

**PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Wednesday, July 28, 2010**  
**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
**615 WILLOW AVENUE**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present** – Mina Amundsen, Martha Armstrong, Dick Coogan, Rick Couture, Fernando de Aragon, John Gutenberger, Dave Herrick, Gay Nicholson, Monika Roth, John Spence, Andy Zepp

**Members Absent** -- Pam Mackesey, Scott Whitham, Fred Wilcox

**Others Present** – Joan Jurkowich (Planning Dept.), Ed Marx (Commissioner of Planning & PW), Liz Walker (EcoVillage at Ithaca), Kathy Wilsea (TCPD)

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

**EcoVillage at Ithaca (EVI) TREE Development and EPA Climate Showcase Communities Grant** – Liz Walker provided two slide shows on EcoVillage. She began with background on EVI, saying it takes a whole systems approach that includes land and water use; green buildings and alternative energy; organic food; on-site jobs; and educational outreach. Best practices include conserving 90% of the land for green space, two organic farms, co-housing, energy efficiency with passive solar design, on-site businesses, and educational opportunities. The Third Residential EcoVillage Experience (TREE) is fully subscribed, although building has not begun yet.

The co-housing model has a balance of privacy and community interaction, common space, pedestrian streets, and cooperative decision-making. Liz pointed out that the pedestrian streets make a big social difference. EVI currently has 100 adults and 60 kids, ages 1 to 95. The green building concepts provide passive solar, super insulation, local materials, and minimal waste. EVI buildings use 40-50% less gas than typical Northeast homes. EVI emphasizes education. They began with ponds and trails, and have added some pavement for handicapped residents.

Moving on to the TREE sketch plan, Liz said the goal is to design for aging in place, with affordability and accessibility. A German technique for passive house design with massive insulation, airtight shell, and heat recovery ventilators provides a residence that body heat and appliance heat usually keep at a comfortable temperature. They are also checking out a loop utility layout and innovations with water bio-retention. Liz has been Director for 19 years, and says they keep pushing for new ideas.

Ed Marx said Planning Department staff was impressed by the plan when it was submitted for site plan review. It is a model for density, affordability, and power systems. Staff was aware of funding opportunities through the Climate Showcase Communities, and contacted Liz about working together on an application, which was recently submitted. The goal is to show how TREE and EVI can become models for municipal codes and design. Together with the Aurora Dwelling Circle, which is an infill urban project in the City of Ithaca, and maybe the vacant Biggs property in the Town of Ithaca, an RFP would ask for a project with these principles that would result in a regional and local education program. Ed finds this process very exciting. Liz said EVI is also excited by the intention of being able to work on this. Gay Nicholson pointed out that the City's Southwest Park is a property that may develop with the same principles.

Andy Zepp asked what the basic barriers have been – codes, lack of awareness? Liz said all of these. People are afraid to live so densely, and question whether they would have privacy. EVI has privacy in homes, and a sense of community just outside your door. Many people “get it” as soon as they see it, and EVI calls itself a living laboratory. Wider acceptance of the concepts would require specific building techniques and workforce excellence. When EVI began, it was only one of 30 American neighborhoods like this. The concept cuts resources tremendously (up to 80%) and is seen as the wave of the future. Ed said Sue Cosentini is documenting achievements as the Aurora Dwelling Circle is constructed. Liz passed around a flyer on the

Aurora Dwelling Circle, which she characterized as taking the EVI model to an urban setting, with jobs nearby in the City. Gay said people are used to the density of the City, but it is a cultural shift to get others to live more densely and share resources. Fernando commented we need to make urban living an attractive option. Mina Amundsen said we need to give people a sense of spaciousness to use this model in rural areas. Liz stated parking was a huge issue in planning of TREE. EVI residents typically car pool, ride bikes, and take TCAT (it's a half mile walk to the TCAT stop on Rt. 79). They helped organize Ithaca CarShare, then didn't use their assigned vehicle enough to keep it. They expect to get Ithaca CarShare back when TREE opens.

Ed said the Climate Showcase Community grant application tries to parallel our Development Focus Areas with EcoVillage at Ithaca, Aurora Dwelling Circle, and development of the Biggs property. John Gutenberger asked what kind of on-site businesses exist at EVI, and Liz said they have eight offices with computer professionals, writers, therapists, educators, and cooperative living has produced child care, gardeners and housecleaners. She noted it is difficult to achieve mixed use, and they had to work hard with the Town of Ithaca to get zoning for the businesses. Dick Coogan said he sees the Town of Ulysses going in the other direction with minimum lot size of five acres, and he can't get them to look at how to cluster. Ed noted the Development Focus Areas looks at clustering in villages in Ulysses, which Mina encouraged as being worth examining. Liz said when people see it happening, they can open their minds to it – there is power in example.

