

**TOWN OF ULYSSES
STEERING COMMITTEE ON ZONING UPDATES
MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, 10/6/2016**

Approved: October 26, 2016

Call to Order: 7:00 p.m.

Present: Chair Nancy Zahler, committee members Rod Hawkes, Darby Kiley, Sue Ritter, Liz Thomas, and George Tselekis.

Public in Attendance: Roxanne Marino of the Sustainability Advisory Committee; and Krys Cail, Greg Reynolds, John Wertis, John Gates, and Chaw Chang, all of the Ag Advisory Committee.

Agenda Review; Minutes Review (9/26/16)

Mr. Hawkes MADE the MOTION to accept the amended September 26, 2016 meeting minutes, and Ms. Thomas SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was unanimously approved.

Privilege of the Floor

Mr. Wertis said he read through the original NYSEDA agreement for the grant that funds the Town's zoning updates. According to the agreement, the project scope involves codifying policies outlined in the 2013 Ag and Farmland Protection Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Having sat on the committee that guided the Ag and Farmland Protection Plan, Mr. Wertis has concerns that none of the Steering Committee members has any stake in farming; there is no one of the Committee that represents the ag community, and that is a big mistake, he said.

At this time, the Committee continued its review of the zoning pre-draft. Members weighed ag uses – specifically ag commerce, CAFOs, and animal processing structures – and whether or not all three should be placed under an allowed use with site plan review. Ultimately, the Committee reached a consensus to file CAFOs under an allowable use with a special permit, while animal processing structures and ag commerce were placed under allowable uses with site plan review.

The Committee then moved on to Lot Area and Yard Requirements, with members in general agreement of a 1-acre minimum lot size but uncertain of a 2-acre maximum. Mr. Tselekis suggested no minimum or maximum for lots starting at 20 acres. Mr. Chang, having arrived at 7:20 p.m., said it is inaccurate to assume that a 20-acre farm field could not be viable. He read his comments for the zoning committee expressing concerns about a number of areas of the pre-draft and submitted them in writing.

In response, Ms. Zahler said the concept of conservation easements has not been discussed. She also explained the Committee's process in crafting a pre-draft of zoning updates to hand off to stakeholder boards and committees, allowing at least four to six weeks for review and for

submission of comments. She added that consultants are not completed with rewrites, and the draft is far from completed.

Committee members continued their review of the zoning document. There was a brief discussion regarding number of subdivisions and size of fragmented lots. Ms. Thomas reiterated her concern that the criteria, as written, does not address rural living or instances where a property owner with 5 to 7 acres would like a smaller, hobby farm with two horses, for instance.

Mr. Hawkes felt the document has gotten too complicated. He noted the Town has averaged under 12 housing permits per year over the last 20 years, and, over an 11-year period, there have been roughly 100 subdivisions. He estimated there are roughly 457 Town lots that could be subdivided. What is the Steering Committee planning for? He said he is concerned about the whole notion of what the Committee is doing, adding he would like to rethink what the Committee is anticipating. Economic forces are at play, and the scarcity of water alone would limit potential for suburban sprawl in the Town.

In response, Ms. Ritter said growth in the Town will likely change, considering there is a housing need throughout Tompkins County, Trumansburg is a good school district, and a large majority of Ithaca workers commute in from outside the county. The Town does need to plan because it is a desirable place to live. She said she supports doing something to help limit the amount of subdivisions in ag areas. Ms. Cail said federal purchase of development rights is another tool at the Committee's disposal in order to protect farm land.

Asked for his thoughts on fragment lot size minimums and maximums, Mr. Hawkes said he liked 150-foot minimum road frontage and 1-acre minimum lot sizes but disagreed with the notion of a maximum fragment lot size. Allowing farmers to subdivide off, say, five 1-acre lots in order to raise capital would keep that farmer in business and preserve the activity. Limiting a farmer's ability to do that raises the long-term potential of eliminating ag, since living in Town is becoming more expensive. Ms. Ritter said land in the Town may become less expensive if zoning parameters are eased. After more deliberations, Ms. Kiley proposed the following criteria to be sent to participating subcommittees for review: 1-acre minimum fragment lot sizes, no maximum fragment lot size, and a limit on the number of subdivisions divisible by 10. Mr. Hawkes said he favored the proposal. Ms. Thomas expressed concern with issuing a draft that is not fully flushed out.

Mr. Tseleki asked for reasons why the Committee would want to limit subdivisions. In response, Ms. Kiley said it is a concern of road frontage being chipped away with each year and holes within zoning regarding road construction in subdivided areas.

In summary, Ms. Zahler proposed relaying the draft subdivision parameters to subcommittees once the draft is complete and requesting feedback and strategies for preserving farmland and limiting roadside sprawl. The Committee reached a consensus in favor of Ms. Zahler's proposal.

After a brief discussion, Committee members were in agreement that agricultural subdivisions were no longer being considered. Ms. Kiley said she did not see it as a tool that is handy or needed at this point.

Ms. Kiley MADE the MOTION to remove agricultural subdivisions from Committee consideration, and Mr. Hawkes SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was unanimously carried.

Ms. Zahler said the Committee's next meeting on October 26 will focus on whether or not to have a maximum size on fragmented lots. Ms. Kiley reminded the Committee of the project timeline – that draft language for both the Jacksonville and Ag portions is due by the end of the year, with June 2017 being the intended target date for enacting the zoning updates. If it appears more time may be needed, she will need to work with NYSERDA on an extension as soon as possible.

Privilege of the Floor

Mr. Reynolds laid out several concerns with the zoning-update process and outlined intended goals from the Comprehensive Plan and Ag and Farmland Protection Plan that have not been enacted.

Ms. Marino reminded the Committee that the Comprehensive Plan and Ag and Farmland Protection Plan are guiding documents, representing years of work and countless public hearings. Some of things mentioned tonight are in complete contrast to what is laid out in those plans. She urged the Committee to keep the broader Town goals in mind. She also disagreed with the thought that the Town does not have potential for housing development.

Ms. Cail said the Ag Committee has been running some of the suggested zoning updates by Ag and Markets and getting comments on subdivisions. They have concerns about the emphasis on open space in the purpose statement and on the process for developing the draft. She expressed concern about water availability, and urged the Committee to look more carefully at the history of development in the Town.

Ms. Kiley MADE the MOTION to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Tseleki SECONDED the MOTION. The motion was unanimously carried.

Meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Louis A. DiPietro II on October 14, 2016.