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**PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Wednesday, November 30, 2011**  
**SCOTT HEYMAN CONFERENCE ROOM**  
**125 East Court Street**

**MINUTES**

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

**Members Excused** -- John Gutenberger, Gay Nicholson

**Member Absent** – David Kay, Monika Roth

**Others Present** – Katie Borgella (TCPD), 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. The agenda item on Proposed Changes to Agricultural District 1 will occur at a later date, probably January 2012.

**Revised Request for Proposals for Sale/Lease of Biggs Property** – Ed Marx sought agreement from PAB to have this proposal go to PDEQ and the Town of Ithaca, after which it would be released in early 2012 with a deadline for submission being several months after release. The RFP will have many attachments. Ed reviewed how the document has changed since last month's discussion, mainly by changing certain aspects from requirements to qualifying for flexible points. Also added was the County's right to reject any or all proposals. The affordable housing portion of the project can be set aside for a partner. Common amenities are suggested as a way to keep units small. Minimum bid was included, as well as the option to include K House in the project. Provision is now included to defer half of payment for land. All of these points have been discussed with the County Attorney and the County Administrator.

During discussion, it was clarified that more density will be requested for the PDZ, with a goal of 70 units, but that count is up to the Town of Ithaca. The Pedestrian Zone will be included. If a developer intends to turn the affordable portion over to a not-for-profit organization, a letter of commitment from the partner will be required. Ed noted that several local NFPs would be interested. Rob Steudtville brought up the topic of timing and what are the reasons to go forward at this point. Ed said we need to reach the commitment phase within the period of the EPA grant, but the node was identified in the Route 96 Corridor Study, with this site being at the edge of the node. The County has had the intention to do something with this lot for a long time as part of the move of the Health Department out of Biggs B. There are many benefits if it also demonstrates Climate Showcase Communities principles. Any node takes time to develop, and commercial portions won't be supported until residential aspects are a reality.

There have been some discussions with the Town of Ithaca, but nothing specific can happen until the County Legislature sees the RFP. There is probably no unanimous opinion, and Ed conceded it might go in a different direction. Sue Cosentini pointed out it is unfortunate that it is perceived as grant-driven, but it will create the future for the Town and can be utilized effectively. Ed said discussions have occurred with Cayuga Medical Center and other neighbors, and will continue. Fernando de Aragon said it would be nice for the Town to make a commitment to nodal development sooner rather than later. There is a lot of pressure from the public to block West Hill

development due to traffic concerns. A node is needed to make it come together. Ed said this concept has been under discussion with the Town for two or three years. The Town is still not ready to present their draft Comprehensive Plan, and we can't keep waiting for that to happen. This is an opportunity to present a nodal plan to the community and show a concept that is better than the 35 lots that could be developed under current zoning.

Andy Zepp said he understands the need for the timeline, but asked if there are any spots on East Hill. Mina Amundsen said Cornell is in discussion with the Town about East Hill Plaza, and the Town will probably rezone the area after their Comp Plan is updated. She noted planning for West Hill is not perfect, but the EPA project is an opportunity to make something happen. Cornell is trying to have zoning in place in the East Hill Plaza area before they propose anything. Ed said Cayuga Medical Center is going forward with their district energy. This site is right next door, and is an incredible opportunity for district energy. More information on that will be included with the RFP. It would reduce occupancy cost, and will be a factor in discussions with the Town. Rob asked if all three projects (EcoVillage, Aurora Dwelling Circle and Biggs) need to proceed for the grant qualification. Ed said yes, and the grant provides an opportunity for something we always intended to do. The timeline is from the grant, but would have started earlier if the grant hadn't come along. Lagging occurred to match the Town process.

