

**TOWN OF ULYSSES  
STEERING COMMITTEE FOR ZONING UPDATES  
MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, 02/04/2016  
7:00 p.m**

*Approved: March 3, 2016*

**Present:** Chair Nancy Zahler, Rod Hawkes, Darby Kiley, Sue Ritter, and George Tselekis; CJ Randall and David West of Randall + West.

Liz Thomas was excused.

Call to Order: 7:04 p.m.

**Agenda Review; Minutes Review (1/07/2016)**

Mr. Hawkes MADE the MOTION to approve the January 7, 2016 meeting minutes, and Ms. Kiley SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.

**Discussion of 2/27 public meeting**

Ms. Zahler explained that the intent of the evening's meeting was to get a better understanding of what will take place at the February 27 kick-off event. Scheduling beyond the 27<sup>th</sup> should also be discussed. If there are recommendations on Ag lands, for instance, maybe the Committee would review those recommendations and bring in stakeholders to review them also, she said.

Randall + West began their sample presentation at 7:09 p.m., beginning with a slide showing a zoning map of the Town. Mr. Hawkes suggested the map legend be displayed larger.

Regarding the subject of hamlets, Mr. West thought it would make sense for Ms. Kiley to explain what has happened in the Town since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted, including a focus on zoning in the Hamlet of Jacksonville and agricultural lands. Mr. West asked the Committee if the rural residential zone was to be part of the consultant's scope, to which Ms. Kiley said it was to be included. He said he would update documents to state that consultants are reviewing everything except the Lakeshore and Conservation Zones. Ms. Zahler requested removing a fog effect intended to blur out zones on one of the slides.

Continuing with the mock presentation, Ms. Randall then discussed the three documents from which consultants will base their work – the Town Comprehensive Plan, the Ag and Farmland Protection Plan and the Tompkins County's Focus Strategy. We want to put these documents front and center to ensure Zoning amendments are strongly tied to these plans, she said. The Committee and consultants reached a consensus to remove text regarding subdivisions from one of the slides, citing it as too much detail for a general review of strategic documents. Ms. Randall said they do not want to focus too much on the County Plan because, of the three, the County's

has the least authority. Plus, there were some initial concerns regarding the County's recommendation for 125 housing units in the Hamlet of Jacksonville.

A discussion of plans for density in Jacksonville then ensued. Mr. Tselekis asked if it has already been decided to add density in Jacksonville, because it sounds set in stone. Ms. Randall said nothing has been decided; housing can be shifted to where it is desired. Ms. Zahler said a key focus is to avoid sprawl. The idea embedded in the Comprehensive Plan was to try to concentrate future growth in communities, she said, adding she wants to back off on the 125-units figure from the County plan. Ms. Randall suggested the presentation could highlight the Town's plans more, since the County's plan has the least authority, and leave the focus on the Hamlet more general.

Mr. West continued with the next slide, which displayed big-picture goals: Preserve Open Space, Grow Green in a Sustainable Way, Focus Residential Growth in the Hamlet of Jacksonville and Streamline Zoning Code. Is there a better way to state these goals? he asked.

After a point put forward by Ms. Ritter, the Committee reached a consensus to change "Preserve Open Space" to "Preserve Agricultural Lands and Open Space".

Mr. Hawkes asked about the Hamlet of Waterburg and where it was in future talks involving Zoning. Ms. Kiley said Waterburg would remain its own Hamlet, and that there is no need for commercial uses there; it is all residential and not on a State Route like Jacksonville.

Ms. Randall asked the Committee if they should state Jacksonville specifically in point three – Focus Residential Growth in the Hamlet. Though Jacksonville is clearly the focus, Ms. Zahler said, she preferred to keep it in the general term of "hamlet", since she foresees possibly a new hamlet forming in the next 10 years or so along Falls Road, where the Village of Trumansburg plans to route its second water source. With municipal water, land along Falls Road – behind the ShurSave, specifically – could accommodate mixed-use development and housing, she said. It is a useful conversation, Ms. Kiley, but such a vision is not in the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Hawkes turned the discussion to point two – Grow Green in a Sustainable Way. Mr. West said the expressed goal comes from two perspectives: the Town wants to ensure that growth in agricultural areas is the least disruptive as it can be, while in the Hamlet, the focus is density and walkability. Mr. Hawkes stressed words are important and thought the goal, as stated, could suggest that farmers are not growing in a sustainable way.

Mr. Tselekis returned to his previous question regarding whether it has or has not been decided to center growth in the Hamlet of Jacksonville. He cited the Comprehensive Plan, emphasizing that it encourages residential growth in the Hamlet, and said if 25-acre lot sizes are enacted in agricultural areas, the Town could be cutting off residential development for most of the Town.

In response, Mr. West said they want to prioritize and shape development in the Hamlet. Citing goals expressed in the Town's Comprehensive Plan, he said the Town does not want to cut up parcels in the same way forever. One focus area is to determine how to allow growth that is necessary for farming operations but preserves open space, he said.

Is the point of the public presentation to inform residents of strategies based off existing plans or to build an entirely new plan? Mr. Tselekis asked. Committee members and consultants were in agreement that the purpose is to inform residents of strategies based off existing plans. Ms. Randall said there are many tools to focus density away from ag lands – like the purchase and transfer of development rights. The Town is not looking to take away farmers' land rights.