**Sustainable Communities Development Grant Application and Resolution of Support** – Joan Jurkowich has been working on this grant application. She said the resolution lacks specifics because the application is not fully developed yet. She said our advantage is that we are already partly there, so are ready to become a model. Mina suggested mentioning that it coordinates efforts of municipalities, land trusts, and the university. Gay thought “energy analysis” should be “climate impact analysis”, and Joan said she would check the term used in the HUD definitions. Some items will also be in the Development Focus Areas. One participant in a Development Focus Areas public meeting provided an idea for shared water/sewer. This will be checked out with the Health Department for feasibility in New York State. Ed said there has been reluctance due to the complexity of failure issues. Joan said Vermont had some shared septic systems, and lots of experience with them. There were no failures while she lived in Vermont. John Gutenberger asked about use of the term “regional”, and Joan said the County is a region under HUD, and Ed suggested addition of a Whereas clause in the resolution that the County meets the definition in this case. Ed said the scenarios might be changed to more closely match those used in the Town of Ithaca/Cornell Transportation GEIS, such as high growth, growth, and no growth, with gas drilling situations added. There would be different timelines for different scenarios, especially if gas drilling proceeds here, or peak oil becomes a factor. It is difficult to put exact numbers on these, but Ed said some communities are now doing 100-year plans. The resolution was moved by Dick Coogan, seconded by Rick Couture, and passed by unanimous voice vote.

**Finalize Guidelines for Capital Reserve Fund** – Ed said the interim guidelines were established while we were waiting to finish the conservation plans. These are now complete and incorporated into the changes proposed. John Gutenberger asked for an example of use to protect a scenic view. Ed said viewsheds have been defined, and use of the grant might be to aid in acquisition of the property or might result in an easement on a property. Gay Nicholson said there are many such places in the Finger Lakes. There was also discussion on how it could be used to protect agriculture, such as covering transaction costs for a property donation that would protect prime soils. This is a small fund, and Ed pointed out it wouldn't be enough to cover PDR closing costs. The body does mention prime agricultural soils. Guideline amendments moved by Gay Nicholson, seconded by Dick Coogan and passed by unanimous show of hands.

**TCPD Budget** – Ed said it's another tough year, with the County asking for budget cuts and the State dictating higher fringe costs. TCPD will lose the equivalent of  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a staff position. He proposes to cover this by reducing staff hours, in a combination not ironed out yet. This will result in program changes, and these are the proposals being put forward by the Department: municipal planning assistance would be paid 100% by the municipality (currently is 50/50), 239 development reviews will only provide comments on those points that have significant impact, analysis of census data will not be provided (inquiries will be referred to the Census website), and staff would only get involved with tax foreclosures later in the process and review only properties that are going to auction after the redeem date has been reached. These programs are being put in as over target requests so that County legislators understand what work is involved and may choose to fund any individually.

Rollover has been requested to continue the stream corridor program, complete funding for the gas drilling position for one year, and have EMC conduct the Unique Natural Areas update. County Administration has asked for clarity on what proposed cuts will mean and what options are available. TCPD is trying to keep Comprehensive Plan action items, and maybe transfer the homeownership program to Better Housing for Tompkins County and eliminate TCPD's role. County Administration is recommending a staff person be added, funded by room tax dollars, to work on tourism. This would not affect other cuts, as the funding and job go together. Joan added that Ed's role might change concerning acting as dual Commissioner of Planning and Public Works, eliminating the PW portion, and this may cost TCPD to cover him full time again. As funding of our over target requests would mean deeper cuts elsewhere, Ed feels these OTRs are unlikely. The rollover projects are more possible. Martha Armstrong voiced concerns about not providing Census analysis. Joan said, beginning with the 2000 Census, information has been accessible online, and Ed pointed out the 2010 Census is just a head count.

**Approval of Minutes from June 23, 2010** – Katie Borgella, who had given the presentation on the 2020 Energy Plan in June, had provided some suggested changes to the draft minutes. Dick Coogan moved the minutes with Katie's amendments, seconded by Mina Amundsen and passed by show of hands.

**Commissioner's Report** – Ed Marx reported EPA recently published a Rural Smart Growth guide, which highlights the Ithaca Farmers Market. Kathy Wilsea will email information on that to members.

**Announcements** – Monika Roth said the public can vote again this year for the best farmers market on the American Farmland Trust website. Fernando de Aragon said the RideShare grant funds finally came through, and he will be getting the paperwork signed and spreading the word that the program is up and running. Monika also reported that Cooperative Extension received a Community Food Assessment grant. An intern is organizing baseline data. Focus groups will be organized. The intention is to come up with ways to address needs and gaps, and the process will take 12 to 18 months. There is interest locally in forming a food policy council, and Monika expects this grant to become a step toward that.

**Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 10:43 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
Tompkins County Planning Department

Minutes adopted by PAB on September 22, 2010.

**Membership:**

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