

PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD
Wednesday, September 28, 2011
SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM
125 East Court Street

MINUTES

Members Present – Mina Amundsen, Martha Armstrong, Todd Bittner, Dick Coogan, Sue Cosentini, Fernando de Aragon, John Gutenberger, Dave Herrick, Dooley Kiefer, Pam Mackesey, Kathy Schlather, John Spence, Rob Steuteville, Andy Zepp

Members Excused -- David Kay, Monika Roth

Member Absent – Rick Couture, Gay Nicholson, Scott Whitham

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

Call to Order – The meeting was called to order at 9:05 AM by the Chair, Mina Amundsen. There were no changes to the agenda.

Update on Tompkins County Housing Needs – Ed Marx introduced Planning Dept. staff member Chuck Thomas. Chuck's background is in housing programs in Buffalo and Rochester. This is the first presentation of the draft document to a stakeholder group. Chuck said he has worked in affordable housing programs since 1977. He has found Tompkins County housing to be diverse – instead of like neighborhoods of expensive or affordable housing, Tompkins has affordable housing sprinkled throughout. His task was to look at the existing market, building permits, how much of the housing is affordable, and how does it meet the needs of citizens. A draft report and appendices were provided to members prior to the meeting, and he provided a slide show at the meeting.

Analysis of 2005-2010 was based on building permits and County assessment data. "Affordable" applies to households making 80% of the County's median income. Expenditure of up to 30% of income on housing expenses is considered affordable, but residents with expenses over 30% are considered "cost burdened" and need to make stressful decision. A spring 2011 snapshot was done to provide an inventory of affordable housing, and an index was created, then a detailed analysis of new builds from 2005-2010 was conducted. The Affordable Housing Needs Assessment of 2005 had 875 units shortfall and forecast demand for a total of 3,894 units by 2014. 2,500 units are still needed. This analysis concluded the market will not provide units that are affordable without some assistance from the public sector, community organizations, and local institutions. Chuck reviewed building permit data and how it was compared to historical units. He pointed out this is a draft report and feedback is welcome. It will be taken to other stakeholder groups and municipalities, then made available for public comment. He stressed that if the housing market were left to private developers, the percentage of affordable housing will decrease and would include primarily manufactured housing. A significant amount of Tompkins County's workforce comes in from neighboring counties, so changes to the affordable housing market would benefit those who want to live here and work here.

In the discussion period, Chuck said SROs are listed as multi-family housing. Students show up as households. Martha Armstrong pointed out TCAD specifically look s at families. Chuck said this affordable housing analysis uses family AND household incomes. Comparison charts show clear differences. Ed Marx said the original Affordable Housing Needs Assessment excluded students, but we can guesstimate. Chuck said new information is based on total population Census figures. Some members pointed out the need to check math and provided parallel language in the Conclusions section. Specify when using projections or actual counts. Efforts to show that household incomes are lower than family incomes, even if students are removed, shows the impact of the large number of non-family households in our community.

Mina asked how this will relate to the County Comprehensive Plan steps. Ed said affordable living ties in energy efficiency, transportation, and location. Pam Mackesey said the number of people who live outside

the County and could use public transit show a need for regional planning, and she pointed out we might have adequate housing regionally. Chuck concurred that transit services can affect housing analysis, but most commuters do not use transit. John Spence said he appreciates having information on households vs family incomes, and he provided HUD numbers in a handout, saying 100 to 120% is classic middle class. BHTC likes to help those who would move up a step (if such housing were available) and that would leave the lowest range available for more needy residents. Chuck warned it is not a simple discussion on just income, as there is a limit to income that qualifies for subsidies. He noted subsidized rental is better for some people. Sue Cosentini asked what this analysis is for, and Ed said it is a status of need. It shows where we need to adjust and revisit our efforts. Chuck thanked members for their comments and will provide an update.

Commissioner's Report – Ed Marx reported NYSERDA has a grant round for Regional Sustainability Greenhouse Gas Initiative. TCPD staff met with six other agencies on Monday to discuss this. It has a tight timeframe, and Tompkins County may be the applying municipality for a regional group. ▪ Ed met with City of Ithaca staff re the TIGR II grant application for the Commons rebuilt. It will be revised and resubmitted. ▪ Ed and Town of Ithaca Planner Sue Ritter met with City of Ithaca comprehensive plan consultants, and Ed was pleased at their direction. ▪ The Village of Lansing has agreed to engage TCPD for a small area plan, which will develop maps and background so the Village can hire a consultant. This concerns developable land near Bomax Drive with access limitations. ▪ Members will soon begin hearing about a countywide energy campaign, which is being launched by a group of local agencies to get every household to take at least one action to reduce expenses and increase energy efficiency, pledge to use local food, and/or reduce waste. Schools are involved, too. Katie Borgella is the staff member working on this. ▪ Ed is involved with many conference presentations, including the Upstate Transportation Forum (last week), Upstate APA conference, and gas drilling forum. The History Center has also contacted him, seeking history of Tompkins County involvement in energy issues.

Martha asked about interaction with Southern Tier East Regional Planning & Development Board. Ed said they have hired a new Director, Eric Miller, from Otsego County. Rob Steuteville asked if developing the regional plan involves Smart Growth principles. Ed said yes, but the term doesn't resonate well in the Southern Tier. Terms like "compact" and "energy efficiency" work. It will be challenging to come to agreement on a plan within eight months. Fernando will be included in the transportation model. There was also discussion on the need to connect implementation to mixed use, Complete Streets principles, and tools for the Commons project. Ed said the Commons redesign will become part of a West End-IC-CU connection concept, and is seen as an opportunity for housing development along the West State Street corridor and other potential benefits.

Approval of Minutes from August 24, 2011 – Mina requested a change on page three under Announcements. Amended draft moved by Martha Armstrong, seconded by Fernando de Aragon and accepted by consensus. Final minutes are available on the Planning Department website: www.tompkins-co.org/planning/ under Advisory Boards.

Announcements – Todd Bittner spoke of the Hydrilla emergency in Cayuga Inlet. This could have many consequences, and is the first occurrence of this invasive aquatic species in the Great Lakes watershed. It grows from tubers, fragments, and fall production of turions. An herbicide application is being coordinated by the City of Ithaca and Soil & Water Conservation District. Kathy Wilsea said she has heard reports that it can survive at depths up to 20 feet deep, and Dave Herrick said Bolton Point's intake pipes are placed deeper than that. Dooley Kiefer pointed out New York State has no response program in place for aquatic invasive species.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 10:24 AM.
Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Wilsea, Secretary, Tompkins County Planning Department
Minutes adopted by PAB on November 30, 2011.

Membership:

Mina Amundsen, At-Large
Martha Armstrong, Economic Dev.
Todd Bittner, Natural Environment
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
Pam Mackesey, Planning Committee
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.