Mr. Tselekis said the Comprehensive Plan calls for low-density residential, so it seems premature to consider concentrating residential development in the Hamlet. If the presentation is intended to explain the Town's plans, it is distorting the Town's goals. It was suggested to replace the word "Focus", resulting in "Encourage Residential Growth in the Hamlet". Mr. West said if the goal is to preserve open space, then it discourages development. Mr. Tselekis felt the Big Picture goals are not up for debate.

Ultimately, the Big Picture goals were changed to "Preserve Ag Land and Open Land", "Grow Sustainably", "Smart Growth in the Ag Area", "Encourage Residential Growth in Hamlets", and "Streamline Zoning Code".

On the topic of Zoning Code, Ms. Randall said the basis is to understand how Zoning affects people's lives. Mr. West said they plan to discuss the Ag section of Zoning, the value of Ag space, how it is a cash-positive, and the value of traditional hamlet and mixed use. Mr. Tselekis questioned figures on a slide intended to show the costs of bringing services to dispersed rural residential development versus the tax revenue generate from them. Having reviewed Smart Growth: Building Better Budgets, Mr. Tselekis wondered if those figures applied to the Town, since expenses assume that all houses had sewer and water. Plus, the same document focused on states like Tennessee, North Carolina and Colorado and did not include northeastern states. In short, he does not believe the cash-positive figures. Removing specifics from the slide, he added, does not change anything; it is one thing if the numbers can be backed up, but that does not appear so. Ms. Randall said the more concentrated the development, the cheaper it is to bring services. Ms. Ritter said she has seen similar figures and does not debate them; these figures are what she uses in her own presentations, and she is fine with them.

The next slide showed development in the Town from 1970. Mr. West said there have been lots of subdivisions, with the Town losing Ag lands. The consultant's goal is to refocus development on places where the Town wants to see growth. The slide also included figures from the Ag Plan that showed net losses and gains of ag lands and residential development. After discussion, the Committee suggested all dots that represent development on the map be the same color.

The following slide dealt with options for protecting open space. Mr. West outlined strategies like conservation subdivisions, density average zoning, larger minimum lot sizes, transfer of development rights, and conservation easements. Ms. Zahler requested consultants simplify density average zoning for the general public.

How does zoning align with the Town's goals? Ms. Randall asked. Zoning is not a panacea, she said; the Town needs a Swiss-army knife approach: strengthen Hamlets and centers, design

guidelines, purchase and transfer of development rights, housing diversity, and conservation easements.

Mr. West quickly went through the final slides pertaining to the Comprehensive Plan, Zoning Code and next steps. The Committee discussed Zoning Code and how to communicate the consultant's plans to streamline it, saying it would safer to say consultants will be making it a more "user-friendly Zoning code".

The presentation concluded at 8:28 p.m., and the consultants then shared thoughts for activities to take place at the February 27 meeting. The first activity, Mr. West explained, is an aerial map of a section of town, where participants are given a budget and small "Monopoly" houses and asked how they would concentrate housing.

Ms. Zahler asked about the flow of the entire evening. Ms. Randall said the presentation would last about 90 minutes and include a question-and-answer session. Then, consultants would shift to activities, beginning with the brain-writing exercise involving index cards and questions posed to the audience: What do you love about your community? What do you want to improve? And What do you envision with future Zoning? The activity is intended to facilitate a broad sharing of ideas in an anonymous way. Ms. Randall said a second public meeting could include a visual display of some of the key words that the audience wrote on their individual cards.

A discussion ensued regarding the aerial map exercise, the exact questions to ask of audience members during the brain-writing exercise, overall goals of the presentation and community involvement. Ultimately, the Committee reached a consensus to ask the following three questions for the brain-writing exercise: What do you love about your community? What do you want to see improved? And What concerns do you have about future zoning?

On the subject of Jacksonville, Ms. Zahler said residents there are hungry to talk services and stores, though Mr. West said he was hesitant to ask people what kinds of stores they want, since consultants have zero power over that. Ms. Zahler said this is an interesting time for Jacksonville since Exxon Mobil is in discussion with the Town regarding parcels that the oil company currently owns. This poses an opportunity to the Town to put out a proposal for the kind of development it wants.

Mr. West mentioned another exercise involving a photo grid of 80-plus houses and other various commercial buildings. Participants would be given a limited number of green and red stickers and asked to place a green sticker on the kinds of structures they would like to see in Town and a red sticker on the structures they would not like to see. Feedback from the exercise would be shared at the second public meeting, Mr. West said.

Though the question of time was raised, some Committee members, like Ms. Ritter, liked the idea of doing both the photo grid and "Monopoly" exercises. Mr. Tseleki liked the photo grid but was not sure about the Monopoly exercise. There was general consensus to include the photo grid exercise as well as the brain-writing exercise.

An additional meeting with a designated privilege of the floor time was discussed, to include stakeholders like John Wertis, Roxanne Marino and Phil Antweiler. There was consensus to wait on defining this process until the consultants decide how to share drafts with the committee.

Ms. Kiley MADE the MOTION to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Hawkes SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Louis A. DiPietro II on February 12, 2016.