

final

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, August 22, 2012
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM
125 East Court Street

MINUTES

Members Present – Martha Armstrong, Will Burbank, Dick Coogan, Sue Cosentini, Rick Couture, Fernando de Aragon, Dave Herrick, Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Kathy Schlather, John Spence, Rob Steuteville, Scott Whitham, Andy Zepp

Members Excused -- Mina Amundsen, Michelle Berry, Todd Bittner, John Gutenberger, David Kay

Member Absent – Gay Nicholson, Monika Roth

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

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 9:06 AM by the Vice Chair, Martha Armstrong. Order of agenda items was changed.

Report on the Tompkins County Multi-Family Housing Study – Ed Marx reported the consultant's final report was received about two weeks ago. The study was initiated by Downtown Ithaca Alliance for multi-family housing in the downtown area and we asked to be included and have the scope expanded. The downtown analysis includes the Town of Ithaca, and the consultant's main business in quantifying data for downtown analyses.

For our part of the study, the consultant examined the rest of the County. Submarket areas were established, then analyzed. Submarkets do not match municipal boundaries. The broad conclusion is that vacancy rates are so low that any new project in the right spot would be successful. The consultant noted all multi-housing is below average condition in comparison to other areas. Anything new with amenities would be very competitive. Demand over a 5-year period is 1350 downtown units and 975 for all other areas combined, but most likely in villages that have existing infrastructure. Ed expects staff to look at this report in the context of the 2006 Affordable Housing Needs Assessment.

The consultant broke down demand by unit types: 825 potential rental (150 upscale, 150-200 senior ranch style, 225-275 affordable moderate rent, and 225 tax credit type). Also examined how projected units compare to existing market area (upscale markets best targeted in Lansing, Dryden, Newfield/Danby; senior in Lansing, Dryden; and moderate in Lansing, Dryden, Newfield/Danby). Some of the information in the study would be useful for developers, especially on existing stock. Also might be useful to communities that want to encourage housing development, as it documents need. Dooley Kiefer asked about 5- and 10-year goals, and Ed said this report is for 5 years, but is similar to our goals for 10 years. It can be difficult to project, because construction in the first 5 years can affect how much is needed in the following 5 years. Dooley also commented Cayuga Heights is part of the downtown report area, which Ed acknowledged is a potential location because it is a good location if it has appropriate sites. Kathy Schlather asked if the 40-50 unit size is necessary for a project to be successful. Ed said that is necessary for a financial success, and would be 15-20 units per acre outside the downtown analysis area, so 2 to 3 acres, but more density downtown. Rob Steuteville asked if costs were examined and, if so, were national figures used, because these are higher construction costs than he has ever seen. Ed said the report includes a table of rents and taxes, but he is not sure about construction costs used. The market would have to prove itself over the five years. The report says our gaps may mean the market doesn't function well here. The right product could benefit the entire market. Dave Herrick asked if consideration was given to infrastructure, and Ed said not much, but the report has some reference to transit. Martha Armstrong said she felt Cayuga Heights residents oppose loss of open space rather than increased density, and Dooley said too many Cayuga Heights residents only see the village as single-family homes. Ed said we need to continue talking about demographics. Our demographics show a need for different types of housing, which can revitalize communities.

Finger Lakes Land Trust Request for Funding: Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection – Ed provided some history on how the fund was established with rollover funds so the County could respond to opportunities to make open space projects happen. All of the projects have been collaborative. Andy Zepp said all projects have been endorsed by municipalities, but only the Town of Ithaca has contributed any funds. Ed said projects could be acquisitions by municipalities, and staff has done some notification to municipalities in the past about availability of the fund. One project involved paying for an appraisal in the Village of Lansing, but that did not go forward for protection. Dooley asked if the draft guidelines that governed the first two projects also required that the project be located in an Agricultural Resource Focus Area or Natural Features Focus Area. Joan will check (answer is yes). Sue Cosentini asked how the fund can

be replenished, and Ed said some department rollover (left over at end of year) and income from sale of foreclosed properties to State Parks. There is no regular process for replenishing the fund. If it were regular, we could seek out more opportunities.

