

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, March 24, 2010
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
615 WILLOW AVENUE

MINUTES

Members Present – Martha Armstrong, Dick Coogan, Rick Couture, Fernando de Aragon, Dave Herrick, Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Pam Mackesey, Gay Nicholson, Monika Roth, Scott Whitham, Andy Zepp

Members Absent – Mina Amundsen, John Gutenberger, John Spence, Fred Wilcox

Member Excused -- Peter Penniman

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

Call to Order & Changes to the Agenda – The meeting was called to order at 9:11 AM by the Chair, Fernando de Aragon. There were no changes to the agenda.

Countywide Inter-Municipal Water and Sewer Feasibility Study – Martha Armstrong provided background, saying the study was funded through a NYS grant. It served two purposes: as recommended in the housing studies to find out where housing would be supported by infrastructure, and as recommended by the Economic Development Collaborative to find out where commercial centers are worthy of reinvestment. The Health Department and Tompkins County Council of Governments also supported the study. Now the work is almost complete. They held one public meeting for discussion of the data, and most of the people who attended were members of TCCOG.

Dave Herrick said data was gathered by John Andersson and T.G.Miller in interviews with municipal officials and system operators about needs and capacity. Interviews will be part of the record. The examination was principally of rural systems, but info on urban systems will be included in the report. A handout was provided on where systems exist, which shows infrastructure can support robust, small areas for more than 6,000 dwelling units outside the City.

Another aspect is readiness to support planned growth with existing infrastructure. Many areas are ready today or will be within five years. The maps also show 5-10 year, 10-15 year, and >15 year readiness. Dave gave some examples of readiness barriers: Trumansburg has a moratorium by the Health Department on installing new water mains until a backup water system is arranged, and Newfield has adequate water but needs further sewer. Part of the report recommendations will be how the areas in the 5-10 year readiness areas can become prepared. The report will include a map of all infrastructure, but is focused on areas suitable for development.

In the discussion period, Dave said development would still need specific piping, but the capacity is adequate. Ed Marx stressed this report was undertaken for Comp Plan development concepts, and he pointed out the study shows we have capacity for our needs without going to major expansions. Pam Mackesey said she has heard opposition to the study from some who felt it would stress expansion and increase taxes to pay for new infrastructure. Monika Roth said she attended a Lansing agriculture meeting, and some present felt if water and sewer in South Lansing were adequate, it would help protect agriculture in North Lansing. Ed said the study shows no major conflict – we won't need to use ag land or sensitive areas to meet housing needs. By planning development locations, we can protect ag and sensitive areas. But if the community won't agree on this, housing will spread off the infrastructure. Gay Nicholson asked if there is pressure from developers, and Ed said he is seeing good discussion in Dryden, and Ulysses will be facing similar issues. Peter Stein asked if the size of the dots on the page 4 map were significant. Martha Armstrong said the dots represent one-mile in diameter, which is considered a walkable community, but ag land would be excluded. That will be added to the map key. Martha Robertson asked how many new units are located off infrastructure, and Martha Armstrong said 70%, based on permit numbers. Joan Jurkowich said numbers were similar in TCPD checks recently on development in villages. Martha Robertson pointed out some areas with infrastructure are not eager to become more dense, and Ed said there is a density model in the housing strategy. He pointed out concepts for rural clusters create other problems while conserving land. Martha Robertson asked about shared septic systems, and according to Dave they become public facilities regulated by NYS.

Development Focus Areas – Material was provided with the agenda, and Joan Jurkowich asked members to review the schedule and provide suggestions for outreach. Suggestions included interact with all municipalities, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Landlord Association. Ed pointed out the focus areas within the two corridor studies

were identified by traffic engineers during analysis. He can't do better than those professionals, who used the standards of their industry. Andy Zepp suggested presenting these concepts as preferable to the alternatives. He feels the public doesn't understand the need for focus areas because sprawl is still so piecemeal here that they don't identify it. There was much discussion on the need for all municipalities to discuss this and know what their neighbors are doing and how those actions can impact them. Dick Coogan stressed that smaller municipalities don't have professional staff, and their volunteers need training and interaction. Ed suggested people not underestimate how well our municipalities are functioning, though. Comp Plans are happening at the local level, and TCPD communicates with municipalities, although mostly through muni staff. Martha Robertson suggested a list serve, and said if municipalities don't buy into reasons to densify, this work is useless. Dooley Kiefer suggested involving bankers.

Commissioner's Report – Ed Marx reported that, through Martha Robertson's involvement, he was invited to speak at NYS Association of County's discussion on Marcellus Shale drilling. There seem to be two camps – get drilling or not ready. A DEC representative was also present. The Town of DeWitt has enacted a moratorium, and Camillus had a public meeting on a moratorium. Maybe it is not within their authority, but they are taking a stand. Martha Robertson said a Cornell professor is taking up Ed's concept of emissions from drilling negating the benefits of using natural gas. ■ The first round of Housing Fund awards has been announced, and Ed said the program seems very successful. ■ TCPD is supporting legislation at the state level for PACE. There is a lot of interest in Tompkins County in property assessed clean energy. The only opposition he has heard is from the banking industry. ■ The City's dredging committee is getting closer to selecting a dewatering site. ■ The County budget process appears to be shifting to program based evaluation. At some point, Ed will share more information on TCPD programs with PAB for discussion.

Approval of Minutes from January 2010 – Minutes were moved by Pam Mackesey, seconded by Martha Armstrong. One change was announced in the Commissioner's Report – "Last night, Ed watched a program on **PBS network television news** about confined animal feeding operations, which he found of interest." Amended minutes passed by voice vote.

Announcements – Gay Nicholson said Sustainable Tompkins will take on some Marcellus Shale education and research of impacts. Cooperative Extension also has a grant application in for similar programs. ST is trying to learn about all the efforts that are going on regarding Marcellus shale. A three-day conference for Bioneers is planned for October, and the Saturday meetings will focus on planning efforts, so Gay seeks ideas for that. Dick Coogan pointed out that Census forms were, once again, not sent to any post office boxes. This is a problem, especially for Jacksonville where there is only POBox delivery. Pam Mackesey will work with him on this issue. Andy Zepp recognized Rick Couture for leading a collaborative effort in developing a protection easement with partners Finger Lakes Land Trust, Ithaca College, and the Town of Ithaca. The easement will go to the Town in five years. Scott Whitham announced he will be speaking at a historic preservation conference in Buffalo and Syracuse, and will provide brochures next month. Fernando de Aragon had handouts on Way 2 Go for the new ride sharing on-line program. He said they are working to involve businesses, and pointed out Ithaca CarShare has business accounts now, too.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department
Minutes adopted by PAB on April 28, 2010.

Membership:

Mina Amundsen, At-Large	Pam Mackesey, Planning Committee
Martha Armstrong, Economic Dev.	Gay Nicholson, At-Large
Dick Coogan, Local Planning (non-urban)	Peter Penniman, Business
Rick Couture, Education	Monika Roth, Agriculture
Fernando de Aragon, Transportation	John Spence, Housing
John Gutenberger, Education	Scott Whitham, Cultural & Historic Pres.
Dave Herrick, Facilities/Infrastructure	Fred Wilcox, Local Planning (urban)
Dooley Kiefer, Associate Member	Andy Zepp, Land Pres./Public Land Mgmt.