

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, July 22, 2009
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
615 WILLOW AVENUE

MINUTES

Members Present – Martha Armstrong, Dick Coogan, Fernando de Aragon, John Gutenberger, Dave Herrick, Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Pam Mackesey, John Spence, Scott Whitham, Fred Wilcox, Andy Zepp

Members Excused -- Gay Nicholson, Peter Penniman

Members Absent -- Rick Couture, Monika Roth

Others Present – Joan Jurkowich (Planning Dept.), Jeanne Leccese (TCPD), Ed Marx (Commissioner of Planning & PW), Kathy Wilsea (TCPD)

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by the Chair, Fernando de Aragon. There were no changes to the agenda

Renters Survey Results – Jeanne Leccese provided handouts of the draft Executive Summary and invited comments over the next few weeks. Eventually this document will be finalized and placed on the Planning Department website. Three documents are already on the website and available for review at the County Legislature office: results of the student survey, results of the general population survey, and analysis of the combined results. The surveys were developed to ask what renters are looking for, whether or not their current housing meets their needs, and if they have plans to purchase housing in the future. TCPD teamed up with John Gutenberger's office at Cornell (Community Relations) on this project. The general survey was conducted by phone. The student survey was conducted on the web with email invitations to addresses provided by Cornell, Ithaca College, and TC3. The response rate for the general survey was 42%, and for the student survey 20%. Jeanne noted the survey was conducted very late in the semester. More data will be collected in a planned 2011 survey. Surveys were designed to gather info on current housing situations.

Analysis was provided by the Survey Research Institute, and key findings were included in the handout. They sought characteristics that could be shared with developers for new units. Having housing that is clean, safe, and well maintained is important to the general public. Location is an added important factor for students. Two-thirds of respondents in the age group 35-65 had owned a home in the past, and that segment was even high for respondents over age 65. Jeanne did further analysis based on income/affordability. 12% of the general respondents were paying over one-third of their income for housing. 90% of students were paying over one-third of their income for housing. The survey did not ask if students' parents provided any support.

Most important factors were also in the handout. In the area of planning to purchase housing in the future, 75% of the respondents who plan to purchase intend to get a single family home. There was an open-ended question at the end of the survey about the condition of the respondents' current housing.

Jeanne has made a presentation to PDEQ, and will be doing one to the Landlords Association. Municipal planning boards will be notified that the information is available on the TCPD website. All the colleges participated in development of the survey, and results have been shared with them. Fernando de Aragon suggested that finding funding partners for future surveys will be easier, since we can show the value of the information gathered. There were comments shared to make the final Executive Summary clearer and easier to read. It was noted that all campus housing is considered institutional, not rental. John Spence commented that the data shows a mindset for owning a house with acreage. Ed Marx said more than half of those comments on acreage could match areas we consider nodal. Suburban subdivisions are now the least preferable, although that is where building has occurred in the last 20 years. So a shift in preference is showing up. Jeanne invited members to read the analysis on the website and send her comments for changes to the Executive Summary. There was an article on the Renters Survey in the Ithaca Journal following Jeanne's presentation to PDEQ.

Nodal Development/Development Focus Areas Map – Ed Marx said staff tried to provide better analysis and maps following discussion at the last PAB meeting. Vacant land over 20 acres within ¼ mile of a bus stop and within ½ mile of community facilities were marked on the map. Circles were added to identify hamlets, villages, NYSEG, and the hospital. The combined data shows capability to meet the housing needs of our community, even without including infill potential. Staff doesn't feel any other areas will meet as many factors as the NYSEG and hospital circles. The map shows several areas of similarity, so no one should feel targeted. The map title will probably be changed to "Development Focus Areas". Downtown Ithaca Alliance has a map of possible infill sites in their plan, and because of that and the preference for infill to be selected by communities, infill was not included in this map.

