public is an important question to consider. He sees the Committee as nimble. He suggested face-to-face meetings with residents who might have good ideas but also might become upset with the process. The group should brainstorm and determine who some of those residents might be and perhaps reach out to them on the firm's behalf, he said.

Mr. Hawkes said he liked the idea of reaching out to stakeholders first thing. He also said there are not many farmers in the Town, so it is a short list of stakeholders on the agricultural side. Mr. West said the firm has determined that there are two scales of agriculture: large farms and smaller Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs) that have different perspectives and needs. The group needs to outreach with both, and given the small number of farms in town, it should not be difficult to outreach with all of them, he said. The idea was floated on having a point person from the Town's agricultural community, though Mr. Hawkes suggested the Committee invite them all.

As for Jacksonville, Phil Antweiler is the new president of the Jacksonville Community Association, Ms. Thomas said. Ms. Zahler and Mr. Hawkes suggested a community meeting in Jacksonville.

Conversation turned to local business owners as outreach partners. Ms. Thomas said the Town could probably complete a survey of local businesses and reach out to business owners about the Committee's zoning efforts. She was not sure if Trumansburg Village businesses would be

interested in the Committee's work, though Ms. Zahler pointed out the number of village bed and breakfasts – noting the local bed and breakfast association as a potential outreach partner – childcare providers and private schools. Ms. Kiley said the Town already keeps a list of local businesses for inspection purposes, and she will get the list.

Ms. Randall asked if the Committee intended to keep development districts active. Ms. Kiley said the inactive development districts need to come off the map, and the Committee must decide what to do with the remaining ones. Years ago, the Town had zoning but not Site Plan Review, so Town leaders implemented development districts as new zones. Ms. Thomas said the Town has a number of buildings not currently in use because they fall outside of uses for zoning. Maybe the Committee should make zoning uses broader and less restrictive, she said.

Mr. West said part of the traditional flavor of rural places is that they are mixed-use. By promoting single-use, you apply a suburban element. But rural places are a combination of businesses, farms and residential. It might make sense to see what level of acceptance the Committee is willing to have, adding that it is necessary to find a balance between two competing interests – tightly controlled use and the flexibility that characterizes a rural place, he said.

Returning to the firm's Public Outreach Strategy, Ms. Zahler said she would like to see something in the document that explicitly mentions outreach efforts to the agricultural community. Mr. West said suggestions previously discussed in the meeting, like the initial meetings with stakeholders before other work begins, would be added to the Strategy. Ms. Thomas said to be mindful of the residents who live in agricultural areas but who do not farm. Most use is residential in those areas, and both this Committee and its consultants need to pay attention to those residents and their concerns. Adding to Ms. Thomas's comment, Ms. Zahler said the Town's Farm and Ag Land Protection document is intended to protect agriculture, but it says nothing about protecting residents from agriculture. It was noted that the State does not allow for that, a point emphasized by Mr. Tseleki who referenced the BZA's recent run-in with the State Ag and Markets over a sheep farm located in the Town. The farm operates in a residential zone but is also included within the Tompkins County Ag District. Responding to a question from Ms. Randall about how closely the Town's ag districts overlap with the county's, Ms. Kiley said most of the town is included in the county's ag district.

Ms. Randall said Ag and Markets is a good resource when weighing the needs of homeowners and the agricultural community. She suggested sitting down with farmers and residents for a healthy conversation about what they want moving forward. If you want to keep going toward the suburban route, she said, you certainly can do that, and people love Ulysses. But with the price of farmland being what it is, it is a good bet to double down.

Mr. Hawkes pointed out that there are many residents who really do not know where they are zoned, especially in relation to the County's ag map. During meetings to update the Comprehensive Plan, he said some residents looked at the existing zoning map on the wall and asked why their property was being rezoned.

