

**TOWN OF ULYSSES
STEERING COMMITTEE FOR ZONING UPDATES
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, 03/03/2016
7:00 p.m**

Approved: 5/5/16

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

George Tseleakis was excused.

Call to Order: 7:03 p.m.

Agenda Review; Minutes Review (2/4/16)

Mr. Hawkes MADE the MOTION to approve the February 4, 2016 meeting minutes, and Ms. Kiley SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was unanimously carried, 4-0, with Ms. Thomas abstaining from the vote.

Public meeting debrief

The Steering Committee began by commending Randall + West for their leadership with the public outreach event on Town zoning. There was a great turnout, Ms. Ritter said, and the public was open to the consultants' ideas, particularly in having more density in Jacksonville and less density on agricultural lands. Ms. Kiley said roughly 40 people, including Steering Committee members, attended the event. Mr. Hawkes also commended the consultants, saying they used the time well and got people engaged. Ms. Zahler, too, echoed previous comments, adding she appreciated the level of detail brought by the consultants and noted that people were engaged. Ms. Thomas said she was initially worried three hours would deter people from attending, but the turnout was great; it was a terrific presentation.

Mr. West presented a word cloud generated from audience members when describing what they love about Ulysses. Among the most popular: neighbors, nurturing community, support from people, natural areas, open areas, and parks. People also noted the amenities in Trumansburg, which Ms. Thomas said provides a strong core for Ulysses. Continuing with his review of audience comments, Mr. West said those in attendance stated they like not having to go to Ithaca for their needs. In general, there was broad consensus about preserving the rural character of the Town, including the views and parks, he said. Where people would like to see improvement: more walkability and biking options. There were no comments about too much traffic, but there were some who liked that Town has no traffic, he said.

Among concerns from Town residents, Mr. West said there were a fair number of comments about better enforcement of existing rules, while some feel there are too many rules. There was consensus among audience members that they did not want to see parcelization of Town

properties or road-side development. Responding to a question from Ms. Ritter, Mr. West guessed there were six farmers in attendance, based on farm-related comments left on comment cards.

There were several brief conversations among the Committee and consultants on individual comments from audience members regarding solar development, lot sizes, subdivisions and low-income rentals. On the subject of low-income rentals, Mr. West thought the group needed to have a strategy for how it talks about rejuvenation. Ms. Zahler said the Town has tried to reframe the subject of low-income rentals by stating that low-income people need good housing too.

Conversation then turned to the event's table exercise, which let participants place model buildings on a map of undeveloped land in the Town. Mr. West said he was surprised participants did not focus development toward a village center. People are generally interested in amenities in Jacksonville, but participants seemed to avoid putting development there, he said. Ms. Ritter recalled participants seemed to focus on practical considerations, like location of septic, while doing their best to avoid encroaching on nearby houses. It was clear, Mr. West said, people liked smaller, clustered houses, so it is important to ensure the Town's regulations allow that. Adding to Ms. Ritter's comment that her group was particularly interested in commercial development in Jacksonville, Mr. West said he heard something similar from a lot of participating groups, but allowing commercial development is not the same as building it. Ms. Zahler mentioned the possibility of a multiuse facility at the old Jacksonville church – a combination bakery, café or wine bar. Also, with a TCAT Park and Ride stop, electric utilities could be used to host food trucks on a Friday afternoon, she said.

Responding to a question from Ms. Thomas, Ms. Randall said the transit rule suggests somewhere between 7 to 14 dwelling units per acre (within a quarter-mile radius) are needed to support a hamlet. In a hamlet context, added Mr. West, a corner store needs about 500 households in a quarter mile radius. There are currently 380 households in the Jacksonville water district, Ms. Thomas said, and the hamlet represents not even half that. Ms. Thomas also noted the area around Trumansburg Village could support additional housing development, especially as the Village prepares to bring its new water main online. An area around Curry Road – at roughly two acres – is a good place to increase density, she added.

