

**PLANNING ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Wednesday, December 2, 2009**  
**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
**615 WILLOW AVENUE**

**MINUTES**

**Members Present** – Mina Amundsen, Martha Armstrong, Dick Coogan, Rick Couture, Fernando de Aragon, John Gutenberger, Dooley Kiefer (Associate), Pam Mackesey, Gay Nicholson, Monika Roth, John Spence, Scott Whitham, Fred Wilcox

**Members Excused** -- Dave Herrick, Peter Penniman, Andy Zepp

**Others Present** – Joan Jurkowich (Planning Dept.), Ed Marx (Commissioner of Planning & PW), Leslie Schill (TCPD), Kathy Wilsea (TCPD)

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

**Indicators of Success** – Leslie Schill announced members are welcome to contact her with any questions. She provided an overview memo and mentioned that this is the third Indicators report. Indicators are still being developed for the Energy and Greenhouse Gas Emissions element of the Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted in 2008. Some points of interest: The Census states the housing vacancy rate is 1.9%, with a margin of error of plus/minus 2.5%. In Jobs and Business, there are interesting jumps in airport use and hotel room stays. In Rural Resources, the County is losing farm acreage, which is of concern, but only owner-operated farms are tracked. The next Ag Census will provide a new five-year report. The Indicators show an increase in protected land in ag areas, which is from the County's first NYS-funded Purchase of Development Rights project. Protected stream buffer increase is attributable to the County's stream buffer program getting off the ground, and the impact of PDR.

Martha Armstrong encouraged policy review based on emerging trends. Some of the data should be examined more closely to determine what the figures mean. Joan Jurkowich agreed Martha was making a good point, and said methodology will be reviewed this year. Ed Marx said a lot of the Indicators are based on data from Assessment, and its value will be reviewed. Mina Amundson said there are overlaps, and wondered how they could be displayed. Some qualifying text could be added. She found the data useful. Dooley Kiefer questioned the usefulness of turbidity, as it is weather related. Joan agreed, saying there was much discussion when the Indicators were first set up. Turbidity will certainly be part of the review. Martha suggested inserting website links for readers who are looking for more information. Joan said a technical appendix is available, but most people are not interested in that level of information. Monika Roth asked if there is any breakdown on jobs in terms of permanent, part-time, security, service sectors, etc. While there is not much change, she feels workers have relocated.

**Scenic Resources Analysis** – Joan provided handouts of the document that was emailed to members prior to the meeting. She said a few years ago, the County sponsored a study for location of scenic resources. This analysis looks at efforts for protection. She acknowledged many of the points in the document came from Scenic Hudson. When examining protection, we need to consider goals; what can be accomplished by a community, a local government, the state, and the SEQR process; and the uses of zoning, site plan reviews, and overlay districts. Mina pointed out that a balance should be struck between land use and viewshed protection. A community doesn't want an overlay district for viewsheds to interfere with responsible development. She offered the example of when a city looks at nodes that can be enhanced with density and/or height, they don't want large houses on small lots. Dick Coogan said balance is needed. Focus has been on protection of the resource. Ed Marx pointed out this is a tool for municipalities, provided by a county planning agency. Analysis should be part of the municipal comprehensive planning process. This document will end up on the TCPD

website as a resource. Monika asked if there are ways to prevent roadfront development, as it affects the rural landscape. Ed said the document will include clustering and site plan tools.

**Wind Resources Assessment** – Joan reported this differs from other documents in that it tries to avoid analysis and minimize value judgments. This was discussed at PAB more than a year ago. TCPD is trying to provide information for municipalities on where, why, what land resources are appropriate, etc. A developer would still need to conduct a site study. Looking at ag areas moves into value judgment – if it doesn't interfere, it's an additional revenue source for farmers. There was discussion on how specific the maps can be about communication towers, for security purposes. Rick Couture said a study tower went up last year at Ithaca College, and they are still considering going forward. Dick said these maps lead a municipality through the questions they should be asking, so are very useful. Ulysses does occasionally get inquiries, and this would help. Joan pointed out this is for commercial scale operations. Some of our local municipalities have established regulations for individual use. TCPD staff did make recommendations to Enfield, and that information is available for all municipalities. Tompkins County's wind resources are marginal by most standards. But as the technology changes, we may become more viable.

