

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, March 28, 2012
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM
125 East Court Street

MINUTES

Members Present – Mina Amundsen, Martha Armstrong, Todd Bittner, Will Burbank, Dick Coogan, John Gutenberger, Dave Herrick, David Kay, Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Gay Nicholson, Monika Roth, John Spence Rob Steuteville

Members Excused -- Sue Cosentini, Rick Couture, Fernando de Aragon, Scott Whitham

Members Absent – Kathy Schlather, Andy Zepp

Others Present – Katie Borgella (TCPD), Joan Jurkowich (TCPD), Ed Marx (Commissioner of Planning & Community Sustainability), Kathy Wilsea (TCPD)

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 9:02 AM by the Chair, Mina Amundsen. There were no changes to the agenda.

Election of Officers – David Kay, Chair of the Nominating Committee, reported Mina was willing to continue as Chair. He asked if there were any volunteers from the floor, and Martha Armstrong was willing to be Vice Chair. Slate moved by David Kay, seconded by Rob Steuteville and passed by unanimous show of hands.

Development Focus Areas Update – Joan Jurkowich reviewed the interaction she has had with communities. She provided examples of the comments she is getting: Are there other areas to include? How can we make this happen? What tools are available to municipalities? Can TCPD help? What are the barriers? Economics of the plan need to be addressed. Concerning questions about density of the urban center, 8 to 10 units per acre may be revisited. Freeville prefers to be a rural center instead of a node. TCPD will be working on Freeville's comprehensive plan.

There is some financial support in the TCPD budget to help communities attain these goals. Zoning can be written to draw businesses that attract visitors. In referencing net density, Joan said maybe average lot size is a better reference. Two specific questions came up about lot size – the Route 96 Corridor Study mentions 5 to 10 units per acre, and the Cayuga Heights audience was uncomfortable with the size mentioned. She will research guidelines. Ed Marx said there is mention in the Development Focus Areas Plan of areas where this scale of density already exists, and a community would not be transformed by using this scale in the infill sites we are discussing. Rob said he conducted an informal tally, and the Fall Creek neighborhood has more than 8 units per acre, because lots of large houses have been cut up for apartments.

City of Ithaca Comprehensive Planning Process – Ed reported the City's consultant released a draft Planning Influences Report. TCPD staff has reviewed the document and will provide comments. The consultant is projecting city population growth rate at 1.5% /decade. Prior analysis by TCPD and in the Transportation GEIS has been 0.5 to 1.0% /year. Ed feels the consultant's projection is unrealistic, and it is also contrary to projections of Downtown Ithaca Alliance and the joint housing strategy study. Ed said the consultant's report also projected 1% /year growth for employment, which would yield more traffic if jobs grow faster than population. David Kay said the report was intended to summarize existing conditions and other concepts will be revisited in the next phases. He asked if the consultants contacted TCAD and TCPD, to which Martha and Ed responded they were not contacted.

Commissioner's Report – Kingdom Farm and Proposed Lansing Sewer District: Kingdom Farm in the Town of Lansing is approx. 500 acres, owned by Jehovah's Witnesses with development planned. It doesn't fit into the logical node for the Development Focus Area, but has been included in the sewer analysis. Ed was asked to provide a letter of support for the funding application for the sewer extension, and he declined because of inclusion of Kingdom Farm. Ed has heard the developer wants to get out of the Kingdom Farm deal. Monika Roth reported the agriculture community has been involved in drafting a Town of Lansing agriculture plan. Kingdom Farm would be a huge buffer between development and the ag area, and has some of the best soils in the area. There is a contingent in the Town supporting the sewer extension. Kingdom Farm's caretaker is maintaining the land for agriculture, and even planted some corn last year. Farmers have made contacts about buying the property, but ag prices are lower than development prices. PDR might work to protect it as agriculture. Either ag or housing would provide some tax income for the municipality and County. She keeps hearing referrals to a \$1.5 million commitment from the developer. Rob said the public should ask why the state should pay for sewer access there if it is contrary to the County's Comp Plan, and Ed said that is exactly his issue. He sees mixed feelings during his interactions with elected officials and the planning board. Dooley Kiefer