Discussion then turned to Zoning as it relates to agriculture. Ms. Thomas referenced the Town's Farmland Protection Plan and suggested the group examine and understand what its options are for Zoning changes. Mr. Hawkes said the public event primarily dealt with the Hamlet. What about anything for the agricultural community? he asked. Mr. West said they could do the same idea as the table exercise, but use an individual plot rather than several plots. Mr. Hawkes noted the small number of farmers in Ulysses but said there must be many landowners for whom the discussion would be relevant. Ms. Thomas said she recently interviewed a potential member of the Ag Committee who has 80 acres he and his wife wish to sell. They are an older couple who do not want to see their land developed and hope to establish protections on the water and sustainable farming of the property, she said. Mr. West thought a conservation easement or purchase of development rights would be best for the couple.

A conversation ensued involving subdivision limits on agricultural lands, and then the Town's Ag and Farmland Protection Plan was discussed. Among the options for ag farmland, as outlined in Appendix C, are purchase of development rights, conservation easements and transfer of developments, Mr. West said. Ms. Kiley referenced a recent Board of Zoning Appeals meeting, when a Board member broached the subject of Town conservation easements. She asked what the Town's responsibilities would be – like annual inspections, which seem like a big burden for the Town to take on. In some places, Mr. West said, the local land trust becomes owner of the easement. Ms. Ritter said the Town of Ithaca has three easements, and staff complete inspections following the land trust's model.

Ms. Randall mentioned Clarence, NY, which instituted its own program, Greenprint, which has become a model for other areas in the state to preserve farmland. Clarence leaders came up with a way to inventory and prioritize parcels and selectively follow up with owners, she said. Ms. Ritter also mentioned that the Town of Ithaca, for the last 10 to 15 years, has allocated funds into an open space reserve fund. Mr. West said he has previously completed parcel prioritization for nine counties in central Indiana. It is an interesting process that can be done with the help of students, he said.

Ms. Zahler asked the group which parts of the Ag strategies relate to potential zoning changes, and whether or not the group should be reviewing such zoning-related strategies. Zoning is one of the tools, Ms. Thomas said, and conservation easements are something you could serve on the same plate. Ms. Ritter asked if there are other options in zoning that could help a farmer if development is limited. Ms. Randall mentioned direct farm marketing, while Mr. West said on-farm processing and retail operations are possible options to assist farmers.

Another option for space preservation is large-lot zoning, Mr. West said. The Town could require 20-acre minimum lot size, and no one can subdivide. Ms. Thomas said the Town had trouble suggesting a 5-acre minimum lot size. You could just require conservation subdivisions, Mr. West said.

A discussion of acreage cost in the Town ensued. Ms. Kiley referenced a sale of close to four acres within the Town that sold for more than \$80,000. Based on suggestions from Committee members, Ms. Randall said it would be a smart idea to research per acre values in the Town.

Ms. Zahler asked about next steps. Ms. Randall said she and Mr. West have an entire list of questions after having reviewed Town Zoning – are definitions consistent with Ag and Markets? How strict should the Town be with Ag zoning? Are incentives worth exploring? These questions, when framed in an accurate narrative, could lead off discussions with the Ag community, she said.

Ms. Zahler said it would be helpful if Ms. Randall and Mr. West begin to draft up something to present to the Ag community that might include incentives and options for protecting and regulating Ag lands. Mr. West said there are three main groupings of options for preserving farmland: large-lot zoning; fixed-area zoning, and conservation subdivision design. It might make sense for us to flush those options out a bit, Mr. West said, or possibly put together a presentation that explains those options. He felt the Committee should know the options before

they are presented to the public. Ms. Thomas said the Ag Committee could hopefully be organized in the next month.

After more discussion, the Committee and consultants reached a consensus to review the existing regulations and plan summary for the next meeting. Ms. Randall said she would make the existing regulations and plan summary available as a Google Document, which would allow each Committee member to digitally mark-up the document and make comments.

Ms. Kiley MADE the MOTION to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Hawkes SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was unanimously carried, 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Louis A. DiPietro II on March 10, 2016.