

**TOWN OF ULYSSES
STEERING COMMITTEE FOR ZONING UPDATES
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, 04/14/2016
5:00 p.m.**

Approved: 5/5/16

Present: Rod Hawkes, Darby Kiley, Sue Ritter, Liz Thomas, and George Tseleki; CJ Randall and David West of Randall + West.

Chair Nancy Zahler was excused.

Public Present: Helen McKellen, John Wertis, Beth Gleason, Greg Reynolds, Phil Colvin, Bill Janisko, Brian Grout, Roxanne Marino, Bob Weatherby, Cheryl Thompson and Barbara Hotchkiss.

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Ms. Thomas called the meeting to order and provided an overview of the zoning Committee's work thus far. The Town received a grant to update its Zoning, an effort led by consultants, Randall + West. Part of the Committee's scope is to make certain outreach is accomplished. Both the Comprehensive Plan and the Ag and Farmland Protection Plan are guiding the process. Just this week, the Town Board appointed members to an Ag committee. Those appointed are John Wertis, Chaw Chang of Stick and Stone Farm, John Gates – who has a dairy farm in Burdett but also owns land in Ulysses, Krys Cail, and Greg Reynolds. Part of their charge is to reach out to the ag community, she said.

After each member of the audience introduced themselves, Mr. West said the evening's presentation follows a previous kickoff event in February that mostly centered around the Hamlet of Jacksonville. Randall + West has worked extensively with zoning rewrites. Rural zoning in particular can be difficult when balancing environmental goals, like preserving open spaces, with farmers' rights to subdivide and sell off their land, he said. Those are conflicting purposes, and we have to figure out how to work through that conflict.

At this time, Mr. West and Ms. Randall began their presentation, which concluded at roughly 6:45 p.m. During this hour-and-a-half long presentation, the following questions were posed and comments offered:

Mr. Reynolds asked whether the Town is legally required to update its Comprehensive Plan. Mr. West said there is no such requirement. Further, Mr. West noted Ulysses Town Zoning was last updated in 2009, which is fairly recent considering some Towns take several years, even decades, to adopt zoning updates.

Mr. Grout asked how a vineyard, including retail and a tasting room, would be considered as an allowable use. Ms. Randall called it a farm enterprise, adding NYS Ag and Markets has a wide range of definitions to encourage variety. Mr. Wertis noted other factors and processes are required when it comes to adding buildings to farm enterprises.

A slide showing the Town's land use/land coverage change from 1995 to 2008 spurred several questions and comments. Mr. Reynolds asked if the consultants had the information from 2008 to present day, which the consultants said they did not. However, Ms. Randall said Tompkins County is currently in the process of a mapping project and a housing study that could prove relevant. Mr. Grout noted the 70 percent growth of commercial development, and, referencing the consultants' net-positive, net-negative slide, said school taxes are the biggest financial burden.

Returning to a previous point made by Ms. Randall, Mr. Wertis asked her to explain how improving Ag Zoning helps growth in the Hamlet. Ms. Randall said a strong delineation between cities and rural areas is a common assumption, but, in the end, it does not work out that way. As Mr. Wertis understood it, the Town hopes to restrict development in ag areas and push development to the Hamlet, while creating incentives for both goals. Mr. West explained that if 10 new homes are expected every year in the Town, does the Town want those 10 homes to be randomly spread out, or attempt to target 70 percent of that annual growth to the Hamlet? There are four options to preserve open space and balance property rights, he said: retain the same Zoning, as written; have large lot zoning, with nothing smaller than 20 acres; density averaging, and conservation subdivisions.

Asked to provide lot-size figures related to density averaging and conservation subdivision, Mr. West said .75 to 1 acre lots.

Mr. Reynolds said road buffer is a problem for farmers because it takes up so much space. Secondly, wooded areas could be considered farmland since one could produce maple syrup or mushrooms. Lastly, he noted conservation subdivisions appear to take up more land than the other options.

Mr. Wertis asked about cluster developments. Ms. Randall said conservation subdivisions have come to the forefront recently as an alternative to cluster developments. Where the two differ is conservation subdivisions lay out criteria for lands you would want to protect.

Mr. Reynolds made the comment that if Zoning is more restrictive on development, the Town could reduce landowners' borrowing potential and, in turn, prevent the land from increasing in value.

Road construction was also brought up. Mr. Wertis asked if it was common for a town or municipality to help build roads to residential developments. Mr. West said it is uncommon for a town to pay for such infrastructure because it is cost prohibitive. With larger developments, the Town would be asking the developer to cover the cost of roads since it is expensive, he said. Though, Mr. Wertis added, most development in the Town

does not involve a large developer. Ms. Thompson felt the Town should offer some kind of assistance in building roads. Ms. Marino said the subject of roads was a huge challenge when she worked on Zoning rewrites in 2005.

The discussion turned briefly to community septic, which the county Health Department is much more amenable to recently, Ms. Randall said. There are two community septic systems in Danby thus far.

Ms. Thompson felt there should be some incentive to a developer to put in community septic. She also reiterated her thoughts that the Town should build roads to accommodate residential development. Mr. Hawkes noted Hinging Post Road and Honey Bee Lane, two roads to recent housing developments. A developer paid for Hinging Post Road, but the group was unclear who financed Honey Bee Lane.

Mr. Weatherby made the comment that the differences in development names – cluster and conservation subdivision – seems only a change in terminology. Ms. Randall said the two are similar but differ in that a conservation subdivision lays out criteria as to where development is most appropriate.

A conservation subdivision, Mr. West said, allows for more units. However, units would only be allowed on, say, 10 or 20 acres.

Mr. Wertis made the observation that, in Tompkins County, those who desire to live on 5 acres want a separateness from the Ag area. They do not want to be in a cluster; that's what most studies have shown, he said. Responding to Mr. Wertis's comment, Ms. Randall said it is one question the consultants are attempting to answer.

At this time, blank index cards were circulated to audience members to gather feedback on four questions relating to Town Zoning and Ag land.

Mr. Grout said it is unlikely area property owners are aware of transfers of development rights and the limited opportunity to take advantage of them. Ms. Kiley said Tompkins County recently held a meeting at the library to present information on TDRs, but few people attended. However, Mr. Wertis pointed out, the County does not recognize the lower assessment value on a property. Mr. Reynolds added that, while working with Ms. Kiley on the Farmland Protection program application, his 88-acre farm with views over Cayuga Lake was valued by the County at just \$110,000.

Mr. West said the consultants would be working with the Steering Committee through the spring and summer in hopes of completing an updated Zoning map by June. At that time, consultants will be coming back before the community to get feedback. Another public meeting is slated for September, he said.

Mr. Reynolds felt the timeline was aggressive. He asked when the consultants' contract is up, to which the consultants said their contract is based on number of hours and that the timeline is reasonable.

Mr. Wertis asked about scheduling similar meetings with the ag and farm community between April and June. Mr. West said they are working on having as much input as possible.

A resident requested any kind of available research on incentive-based models for conservation developments and road management. She also expressed interest in knowing if there are communities built around wind and solar farms. Ms. Randall said green-energy models are among several options to approach Zoning initiatives.

The presentation concluded at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Louis A. DiPietro II on April 22, 2016.