**Commissioner's Report** – Ed Marx reported TCPD recently received data on our web hits, and the Planning Department page has had 2.5 million hits since 2006. In 2009, the average was 1,500 visitors per month, and they came from every state and over 50 countries. The majority used "planning" in their search. The new Health Department building on Brown Road is essentially complete, and the department will probably move in January. The County is in discussions with Cayuga Medical Center on sale of the Biggs B building and site. The property is being subdivided into three pieces: K House, Biggs B, and 26 vacant acres. Marcellus Shale gas drilling topic is taking a lot of staff time. They are developing comments to DEC on the dSGEIS. The more Ed learns, the more he feels there are too many holes in the regulatory process, and DEC shouldn't proceed. The dSGEIS negates the concept of cumulative impacts. The expectation with Marcellus is uniform success, which will provide incentive for continued drilling. The acreage anticipated for drilling use is equivalent to our industrial developed sites, but is not subject to planning or infrastructure regulations. It will provide fragmentation of our landscape, with multiple roads and pipelines, plus storage ponds for flowback. The flowback is a huge issue, as radioactivity, salinity, heavy metals, and carcinogens are not addressed. Each well uses up to 5 million gallons of water, and half comes back to be stored in open ponds with unknown wildlife impacts. Water wells need to be pretested. County health departments are expected to do screening on drinking water complaints, with no resources. There are huge potential impacts to neighbors, as each permit allows drilling for three years, and has continual truck traffic during the drilling period. The carbon emissions will adversely affect our air quality. One hundred wells would produce emissions equal to the current carbon equivalent of our entire County per year, and the life of a well can be 30 years. There is no local authority to deal with these issues. He found it to be a very disheartening document, and warned citizens not to think, "It can't happen". John Gutenberger asked if leases impact assessed land value, and Ed said they do not. Tax would be paid on the value of the produced gas. Pam Mackesey said she has heard a real estate lawyer say leases make property difficult to sell or finance. Ed said he met a DEC staff member who said if it's not in the regs, staff can't require more. The document keeps saying 'should' and 'could', but if it's not in the regulations, it cannot be enforced.

TCPD is aggressively working toward a property assessed clean energy program, with a grant application being prepared. This has strong support from the County Legislature and community, and Ed feels it is very promising. The Housing Fund NOFA was published. An information meeting was held and had good attendance – 22 organizations sent 29 people. Ed presented at a conference on quantifying natural resources at SUNYESF, which he characterized as a brainstorming session. He spoke on information from the APA conference. The History Channel had a contest on cities of the future, and an Atlanta consortium submitted a project on City and Forest. Stormwater system could be opened up to increase tree cover and save money on stormwater treatment. Atlanta needs to separate their sewer and stormwater systems, so it is time to consider new systems.

**Approval of Minutes from** – Dooley Kiefer had suggested some changes prior to the meeting, which were distributed by email. Fred Wilcox moved the amended version, which was seconded by John Gutenberger. John provided one additional change. Minutes passed by voice vote.

**Announcements** – Fred Wilcox said he has applied for reappointment to the Town of Ithaca Planning Board but is not sure he can remain on it, as he has reached the term limit. Monika Roth announced there will be a farmland protection training on December 7 in Geneva. Attendees can get training credit for municipal board qualification. Gay Nicholson said she expects the Marcellus Challenge website to go online next week. Citizens will be able to pledge to reduce use of natural gas, and the site will provide tracking. Fernando de Aragon announced he has received funding for rideshare software, which will be a resource for public use.

**Establish Nominating Committee** – Fernando announced PAB needs a Nominating Committee so election can be held next month for officers. Martha Armstrong volunteered to make contacts and develop a slate.

**Adjournment** – The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Wilsea, Secretary  
Tompkins County Planning Department

Minutes adopted by PAB on January 27, 2010.

**Membership:**

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