

**TOWN OF ULYSSES
STEERING COMMITTEE FOR ZONING UPDATES
MINUTES
Thursday, 01/07/2016
6:30 p.m**

Approved: 2/4/16

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

Call to Order: 6:32 p.m.

Agenda Review; Minutes Review (12/10/15)

Ms. Ritter MADE the MOTION to approve the December 10, 2015 meeting minutes, and Ms. Kiley SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was unanimously approved, 5-0.

Schedule and discuss public kick-off meeting #1

Given the schedule of the events, exercises and discussion, Ms. Randall estimated the kick-off meeting would run between two to three hours. Meetings held on weekday evenings and weekends are usually the most well-attended, she said. After a discussion, some committee members liked the idea of a Saturday morning kick-off meeting time, though Mr. Tselekis expressed he would be unable to attend if it was held at that time. Further discussion ensued in which Committee members and the consultants reached a consensus to schedule the kick-off meeting for 9:30 a.m. to noon Saturday, February 27. As for a venue, Committee members chose the Rackers Center as their first choice and identified the Trumansburg Village Fire Hall, West Hill Church, the Highland Lodge, and Cayuga Nature Center as alternative options to explore. It was agreed that Committee members would look into cost and availability for the discussed venues.

Outreach for Kickoff meeting

Ms. Thomas said the Town would be releasing a newsletter in the next two weeks and will include a notice for the kick-off meeting. Ms. Zahler also mentioned the Town's biweekly listserv notice, which has roughly 400 subscribers. Ms. Kiley told the Committee that Planning Board Chair John Wertis would help inform the ag community about the kick-off meeting. The Jacksonville Community Association listserv, possible stories published in the local newspapers and flyers posted at local businesses were also discussed as viable communication efforts. Sending flyers home with students of local private schools was briefly considered as an option, and Ms. Kiley suggested proposing the idea to local private schools and daycare facilities. Ms. Randall said she would reach out to Debbie Teeter at Cornell Cooperative Extension for a list of farmers in Ulysses. Ms. Kiley agreed to write the blurb for the kickoff meeting notice and she, along with Randall + West, will craft the meeting flyer.

Schedule of Events

Ms. Randall said three questions initially proposed by Ms. Zahler to Town stakeholders could also be great questions to ask during the kickoff meeting's brain writing exercise. The questions are: What concerns do you have about current/future zoning? What issues should this project address? and What suggestions do you have for us to better engage with the ag community and residents living in the Ag District? In the past, Ms. Randall said, she and Mr. West have asked What do you like about the Town? And What things would you like to see more/less of? The public would then be given index cards to write their answers, a practice that encourages broad input, Ms. Randall said.

Ms. Ritter asked the Committee if they got the sense that Ulysses residents knew what zone they lived in. The consensus answer was no. Ms. Zahler said a large Town map at the meeting would work well in informing residents of zones. However, she added, Town zones are a bit confusing, since the Ag District makes up a large majority of the Town. Ms. Randall said she and Mr. West plan to touch on Zoning districts during the kickoff meeting, but the Committee is welcome to help the consultants flush out that aspect.

During the ensuing conversation of questions to pose to residents, Ms. Thomas suggested posting at the meeting a list of what residents had deemed valuable in the Town's Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Randall discussed one of the exercises – zoning trading cards – in which residents are shown cards with various buildings and other infrastructure and asked to identify if it does or does not belong in Ulysses. This exercise helps steer the conversation toward what Ulysses residents want to see in zoning.

Based on a prior question regarding Town population, Mr. Hawkes shared that the Town population is roughly 4,900 with 2,600 properties and 1,841 homes. This data, included in the Town Comprehensive Plan, was collected in 2007. Ms. Zahler asked what the turnover has been since then, given that there are many new families in the Town. Ms. Kiley said the Ithaca Board of Realtors could provide a sense of home sales in the area over the last 10 years. Mr. West estimated Ulysses has added 10 to 15 new homes every year, and that adds up quickly. To ask of residents during the kickoff: Does the Town want to spread development evenly, or encourage clustering? Mr. West said a progressive slide to be shown during the kickoff meeting would show housing growth over the years. A similar kind of slide, using Ithaca data, would be used during the evening's pre-screening with Town stakeholders, he said.

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

At this time, Committee members reconvened with Town stakeholders for a prescreening of the kickoff meeting. Present, along with Steering Committee members and Randall + West, were: Planning Board members John Wertis, Rebecca Schneider, and David Blake; BZA members David Means and Cheryl Thompson; Rich Goldman, Town Board member; Sue Poelvoorde, former Town Board member and Comprehensive Plan committee member, and Phil Antweiler, of the Jacksonville Community Association. The pre-screening began at 7:31 p.m.

Ms. Zahler gave a brief overview of the Steering Committee's charge and asked for stakeholders' feedback on Town Zoning, how best to engage with the community, and ways in which to present the best information during the kickoff meeting.

Ms. Randall said Randall + West has teamed up with architect Noah Demarest, of Stream Collaborative, who will assist with design pieces. She noted NYSERDA is funding the Town Zoning efforts through its Cleaner Greener program, which is partly tasked with examining how rural and urban sustainability efforts can help curb greenhouse gashouse emissions. Defining rural sustainability is another reason NYDERDA is funding this effort. Goals with the Town project are to preserve farmland and open spaces, she said, and to consider hamlet revitalization in Jacksonville through zoning. The Town is in a unique market position since it is a desirable place to live, she said. At this time, consultants began a Powerpoint presentation showing development patterns in Ithaca since 1938. As more and more development has come to the area, the erosion of rural character is more pronounced, she said. Ithaca is a big draw as a place to live and by default Ulysses, Trumansburg and Jacksonville have seen an increase in housing demand.