Pam Mackesey said she would expect discord from the community, especially about the number of circles along Route 366. Ed said some areas would welcome housing, and some have already been studied. It is important to point out we can meet our housing needs without eating up agriculture lands and natural areas. Andy Zepp felt it is better to have general discussion rather than project-by-project reaction. John Gutenberger asked if the circles take into account land use regulations, as some municipalities have minimum lot size regulations. Ed said there is a wide variety of infrastructure, and not all of the areas are ripe for development now. Joan Jurkowich pointed out that different color circles identify expectations of different services and mix of land use. There was discussion on whether the map tried to show too much data, and how to best present it. Martha Armstrong suggested that mobile home parks need to be kept in mind, as they are affordable housing in some communities. Joan said few showed up in the analysis for density. Ed said the map will be tweaked based on conversation today. It will be shared with municipalities in context with other issues for the purpose of intermunicipal understanding. Pam was concerned about producing anxiety in the general population, who might feel the circles are targets for development. Ed said we need better explanations in order to educate, but this is better than current information. The circles are integral because they show walkability. This map might be a new component to the Comprehensive Plan update, and would be part of the public outreach. John Gutenberger suggested emphasizing criteria and desirability of the factors that led to selection. Martha said she appreciated having the agriculture and natural focus areas included.

Planning Department 2010 Budget – Ed Marx said the County is facing serious cuts this year. Increases in fringe benefits and retirement costs mean department impacts of 8 to 12%. TCPD is working to come in under target, and will recommend shedding some things the department does. This may include minimal support for advisory boards, but PAB is probably already at that level. Department work will focus on the Comprehensive Plan, patterns of development, protection and conservation of natural resources and lands, and energy and greenhouse gas emissions. He sees budget changes having permanent effects on work in the department, and probably won't be putting in any over-target requests. Joan said their budget information to the County Administrator and the Legislature will make clear what changes are proposed to reach this target.

Commissioner's Report – Ed Marx reported the Housing Fund program oversight committee has met twice. They will consider an application for funding at their August meeting and hope to award funds by the end of the year. The Legislature has approved sale of a foreclosed property in Malloryville to the Nature Conservancy. TCPD and Solid Waste staff are working on a grant application for Climate Showcase Communities Program. The two elements are rural biomass, and expansion of Solid Waste outreach to businesses on waste reduction and energy reduction. Finger Lakes Land Trust held a meeting of Cayuga, Seneca and Tompkins county officials for expansion of a blue way trail around Cayuga Lake. There is interest in applying for a grant to enhance current services for boaters with small craft. Dooley Kiefer said the Water Resources Council's Cayuga Lake Recreation Committee examined this concept and were very concerned about the dangers from storms that move in quickly. Ed said that is one reason stops need to be closer together. NYSERDA funding opportunities are coming up for municipal fleets and buildings. The TCPD Annual Report was distributed.

Joan Jurkowich distributed a memo on updates for the Comp Plan and packets of potential action items for members to review. Discussion will occur at the August meeting of PAB.

Approval of Minutes from May 27, 2009 – Dooley Kiefer asked that approval of the minutes wait so she could provide proposed inclusion of some of the points Ed mentioned about his trip to the APA conference. Fred

Wilcox moved the draft minutes for approval. Seconded by Martha Armstrong, who also moved to include comments Dooley will provide to Kathy Wilsea. Amendment accepted as friendly. Minutes passed by voice vote.

Schedule November and December Meetings – Following brief discussion, it was agreed to hold one meeting on December 2 instead of two monthly meetings near holidays.

Announcements – Fred Wilcox announced training opportunities will occur at the annual conference of the New York Planning Federation. Specific info will be shared by email.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:34 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Minutes adopted by PAB on August 26, 2009.

Membership:

Martha Armstrong, Economic Dev.

Dick Coogan, Local Planning (non-urban)

Rick Couture, Education

Fernando deAragon, Transportation

John Gutenberger, Education

Dave Herrick, Facilities/Infrastructure

Dooley Kiefer, Associate Member

Pam Mackesey, Planning Committee

Gay Nicholson, At-Large

Peter Penniman, Business

Monika Roth, Agriculture

John Spence, Housing

Scott Whitham, Cultural & Historic Pres.

Fred Wilcox, Local Planning (urban)

Andy Zepp, Land Pres./Public Land Mgmt.