

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, August 24, 2011
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM
125 East Court Street

MINUTES

Members Present – Mina Amundsen, Martha Armstrong, Sue Cosentini, Fernando de Aragon, John Gutenberger, Dave Herrick, Pam Mackesey, John Spence, Rob Steuteville, Scott Whitham, Andy Zepp

Members Excused -- Todd Bittner, Dick Coogan

Member Absent – Rick Couture, David Kay, Dooley Kiefer (Associate Member), Gay Nicholson, Monika Roth, Kathy Schlather

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

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by the Chair, Mina Amundsen. Addition to agenda: November/December meeting date will be established when minutes are addressed.

Development Focus Areas – Joan Jurkowich reported Planning Department staff met with City of Ithaca and Town of Ithaca staff on separate occasions to talk about the maps and concepts. Both municipalities brought up the disconnect perceived in the prior map, and the need for tying the outer circles and the city. Joan reviewed the new, urban growth boundary concept on a wall map. Instead of circles, these are more like amoebas developed after discussion with municipal staff. Joan recently met with Sue Ritter and JoAnn Cornish together to review this map. It uses protected open space as boundaries. It factors in existing water and sewer service, TCAT service hourly on weekdays, existing development and open space. The peripherals were decided by existing density and capacity. Discussions will also be scheduled with the villages of Lansing and Cayuga Heights. Ed Marx said we want to let the City and Town of Ithaca set their own targets. Our Development Focus Areas strategy will point out opportunities, like walkability. There was discussion on whether members preferred a map that seems so specific or one that is more conceptual. Ed pointed out the Town of Ithaca is basically drawing these boundaries in their comprehensive plan process now, too. Andy Zepp voiced concern about the lines shifting out from an urban core. Pam Mackesey said she would hate for the focus to become specific boundaries. Joan pointed out these ideas came from the City and Town. TCPD wants to have specific enough lines so we can say in the future some proposal does or does not match the strategy goals. Also, it is not possible to wait for all of the municipalities to complete comprehensive plans, as there is always some municipality with a plan being developed. Ed pointed out the City and Town are in sync. Accommodating their ideas for the map gives the City and Town something to show that they are working regionally. TCPD will meet with the Town of Ithaca comprehensive plan committee tomorrow night.

Rob Steuteville asked about criteria to exclude some of the suburban areas. Ed said the colored areas have the density to support walkability and existing infrastructure can support dense development. Areas outside would not support extending infrastructure. TCAT would welcome a map that they can use as a guide for levels of service. The strategy would also encourage only expanding sewer and water services within the boundaries. These are factors in public efficiency. The targeted areas can accommodate our housing needs if developed for density standards, including infill. Joan said working within the target areas also provides opportunities to establish clusters of commercial activity. Ed pointed out connections might be improved from areas outside the clusters to the clusters, such as through use of bike runs. A lot can occur outside the focus area lines, it would just be a different type of development. Staff believes there is a market for what would develop within the focus areas.

John Spence pointed out that he knows, as a developer, that it gets messier on the edge. BHTC is getting opposition/pushback from neighbors in the Village of Lansing, and may not be able to proceed with their planned housing project. One of the village residents said at a public meeting that “We don’t need to solve

Tompkins County's problems". Ed said there are lots of local issues. There is an incentive concept being discussed at IDA. Andy said concepts are also needed to discourage development like apartment buildings at the four corners of the county.

TCPD staff will be discussing concepts and maps with the other municipalities where focus areas are located.

Finger Lakes Regional Rural Revitalization Initiative – Ed provided handouts of a map and background information. The ten counties in the shaded area for the Task Force have met twice. They have discussed the concept outlined in the background handout in terms of our land-based economy and how to make it vital, productive, and more sustainable. Components are agriculture, forests, tourism/outdoor recreation, and renewable energy.

Ed also serves on the Agriculture Working Group of the Governor's Regional Economic Development Council. There were many farmers in attendance at the meeting yesterday, and they were enthused. They see ways to diversify agriculture and forests, but need resources to make this happen and hope for a financing assistance program. New technologies can extend the growing season, and regional processing could keep crops in the local markets. There is also an energy subgroup focusing on efficiency and biomass. The REDC Tourism Working Group hasn't made as much progress. The Governor has set aside \$100 million for energy efficiency.