said the history there is very important, and Andy Sciarabba, a proponent for the sewer extension, is familiar with that history. David Kay said state agencies are required to do a Smart Growth impact statement, which should result in low priority for the sewer project, but different agencies are at different stages of implementing the mandate. John Spence reported Better Housing for Tompkins County has had discussions with the town planning board about a different site, which would have some market rate senior housing and some affordable senior cottage-style housing, and Kingdom Farm has not been mentioned at all. Ed said he is willing to provide comments in opposition to the sewer extension, but support of PAB would be helpful instead of just having staff comments. John Gutenberger, Gay Nicholson, John Spence and Dooley Kiefer (if Pat Pryor is not available) volunteered to interact. Monika noted Ag & Farmland Protection Board and Cornell Cooperative Extension also declined to provide letters of support. If a Notice of Intent is issued, they would comment with opposition to the sewer extension. Ed recommended we find a way to be proactive with a solution, as Kingdom Hall expects to cash this property out. Monika reiterated farmers are interested in the property, it could be an organic farm, and prices for corn are up. The Town of Lansing has seen a large increase in acreage rented for agriculture in the last ten years, and is the only town with this level of interest. Rob thought the Town should look at the long-term economic impact, like who maintains and replaces damaged infrastructure, so they can consider costs over 30 years. Ed will discuss this with Pat Pryor, the County Legislator from the Town of Lansing.

Climate Showcase Communities: Ed reported the Aurora Street Pocket Neighborhood will break ground in June, and EcoVillage TREE will break ground this summer. They hope to accomplish 80% energy efficiency over current codes. Biggs is the third piece of CSC, where they hope to get a private developer to achieve similar efficiency. The draft RFP and pedestrian plan were submitted to the Town of Ithaca in January. Offers of a staff presentation were declined. On 3/12, the Town Board passed a resolution of comment. Support was not unanimous. The Town's Comp Plan is targeting the site for other development, like a nursing home. There is no draft Comp Plan yet, so this is only verbal discussion. The Town Board provided comments on distance to parking, proximity to Black Diamond Trail, need for a bus shelter, and that the project would be better suited to another part of the Town. The Planning Board was more positive, and their only concern is traffic. PB had no suggestions not to move the project forward. Ed feels the request for zoning change would pass with the current Town Board, but not unanimously. This presents difficulty for drawing interest of developers. At the Planning Board level, Ed made suggestions that could be worked into the Town's Comp Plan: possibility of district heating at Cayuga Medical Center, closest possible connection to Black Diamond Trail, the hospital is a priority for TCAT service and transit is most likely to continue there, identification for single use of County property is contrary to the County's intentions for the site, the open space component would provide a firm northern edge of development, there is possible synergy with development at the other Biggs sites that now belong to CMC, we are more likely to get successful mixed area use near CMC, CMC is the major employer of West Hill, and a critical mass for the node would be achieved with this site combined with Overlook, Holochuck and Conifer. Monika said Ulysses citizens who have been in discussion for their ag plan are concerned about the need for a buffer from development on West Hill. Mina said the Town seems to want to push development to the south and west, which is also affecting Conifer. David Kay said the planning board and town board both have representatives on the comp plan committee, where West Hill development is one of the most divisive issues. They have not discussed the district heat concept. Most members buy into Smart Growth, but are not agreed on implementation. They are focused on traffic reduction, and if that focus could be broadened to carbon emissions and energy savings, it could lead to support for district heat. Will Burbank asked if the Town might purchase the site, noting when he served on the Town of Ithaca board that was mentioned. Ed said he has never heard mention of the Town being interested in purchasing the property. The Town Board resolution mentions an old assessed value, which is not accurate or relevant. The RFP makes it clear that any extra income would be used for mitigation, in the forms of reinvestment in the community and protection of open space. The draft RFP will be discussed at PDEQ next week, then open for public comment.

Approval of Minutes from 11/30/2011 and 1/25/2012 – Mina had provided some changes to the draft November minutes by email. Dooley suggested some additional changes. January minutes moved by Gay, seconded by Dick, passed by show of hands. January minutes moved by Gay, seconded by David Herrick, passed by show of hands. Final minutes are available on the Planning Department website: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/ under Advisory Boards.

Appointment of Membership Committee for At-Large Applications – Volunteers were sought for review of the four applications received for the vacant at-large seat. Dave Herrick, Martha Armstrong, John Spence and Mina Amundsen offered to serve.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 AM.
Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department
Minutes adopted by PAB on June 27, 2012.

Membership:

Mina Amundsen, At-Large
Martha Armstrong, Economic Dev.
Todd Bittner, Natural Environment
Will Burbank, Planning Committee
Dick Coogan, Local Planning (non-urban)
Sue Cosentini, Business
Rick Couture, Education
Fernando de Aragon, Transportation
John Gutenberger, Education
Dave Herrick, Facilities/Infrastructure

David Kay, Local Planning (urban)
Dooley Kiefer, Associate Member
Gay Nicholson, At-Large
Monika Roth, Agriculture
Kathy Schlather, Human Services
John Spence, Housing
Rob Steuteville, Built Environment Design
Scott Whitham, Cultural & Historic Pres.
Andy Zepp, Land Pres./Public Land Mgmt.