Andy said funds have previously been used for three FLLT projects. It has not been a lot of money, but provided symbolic support for open space preservation. The Likens project being reviewed today is a conservation easement, which is an agreement between the owner and FLLT. The property will remain on the tax roll. As a management organization, FLLT is needed to ensure long-term compliance and monitoring. The property is contiguous to Shindagin Hollow State Forest and the Finger Lakes Trail. Subdivision for two home sites is part of the agreement. Timber harvest will be allowed with a management plan developed with FLLT input. The Town of Caroline supports this conservation easement. The owner is willing to give up development potential. The property is part of a NFFA, and FLLT will raise the addition funds needed for the closing and long-term management.

Rob asked what if the land is needed for farming in the future, and Andy said that would be feasible under an amended management plan developed by the owner and FLLT. John Spence asked about ideas for building on the subdivided lots. Andy said they presume single-family houses, fairly near the road. This time, FLLT is saying both homes need some acreage to ensure future salability. FLLT is trying to make sure there is only one owner in control of the remaining property, so it will be easier to manage the relationship. David asked if the main property would be kept private, and Andy said public access would be at the owner's discretion. Since the owners do not live here, Andy thinks they will sell sometime in the future.

Dick Coogan moved to support funding from the Capital Reserve Fund as requested by FLLT, seconded by Rick Couture. Vote 11 yes, 0 no, 1 abstention (Zepp).

Approval of Minutes from June & July – Draft minutes of 6/27 were accepted with no changes. Dooley suggested changes for the 7/25 minutes. Amended draft moved by John Spence, seconded by Scott Whitham and passed by unanimous voice vote. Final minutes are on the Planning Department website: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/ under Advisory Boards.

Commissioner's Report – Ed Marx reported The Biggs RFP is out, and a meeting will be held for interested developers at the site on 8/27. ▪ In the last County tax foreclosure cycle, the County added deed restrictions that limited two parcels to having one residence each. Parcels were in Enfield and the Town of Dryden, and both sold at the foreclosure sale. So this is a tool we can use when it is appropriate. ▪ The Development Focus Areas Strategy and Conservation Strategy will go to the County Legislature's second meeting in September. The Strategic Tourism Plan will probably go to the same meeting. ▪ The Planning Department's 2013 budget was submitted to Administration. It includes a proposal for a sustainability planner job shared with the City of Ithaca, which was suggested to Ed by Mayor Svante Myrick. The Legislature would have to make the decision about creating the job, and the Town of Ithaca might become one of the parties in the future. ▪ The Cleaner Greener Southern Tier Sustainability Plan will have public outreach in October, with a goal of finalizing the plan at the end of this year.

Rob asked if the 700 housing units under construction in the City now were included in the consultant's study discussed earlier. Ed said the inventory of existing units was conducted in February 2012, so they were not counted. Dooley asked for an update on the Sustainability Center. Ed said displays are being designed and constructed. Three graduate students from Cornell are working on the business plan for end-of-year completion.

Announcements – Kathy Schlather announced the Streets Alive event will occur on 9/23. Parts of Cayuga Street will be closed to traffic and used for walk, bike, and dance events. Volunteers are still welcome. ▪ John Spence reported BHTC finished and submitted three grant applications for accessibility, rehab, and first time homeownership. He is hearing at the state level that the three-year contracts that establish agency types will end. He received a letter that spelled out a six-month extension through 12/31/12. BHTC did not receive their first half of year funding in July – it may arrive in October. He also received a letter that there will be no regional contacts for programs – all contacts will be through Albany in the future. ▪ Sue Cosentini reported on the Aurora Pocket Neighborhood, where the third foundation is being poured today. Some framing and walls are in place for the other two houses. Updates are being posted on their website, and she hopes owners can move in in eight to ten months.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:19 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Minutes adopted by PAB on September 26, 2012.

Membership:

Mina Amundsen, At-Large

Martha Armstrong, Economic Dev.

Michelle Courtney Berry, At-Large

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.