Dooley felt it is necessary to keep the option of leasing the land, and suggested rewording the RFP for sale or lease. She would expect this to be a topic brought up at the County Legislature discussion. Todd Bittner spoke of the open space and stormwater management piece, and pointed out the need to prevent the open space from becoming a retention basin for stormwater. He asked what is the base of "50% stormwater reduction". Also, if walkability is desired, the project needs trails in the open space for recreation and healthy living. Ed said the intent is to minimize the amount of stormwater that needs to be managed. The RFP does require an open space management plan. He thinks the RFP needs to clarify the intent to maintain the forest as a buffer, and Todd suggested adding it to the flexible points system. Fernando said the trails need to connect to adjacent activity centers, too. Ed responded that the RFP states the intention to use money from additional units to connect to a bus stop, which is not on this property.

Martha Armstrong pointed out the RFP doesn't actually encourage 70 units. Ed said that is part of the balancing act with the Town to use half of the land for housing. The site borders suburban area to the north, and those residents are potentially the largest opponents. The site also includes a federal wetland. Rob said it is one thing to draw a half-mile circle, and another to connect. Ed said that is true, and there is no master plan in the community. He will be discussing the hope to add connectivity further with Cayuga Medical Center. Dave Herrick was concerned about segregation of the affordable housing and asked if styles will differ. Ed said they do ask that it be part of the proposal. Due to scale, it can't be very isolated, and it is desirable to have full integration. Returning to stormwater, Dooley agreed it needed a basis of comparison. Ed said that is comparison to current code, and will be clarified. Ithaca Neighborhood Housing Service reports they have actually achieved 50% energy use reduction. Ed will circulate further revisions to PAB. The RFP will be a topic of discussion with the County Legislature and the Town of Ithaca.

**Comments to DEC on dSGEIS on Gas Drilling** – Ed reported PDEQ will be considering several resolutions at a special meeting today. Resolution topics are general comments, affirmation of home rule, and two versions of impacts not mitigated for agriculture, Finger Lakes, or water resources.

**Commissioner's Report** – Ed Marx reported the Planning Department received the County version of the housing demand study yesterday. That information will be examined and shared. ▪ Ed has been invited to a presentation on EPA brownfield development at the Emerson site on South Hill. Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative developed the case statement, which was shared with a consulting firm in DC, and through work with TCAD, the City and Town of Ithaca, a grant application has been submitted. ▪ Recommendations are due to the Governor 12/1 for NYSERDA Regional Sustainability grants. ▪ John Spence asked if Chuck Thomas' housing report (Sept. PAB) will be distributed. Ed said it will be put together with the housing demand study.

**Approval of Minutes from September and October** – Dooley Kiefer made suggestions for amendments to the September minutes. Both sets of minutes were then moved by Dick Coogan and accepted by voice vote. Final minutes are available on the Planning Department website: [www.tompkins-co.org/planning/](http://www.tompkins-co.org/planning/) under Advisory Boards.

**Announcements** – Kathy Wilsea announced Tompkins County Council of Governments will be posting comments on their website from local organizations to DEC on the gas drilling dsGEIS. Pam Mackesey announced a TCCOG-sponsored public hearing on the gas drilling dsGEIS to take place 12/1, 7 to 11 PM at the State Theatre. Transcript will go to DEC. Dooley said the Environmental Management Council is sponsoring an event on dredging, also 12/1, 7 PM at the Library. This is a report from a class at Cornell. Sue said she expects to break ground for the Aurora Dwelling Circle in the spring. She sees this as an education opportunity and welcomes ideas from PAB members. Info is available at the website: [www.newearthliving.net](http://www.newearthliving.net). Ed recommended that members check out the HUD Rural Development report that was recently sent to members by email. Mina announced a Town/Gown event on Saturday, 12/3 at 10 AM.

**Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 10:26 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
Tompkins County Planning Department

Minutes adopted by PAB on March 28, 2012.

**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 Gutenberger, Education	Scott Whitham, Cultural & Historic Pres.
Dave Herrick, Facilities/Infrastructure	Andy Zepp, Land Pres./Public Land Mgmt.
David Kay, Local Planning (urban)	