Town of Ulysses
Planning Board
Final Meeting Minutes
August 21, 2018

Approved: September 16, 2018

Call to Order: 7:04

Present: Chair David Blake, John Wertis, Jonathan Ferrari, Steven Manley, Rebecca Schneider, Katelin Olson, Town Planner John Zepko, Town Board Liaison Rich Goldman

Members of the Public Present: Carl Guy, Roxanne Marino, Bob Howarth

Agenda Review, Minutes Review (August 7, 2018): Board members made several corrections to the August 7th meeting minutes; then Mr. Wertis MADE the MOTION and Mr. Blake SECONDED the MOTION to approve the revised minutes and the MOTION passed unanimously.


Following Mr. Guy’s presentation of an amended site plan addressing concerns raised by Board members at the last meeting, Mr. Wertis MADE the MOTION and Ms. Schneider SECONDED the MOTION to close the site plan review.

Mr. Blake then MADE the MOTION to approve the following resolution:

WHEREAS:

This action consideration of site plan approval for the construction of a single-family home within the Conservation District (CD) and in a unique natural area. The project includes the grading/filling, and construction of a structure with an approximate footprint of 1600 square feet. The property is located on Taughannock Blvd, Tax Parcel Number 18.-3-9. Maynard and Megan Fahs, owners; Carl Guy, contact for owner; and;

The proposed project is a Type II action under SEQR, requiring no further review; and

The Tompkins County Planning Department reviewed the proposed project, pursuant to NYS General Municipal Law §239-l, -m, and –n, and in a letter dated 8 August 2018 determined that the project has no negative inter-community or county-wide impacts; and

The Planning Board, at a public meeting held on 21 August 2018, has reviewed and accepted as adequate the project site plan prepared by DELTA Engineering (Drawing number C-101)

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:
That the Planning Board of the Town of Ulysses hereby waives certain requirements for Site Plan Approval, having determined from the materials presented that such waiver will result in neither a significant alteration of the purpose of site plan control nor the policies enunciated or implied by the Town; and

That the Town of Ulysses Planning Board approves site plan as shown on the following: the project site plan prepared by DELTA Engineering (Drawing number C-101) dated August 20, 2018; and the Onsite Wastewater Treatment System Construction Permit from Tompkins County Environmental Health issued 4/20/2018.

The MOTION passed unanimously.

Discussion:

Planning Board members returned to the work of reviewing the proposed zoning now before the Town Board. Discussion focused on the 80/20 rule (allows landowners to develop 20% of their land while requiring them to leave 80% as farmland or open space), subdivision as a way to shape development, and how to preserve soil and water quality.

Most members do not fully support the 80/20 rule, but for different reasons. Ms. Olson said the rule is too inflexible. It is meant to preserve farmland and open space, but not all land in the Town is the same: on some parcels, only 80% or even just 20% is worth preserving, while on others the whole parcel should be conserved. Also, commented Ms. Olson, strict implementation of the rule would take power away from the Planning Board as it’s trying to build the community Ulysses wants.

Mr. Wertis stated the rule limits farmers’ freedom to farm by making it hard for farmers to keep the farm in the family, for example, or not allowing a farmer to sell off some land to finance a piece of equipment or construction. Still other members cited the possible increase of flag lots – parcels of land along a road bordering the owner’s land; the long line of sprawl created by flag lots is the exact opposite of the clustered, walkable type of community the Planning Board wants to see in Ulysses.

Ms. Olson stated her doubts about using subdivision to shape business and residential development. Subdividing puts land in permanent conservation, she explained, which may seem like a good idea now but doesn’t give much flexibility for the future. Ms. Olson added that 10 or 20 years down the road, encouraging density could be the better way to build a community.

A reason to support the rule, said Ms. Schneider, is that without it the new zoning lacks added protection for the area’s soils and water, ways to halt erosion, and regulations for handling storm water runoff and drainage. The 80/20 rule is at least a beginning to putting environmental protections in place, she stated.

As the meeting continued, discussion turned to finding alternatives to the 80/20 rule and Mr. Zepko encouraged members to come up with specific plans. Ms. Olson and Mr. Ferrari both mentioned a plan that has increased restrictions on smaller lots closer to town – be it Jacksonville or Trumansburg – and fewer on larger lots farther out of towns. Ms. Olson said that regulating lot size with existing settlement patterns is a better way to manage development. Another member cited the possibility of using flag lots to cluster development – adding that she had heard this idea from an Ag Board member.

August 21st, 2018 Planning Board Minutes
After hearing more brainstorming, Mr. Blake said he believes creating overlays – as Board members had discussed at the last meeting – remains the best way to address the Board’s concerns and achieve its goals. He added that the Board’s job now is to create the language and concept of overlay districts and sell it to the Town Board.

The night’s remaining discussion touched on informing residents about the proposed zoning. Ms. Olson asked that, given the public’s right to know, the Town do physical mailings to residents about public hearings.

As no consensus or general statement had been reached, Board members agreed to call another meeting to take place August 28th, at 7 p.m.

Ms. Schneider MADE the MOTION and Ms. Olson SECONDED the MOTION to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Maria C. Barry, September 25, 2018