

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Tuesday, Oct 8, 2024
Via Zoom
FINAL MEETING MINUTES

Members Attending

Name		Representation	Name		Representation
Liddy Bargar	P	Human Services	Gay Nicholson	P	At-Large
Joe Bowes	P	Housing	Christine O'Malley	P	Cultural/Historic Preservation
Fernando de Aragón	P	Transportation	C.J. Randall	P	Local Planning (non-urban)
Jordan Decker	P	Energy	Leslie Schill	P	Education #2
Yamila Fournier	P	Built Environment	Andy Zepp	P	Land Preserv./Public Land Mgmt.
George Frantz	P	Agriculture			
David Herrick	P	Facilities/Infrastructure	Others Present		
David Kay	P	Local Planning (urban)	Katie Borgella	P	Commissioner
Thomas Knipe	E	Business	Abigail Conner	P	Environmental Planner
Anne Koreman	P	County Legislature	Darby Kiley	P	Associate Planner
Ernie McClatchie	P	Education #1	Kristin McCarthy	E	County Staff
Heather McDaniel	P	Economic Development	Megan McDonald	E	Deputy Commissioner

Guests: Mike Smith

Call to Order/Agenda Review and Changes/Privilege of the Floor: Vice Chair Leslie Schill called the meeting to order at 3:04pm.

Action: Approval of Draft Minutes (August 2024): The draft August 2024 minutes were approved (moved by Anne Koreman, seconded by Yamila Fournier) as submitted. Motion carried.

Report/Discussion: County Strategic Operations Plan – Bridgette Nugent, County Administration

Bridgette Nugent, Deputy County Administrator, presented the Strategic Operations Plan, outlining the County's five-year priorities: organizational excellence, equitable service delivery, economic opportunity, climate change mitigation, and health and safety. The plan also includes a vision statement emphasizing community well-being and a mission statement focused on providing essential services. During the discussion, attendees expressed interest in staff involvement and performance measures to track progress. Additionally, they highlighted the importance of prioritizing lake water quality due to its significant environmental and economic impacts. The need for collaboration between the County and municipalities was also emphasized. Some attendees suggested that the plan should also factor in external partnerships, rather than just internal operations.

Report/Action: Natural Infrastructure Capital Program Funding Request for the Town of Ithaca's Proposed Sage Preserve Acquisition – Abigail Conner, DPS

Abigail presented the Town of Ithaca's proposed acquisition of Sage Preserve to the group. This property, located south of Ithaca College and South Hill Swamp, encompasses streams, wetlands, and recreational areas. The Town is seeking \$200,000 through the Natural Infrastructure Capital Program to acquire the land, which constitutes 26% of its assessed value. During the discussion, questions arose regarding the potential connection to Compton Park and the protection of wetlands on the subdivided portion of the land. Mike Smith from the Town of Ithaca clarified that the landowners plan to retain ownership of the subdivided area, which includes wetlands. While the Town is interested in a potential connection to Compton Park, the landowners believe that the terrain, particularly the wet

conditions, would make it difficult to establish a direct path.

Action: Gay Nicholson moved to recommend that the Town of Ithaca's request for \$200,000 in Natural Infrastructure Capital Program funds be approved for the Sage Preserve Acquisition proposal. Ernie McClatchie seconded the motion, which passed with C.J. Randall abstaining.

Report/Discussion: Agricultural Conservation Easements and Riparian Protection Agreements Annual Report

– *Abigail Conner, DPS*

Abigail presented the annual report on Agricultural Conservation Easements and Riparian Protection Agreements. The report detailed the monitoring of conservation easements and riparian buffers, including the specific properties monitored, challenges encountered, and future plans for more efficient monitoring. The discussion also covered the capacity limitations of County staff to accept new easements and the ongoing Farmland Protection Implementation Grant program, which is being explored by the Agricultural Farmland Protection Board. Additionally, the group discussed the potential impact of conservation easements on local municipalities and the potential for increased collaboration and support for these programs from external partners like the Finger Lakes Land Trust and NYS Agricultural Land Trust.

Report/Discussion: Update on new NYS Wetlands Regulations – Darby Kiley, DPS

Darby presented an update on the recently amended NYS Freshwater Wetlands Act. After providing a brief history of wetland regulations in New York, she highlighted key changes, such as increased permit fees, a new "wetlands of unusual importance" category, and the replacement of jurisdictional wetland maps with informational ones. Landowners will need to obtain a jurisdictional determination from the DEC to confirm wetland presence on their property. Concerns were raised about enforcement mechanisms, local regulation adjustments, DEC's capacity to handle increased permit requests, and potential conflicts with federal regulations. The need for clear communication, particularly for real estate professionals, was emphasized. The group discussed the potential impact of these changes on local development projects and the importance of staying informed as more details emerge. It was noted that the public comment period for the proposed rulemaking has recently closed, and new wetland maps are expected to be released in the coming months.

Report: 2025 Member Recruitment/Nominating Committee– Darby Kiley (on behalf of Kristin McCarthy)

Darby thanked everyone for responding to Kristin's email about membership renewals. She then requested volunteers for the Nominating Committee. Andy, Jordan, and Heather stepped up to serve on the committee.

Member Items

Andy provided an update on recent Finger Lakes Land Trust activities. He highlighted the upcoming opening of a mile-and-a-half hiking trail on a 120-acre addition to Upper Treman State Park. He also discussed the Bell Station/Cayuga Shores Wildlife Management Area project, a 300-acre shoreline conservation effort currently under contract. A portion of this land, approximately 200 acres, is being considered for a solar project. Gay added that this potential solar project could generate 50 megawatts of electricity, powering over 18,000 homes. Leslie thanked the presenters and attendees, expressing interest in future updates on wetlands initiatives.

Adjournment: Vice Chair Leslie Schill adjourned the meeting a 4:04pm.