

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, June 27, 2012
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM
125 East Court Street

MINUTES

Members Present – Mina Amundsen, Martha Armstrong, Todd Bittner, Will Burbank, Dick Coogan, Sue Cosentini, David Kay, Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Kathy Schlather, John Spence, Rob Steuteville, Andy Zepp

Members Excused – Michelle Berry, Fernando de Aragon, John Gutenberger, Scott Whitham

Member Absent – Rick Couture, Dave Herrick, Gay Nicholson, Monika Roth

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

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 9:06 AM by the Chair, Mina Amundsen. There were no changes to the agenda.

Development Focus Areas Strategy – Joan Jurkowich reported that staff met with public officials and held three public meetings. Changes since the last time PAB saw the Strategy:

- Overview was edited to address some of the comments received;
- Development Focus Areas – While Freeville was updating their comprehensive plan, residents were surveyed about their interest in adding public water and public sewer. The majority of respondents said they did not want the infrastructure, so Freeville was moved to the “rural center” category.
- Density recommendations – After staff met jointly with City of Ithaca and Town of Ithaca comprehensive planning committees, net density goals were changed to provide more variety:
 - 20 or more units/acre in and around downtown and collegetown,
 - 10-20 units/acre near other commercial areas, and
 - 5-10 units/acre for other areas. The Strategy does not provide maps or specific areas for these recommendations.

Staff might lean toward establishing a minimum requirement of 20 units/acre in the densest areas if asked to comment, but this also relates to density of neighboring parcels, so leaving wiggle room for context is preferred.

Moving forward is largely in the hands of local governments, but recommendations can include density; design; changes to development recommendations; adhering to the recommendations of the TCCOG infrastructure recommendations; acknowledging the importance of having connections within and between the Focus Areas; encouraging connections to nearby developed areas by walkways, bikeways and trails; and controlling sprawl through zoning and perhaps transfer of development rights program as well as not extending infrastructure. The TCPD budgets for 2012 and 2013 include modest funds to help municipalities implement the strategies. Most attendees of the public meetings were supportive. The Strategy is grounded in the Comprehensive Plan, but won't become part of it unless it is incorporated when the Comp Plan is updated. Existence of a county strategy can be useful for municipalities that are applying for grant funding. It can help some municipalities move forward with ideas they have included in their comprehensive plans.

There was discussion on how development design can help meet density goals, and that Downtown Ithaca Alliance works with developers in and near the core of downtown. The units-per-acre recommendations are not meant to be for every parcel, but a mix will provide density that accommodates the population.

It was moved by Martha Armstrong to recommend that the Tompkins County Legislature adopt the Strategy, seconded by Andy Zepp and passed by unanimous voice vote.

Conservation Strategy – Leslie Schill reported on this Strategy, which had also been part of the recent public meetings. She provided a handout of the proposed eleven key actions, which were primarily based on research for the Natural Features Focus Areas and Agricultural Focus Areas. Farms were identified by land use. A third of active ag land is leased within the Agricultural Focus Areas. Some renters have lost acreage when the owner sold the property. Purchase of Development Rights proposals take a long time to draft, so we need to be ready when funding is announced. There is no PDR funding this year. There is no implication that TCPD will manage the key actions. Martha Armstrong pointed out it seems the Agriculture Plan developed by Cooperative Extension would be a third partner to the Development Focus Areas Strategy and Conservation Strategy. Ed Marx said TCPD and CCE have applied for funding for an update to the Ag Plan. Todd Bittner said overall we are missing preservation and updates for natural areas. People consider issues static, and we are not capturing changes, updating the Unique Natural Areas Inventory, or protecting against long-term degradation. We need a long-range strategy to address good conservation, including invasive species awareness. Andy Zepp agreed with Todd, saying we should not be silent on this huge management issue and need to commit to staying on top of conservation. Ed said, on the management side, it is difficult to know how to deal with it. PDR projects have a specified management plan. If property goes to State Parks, FLLT, or municipalities, we expect that agency to manage the property. Andy suggested raising the Conservation Partners program to a higher level. Todd pointed out hydrilla infestation of Cayuga Inlet as an example of management that is not landowners' obligation. Management will be added to Strategy text and some of the key actions bullets, and the document will return to PAB for endorsement.

Biggs Request for Proposals – Ed provided an update. A resolution will go to the County Legislature to authorize release of the RFP. Ninety days will probably be given for response deadline.

Commissioner's Report – Ed Marx reported he and Katie Borgella attended a Climate Showcase Communities workshop in Wisconsin. A public relations speaker provided examples of terrible website jobs. The speaker warned that people get a storyline into their minds that can block facts. ▪ The regional Rural Initiative Fund is now open for applications. ▪ The public meeting was held to present the Energy Road Map work by interns. Reports are on the TCPD website. ▪ The Blueway Trail RFP has been released. ▪ There was a joint meeting of the Oversight and Project committees for the Housing Fund on ways to make the fund more effective. One point raised was whether or not they should be more proactive in selecting land and then offer it for developers. ▪ Ed reminded members of the comment period on the Cleaner Greener Southern Tier draft goals, which ends Friday 6/29.

Development Focus Areas Strategy Implementation Funds – There is \$15,000 set aside for 2012 and the same amount for 2013. When the Strategy is endorsed, staff wants to move right into this. Joan said some municipalities are ready to jump into projects. She is leaning toward meeting with municipal officials and letting them make proposals. There was discussion on the best way for PAB to interact. Five priorities are in the Strategy, and collaboration among municipalities is possible, too. David Kay, Mina Amundsen and Rob Steuteville volunteered to work on the committee.

Approval of March Minutes – Draft minutes of March 28, 2012 were moved by Martha Armstrong, seconded by Sue Cosentini and approved by unanimous voice vote. Final minutes are available on the Planning Department website: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/ under Advisory Boards.

Announcements – John Spence asked for a quick update on Kingdom Farm in the Town of Lansing. Ed said boundary issues have been resolved.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:29 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department
Minutes adopted by PAB on August 22, 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 Gutenberg, 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.