Pam Mackesey said she spent a lot of time in Steuben County last year, where she found lack of zoning in Steuben municipalities has led to renewable energy taking over farms in ways that produce friction. Ed said wind power can be supported if it is well planned and complementary to existing land use. Andy Zepp said *someone* will hate this. Ed said maybe we can examine use of small turbines on farms. The longevity of the REDCs is fuzzy, but Ed understands all state grant funds will be implemented in some manner consistent with the regional plans. Back to the Task Force, Ed said the interest of all parties shows collaboration, and they are talking about the heart of New York. He will be included in a meeting next week with Farm Bureau officials.

Concerning the money set aside for energy efficiency programs in the REDCs, Ed said projects will need to show how they expect to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and 5% of the fund is for plan development, and the remaining 95% is for implementation. Ed noted there were three communities in New York that received EPA Climate Smart Communities grants – one in each of the three regions in the Task Force. This shows we have technology and leadership.

Commissioner's Report – Ed Marx reported TCPD submitted target budgets to the County Administrator, who will make his recommendations to the County Legislature next week and provide a presentation to the Legislature on 9/6. The scenarios represent 7.4% and 11.2% reductions, and either would affect staff hours. Ed pointed out TCPD is again facing erosion of their budget and staffing, and that has been steady for ten years. One impact is the department is not applying for grants because we couldn't staff a project.

Concerning the Sustainability Center, staff is working to develop use of campus efforts by pursuing internship programs with Cornell and Ithaca College now. This is a pilot project that would then become a component of work by staff at the center. TCPD is also working with T C Solid Waste, the Sciencenter, and Museum of the Earth on display concepts. Display content would come from students.

Approval of Minutes from June 22, 2011 – Ed suggested a change on page 3: CDBG was changed to Energy Block Grant. Minutes moved by Fernando de Aragon, seconded by Rob Steudeville and accepted with the one change. Final minutes are available on the Planning Department website: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/ under Advisory Boards. Kathy Wilsea announced she has been interacting with Debbie Teeter on steps necessary for adoption of the 8-year review of Ag District 1. CCE staff needs to meet with PAB before December 6th, when it will probably go to the Legislature. November 30 was selected for the last meeting of 2011.

Member Reports/Announcements – Andy provided a handout on the Finger Lakes Trails & Greenways Conference and copies of the newest FLLT Land Steward publication. Fernando announced there will also be an Upstate Transportation Forum, with Ithaca CarShare and NYSERDA among the sponsors. Mina said there is a student-operated Farmer’s Market on campus every Thursday from 11-3 through September. The market features produce from Cornell’s Dilmun Hill Student Organic Farm and local farms. Fernando reported the RFP for a regional transportation study received three proposals. Ed reported on three key studies that are wrapping up: (1) The County is partnering with Downtown Ithaca Alliance on a housing study, (2) The County is partnering with DIA and TCAT on an evaluation of the feasibility of a transit spine connecting the West End of Ithaca to IC and CU. This would mean students would not need a car or bus transfers to get to the West End. (3) Staff member Chuck Thomas is completing a housing analysis. This is an update on the Housing Needs Analysis. It will be presented to housing organizations and made public. John Spence reported BHTC is hearing that all NYS grants will be tied to the groundwork of the Regional Economic Development Councils. But he has been working with Paul Mazarella, and they are finding that our problems differ from the rest of the Southern Tier. For example, we aren’t struggling with foreclosures. Ed warned that ideas for plans must be submitted within two weeks. The Downtown Revitalization and Community Development group has Gary Ferguson serving. There is no housing group. Andy said he is very concerned regarding open space, especially if multiple regions are silent on the topic in their plan development. Ed suggested he contact Fred Bonn and Tim Joseph, as they are on the Tourism committee.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary
Tompkins County Planning Department

Minutes adopted by PAB on September 28, 2011.

Membership:

Mina Amundsen, At-Large	Dooley Kiefer, Associate Member
Martha Armstrong, Economic Dev.	Pam Mackesey, Planning Committee
Todd Bittner, Natural Environment	Gay Nicholson, At-Large
Dick Coogan, Local Planning (non-urban)	Monika Roth, Agriculture
Sue Cosentini, Business	Kathy Schlather, Human Services
Rick Couture, Education	John Spence, Housing
Fernando de Aragon, Transportation	Rob Steuteville, Built Environment Design
John Gutenberg, Education	Scott Whitham, Cultural & Historic Pres.
Dave Herrick, Facilities/Infrastructure	Andy Zepp, Land Pres./Public Land Mgmt.
David Kay, Local Planning (urban)	