Ms. Zahler asked about how new developments that affect existing parameters of the Comprehensive Plan and zoning laws – like solar energy – would work into the firm’s zoning efforts. Specifically, she continued, the Village’s second water source is expected to be piped along Falls Road, which creates opportunities for development along that road, but the Comprehensive Plan states the area is to be maintained as farmland. Ms. Randall said everything the firm does will feed into the existing work. Noting the Village’s second water source, Ms. Randall said some plans would have competing interests, which is to be expected when weighing Town plans along with various county and regional plans. Though, she said local plans carry the most weight, noting that courts typically defer to a town’s comprehensive plan. It is up to the Steering Committee to say, for instance, that it likes the Route 96 corridor plan and that some of the expressed goals of the Ag and Farmland Protection Plan are not realistic. That is where the firm will rely on feedback from the Steering Committee and the community to figure out parts to remove, she said.

Ms. Kiley turned the group’s attention to public meetings. The group does want to hold a public meeting before the end of the year, but she said she does not know how much time is needed to prepare for it. She asked how realistic it would be to have a public meeting before the end of the year. Ms. Randall said the group may be able to do it. In the past, they have done some meetings that are fun, general discussions about zoning. The firm’s past meetings in Ithaca were public and broader and proved to be an interesting way to start the process because the presentation was less wonky. Committee members gave their thoughts: Ms. Thomas liked the idea; Mr. Tselekis said he was not sure how to construct such a meeting, but it sounded interesting; Mr. Hawkes was in favor, saying there exists a lot of confusion around zoning and why it changes; Ms. Zahler thought the meeting would be a worthwhile kickoff to the process; Ms. Ritter said the process would put emphasis on the consultants to prepare because some people know nothing about zoning.

Mr. Hawkes noted that oftentimes people who are most engaged know very little about zoning. Referencing his work on updating parts of Lakeshore zoning, he said there were a lot of engaged people who were misinformed about what the updates actually meant.

Communicating news of the meeting would be done through various list serves, like for Willow Creek and Jacksonville residents. Ms. Kiley added that John Wertis, chair of the Planning Board and an area farmer, is good about reaching out to the local agricultural community.

Ms. Randall said she was not sure a meeting would be doable by this year, but it might be a good kickoff at the beginning of 2016. Mr. West said, with the firm’s Ithaca project, they began with a symposium on good urbanism. There is an opportunity to do something similar with Ulysses but theme it around sustainable rural development and balancing the preservation of rural character.

Establish meeting schedule

Ms. Kiley circulated a draft schedule of Committee meetings. After a discussion, the Committee reached a consensus to hold meetings on the first Thursday of each month. The next meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10.

Appointment of Chairperson

Ms. Kiley MADE the MOTION to nominate Ms. Zahler as chair, and Mr. Hawkes SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was approved, 5-0, with Ms. Zahler abstaining from the vote.

Agenda items for next meeting

For the Committee's next meeting, Ms. Randall said Randall + West would include revisions to the Public Outreach Strategy discussed during the evening's meeting. Any additional comments about the Strategy can be made via email. Also, the consultants will finish its review of the existing Comprehensive Plan and give feedback on that document, she said. She requested the Committee provide contact information for community stakeholders.

On the recommendation of Ms. Zahler, each Committee member gave feedback on the night's meeting. Mr. Tselekis said he likes the idea of community input and making zoning more flexible. He asked why the 2012 Building Vibrant Communities plan was not included and if it is worth referencing. Mr. West said the document is not as important, as the other two. In terms of importance, it is the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Ag and Farmland Protection Plan, followed by the County's plan, he said. Mr. Hawkes said he expects fairly active participation from residents, based on his experience with Lakeshore zoning. Ms. Zahler said she is grateful to be involved. Ms. Ritter said is not entirely clear on where the Committee needs to go, and her focus now is what she needs to do to serve the Committee best. Ms. Kiley said she is happy to be a member and is anxious to proceed.

Ms. Kiley MADE the MOTION to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Hawkes SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was unanimously approved.

Meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Louis A. DiPietro on November 7, 2015.