When we talk about sustainability, Mr. West said, we often think of just the environmental component but equally important is the fiscal responsibility. The subsequent slide displayed service delivery costs versus incoming tax revenue associated with various kinds of development, with dispersed residential development resulting in a net negative for municipalities and residential farmland and open space being the most cost effective. Mr. West noted the value that village-centers create, not only aesthetically but functionally, financially and ecologically. Referring to presented figures, Mr. Goldman felt the claim that walkability adds \$82 per square foot to home values seemed like a huge number. Mr. West said the figure is based on a national average.

Mr. West reiterated the project scope, saying they will be focusing on the hamlet of Jacksonville, preserving open space and rural character, and creating walkable space.

Ms. Randall said some people do not know what zone they live in or care about zoning in general, but zoning protects private property owners and it also, ideally, advances public interest. Having some kind of rule book that states what the Town wants is how you get appropriate development. The consultants are basing their work on the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Ag Plan, and the County's plan, which has recommended 125 housing units – 7 to 10 dwelling units per acre – for the Jacksonville focus area, she said. Responding to a question from Ms. Schneider, Ms. Kiley said there are 100 or so existing dwellings in Jacksonville. Ms. Schneider also asked how much control the Town would have in revitalizing areas around route 96, a state-owned highway. Ms. Randall said the Town's control will be fairly limited but the state Department of Transportation is generally open to conversations about creating walkable environments. Mr. West said, for many years, the DOT used to be the biggest enemy of walkable communities, but their feeling has changed dramatically and quickly since roads tend to be safer in walkable environments. The DOT used to believe that the wider the road, the better. They have come around to understanding that village centers, with infrastructure nearer to the roadway, tends to slow driver speeds. Ms. Schneider said she was concerned about sprawl along Route 96 and an increase in traffic flow. Ms. Randall cited research that shows continuous flow

of traffic at slow speeds makes more sense. Mr. West said that roughly 8,000 vehicles travel via Route 96 every day. Adding 100 or so people to the hamlet of Jacksonville would not create a burden in Route 96 commuter traffic.

Ms. Randall said they expect to have a draft of Zoning considerations by the end of June. A public meeting would be held in September and again in December, when the final zoning and map updates would be ready for adoption. Mr. West said the goal currently is to bounce this presentation off Town stakeholders and get feedback on best ways to engage the community beyond the Steering Committee.

Mr. Means of the Town BZA said lot sizes change from 100 feet to 200 feet outbound on Jacksonville Road. Transitions are the trick, and it seems like it would be worthwhile to consider making the lots small as one proceeds out of the hamlet.

Mr. Wertis of the Planning Board urged consultants to think outside of the box since a cookie-cutter approach to open-space conservation will not work. He speculated that the consultants' priority of preserving ag and farmland and open space will ultimately force them to address the question of limiting the sale of farmland. For example, on 100 acres of farmland, some of it may be woods or rocky areas and would be best used for housing. However, local zoning plans do not seem to take such scenarios into consideration. What the Town has currently works pretty well, he said.

A former farmer himself, Mr. Means was asked how best to engage with members of the ag community. An online survey could work, he said, but it would be wise to consider the time of the day and the year when scheduling a meeting with the ag community. Having worked on a local tax review board, Mr. Means said farmers tend to have the feeling that the Town is working against them.

Ms. Randall mentioned a newer tool used for zoning – transfer of development rights, which preserves farmland but sends the density into areas that want it.

Ms. Poelvoorde noted the important economic piece to Ag: given the number of food growers in Ulysses, climate change could transform the Town into a “bread basket”.

Mr. Antweiler of the Jacksonville Community Association brought up the kickoff meeting's format, asking if it made sense for one large meeting to discuss both Ag and the hamlet of Jacksonville. They are interrelated topics, but he said he is not sure the ag community would want to hear about Jacksonville. Breakout groups or separate kickoff groups would seem more productive. Mr. Goldman agreed, saying there should be two meetings. Ms. Randall proposed holding separate sessions during the Saturday morning kickoff meeting, one at 9:30 a.m. and another at 10 a.m. Ms. Thompson of the BZA said the Town and consultants should advertise it as two separate meetings and not simply “zoning for Ulysses”, which would not have as much impact.

Ms. Schneider said there are not many large-scale farmers in Ulysses and asked if consultants considered surveying the four largest growers. Ms. Randall said they plan to coordinate with

Cornell Cooperative Extension to get a list of local farmers. Mr. Means advised not to forget local CSAs and smaller farms. Mr. Wertis also noted that there is a high percentage of leased farmland, and it would be a good idea to talk with people with sizable tracts of land.

A brief discussion of educating residents on Town zones ensued. Mr. Blake of the Planning Board thought there needed to be some kind of education before the February meeting, sine some residents do not know which zone they live in. Ms. Zahler reiterated plans to use the Town newsletter to promote the meeting, and Ms. Poelvoorde suggested that zoning and the upcoming meeting be the newsletter's focus.

Mr. Wertis suggested holding as many public meetings as possible to promote transparency.

Ms. Randall said those in attendance can email in any other questions they may have.

The presentation concluded at 8:48 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Louis A. DiPietro on January 15, 2016.