

**Town Of Dryden
Planning Board
October 23, 2013, 7PM, Dryden Town Hall**

Members: Joe Laquatra (Chair), Wendy Martin, Martin Hatch, David Weinstein (excused), Thomas Hatfield (excused), Craig Anderson and Heather Maniscalco

Planning Department Representatives: none present

Town Board Liaison: Joseph Solomon (absent)

Business Meeting called to order at 7PM.

1. Reading and approval of Planning Board minutes from August 22, 2013 and October 3, 2013.

C. Anderson moved to approve the minutes from August 22 and M. Hatch moved to approve the minutes for October 3 with the recommended changes. The motions were seconded by Wendy Martin and unanimously approved.

2. Discussion of the Comprehensive Plan

J. Laquatra opened the discussion by ensuring that all members had read the emails from D. Weinstein and J. Nicholson regarding the Comprehensive Plan.

C. Anderson suggested that the group review the goals of the Comprehensive Plan although he admitted that D. Weinstein had done a good job of reviewing them already.

J. Laquatra commented on the fact that with Bruno Schickel's help, the Zoning ordinance was changed to include detached multi-family rental homes. C. Anderson asked if he planned on building in Dryden but Mr. Schickel said that the tax rate structure is significantly different between (the Towns of) Caroline and Dryden.

Mr. Schickel suggested that the Town of Dryden has to concentrate on growing a larger tax base since he doesn't foresee the School District or the Town and County reducing their budgets in a significant manner. He pointed out that the Town is spending more money than it is bringing in and is spending about \$900,000/year from the savings. He recommends increasing the tax base by building business and he suggested that needs to be combined with a decrease in spending.

Mr. Schickel said that if the assessment went up 10% a year (due to new growth, more housing, businesses, industry, etc) rather than 5% a year, long term it will have a huge impact. It will help to reduce the push to increase school taxes as well as giving the Town increased money to do things.

M. Hatch verified that Mr. Schickel is in favor of the assessed values increasing which will lead to an increase in taxes.

H. Maniscalco made the point that her home has a high assessment but she is fairly sure she could not sell it for that price. She also pointed out that there is a significant amount of tax-free property in Dryden. She lives on Etna road and found that within a 2-3 mile range, there are about 15 houses that are tax-free. We need to look at who is moving into town and how many of them are paying taxes. We have to look at how much of a tax base is reasonable or tax those that are normally not taxed (not a legal option but...)

J. Laquatra added that Cornell owns a lot of land in Town that is tax exempt.

Mr. Schickel believes that bringing business into the Town will have a large impact in the future and he wants to encourage the Planning Board to push and support projects moving forward.

J. Laquatra said that is what they did in Varna. The Comprehensive Plan encourages development in the nodes of Varna, Etna and Freeville.

H. Maniscalco said the south side of Ithaca looks burned out, if you start building businesses (buildings) without having a need for them.

W. Martin wondered what Mr. Schickel wants the Planning Board to do to increase development.

Mr. Schickel used Mr. Lucente as an example, he has wanted to build an apartment building, but he was asking for a lot of waivers. M. Hatch pointed out that Mr. Schickel didn't know all the details of the project, but that the Planning Board tried to work with Mr. Lucente.

C. Anderson commented that Bruno has a point. He had his vehicle serviced at Maguire where the technician who serviced his car said something about Dryden not wanting to keep or expand businesses. Craig pointed out that the Planning Board asks a lot of questions of the applicants that are not part of their job (Ie – the FLLS – we asked about asbestos and waste removal) but simply interesting information. Many of the specifics are the responsibility of the Planning Department.

W. Martin agreed and pointed to Varna and the involvement of the Varna population. It makes it more challenging.

M. Hatch said that he has not been on the Planning Board when a proposal that was brought was turned down – not one. He thinks D. Weinstein is right when he said they have evaluated 5 business plans, which led to 5 site plan approvals. What we have here is a deliberative body that has been very reasonable. He says he agrees that we need more money coming into the town. He thinks that people use the argument

about the Planning Board being too strict when in fact what they want to do is cut down standards so there can be wildcatting.

Mr. Schickel said that in the past Ithaca seemed to be against development and used to turn down applications. Now they are encouraging growth since they finally realized that they need a broader tax base.

H. Maniscalco pointed out that Ithaca allowed growth too fast and now the south side of Ithaca is going to waste. Buildings and strip malls are empty. Studies have shown that if more than half of the buildings in a strip mall are empty, people do not go to the other stores that are still there.

C. Anderson said we are not looking for rapid growth. We are in a tight spot; we have been taking money from the savings and at some point that has to stop. We can increase taxes and increase the tax base through development, which is not necessarily housing, but industry or businesses that will build the base.

W. Martin suggested that the Planning Board revisit the idea of creating a business development board to help find potential business.

Mr. Schickel shared a Town by Town comparison on how different towns are organized. His point was that we have 7 full-time employees in the Planning and Zoning Department. Other Towns have far fewer employees. See attached.

Mr. Schickel believes the Town is going to be faced with reorganizing the Planning Department, and it seems like an opportunity to input and shape how that is restructured. Instead of hiring another Planner, perhaps the job description should include the notion of an economic development person.

M. Hatch said that hiring a new planner is on the horizon. The legal method is to conduct a public search although the future planner may come from in-house.

M. Hatch said that the Planning Board is on the search committee and we can make recommendations. J. Laquatra pointed out that will happen after the position has been defined.

C. Anderson added that we could make a recommendation to hire someone with a development background rather than an environmental background.

W. Martin defended the Planning Department by pointing out that the staff we have is totally focused on keeping and making sure we maintain the rural character of our town.

J. Laquatra said when they finished with the comprehensive plan, we were required by law to have one public hearing but they had three public meetings followed by a public hearing. The public said the same thing Wendy did, the rural feeling was a priority.

W. Martin said there have been people who are critical of the number of staff members and the funding we spend on those staff members, but she thinks they have done a wonderful job in setting up guidelines so whatever development happens going forward is done in a way that we all benefit from.

Bruno stated he is not here to make a judgment on the staff but he believes his numbers show that the Town is out of step with surrounding municipalities.

W. Martin asked if we know that in the Town of Lansing they have guidelines set up to protect the rural character of their town as we do ours?

Mr. Schickel said the reality is we have budget challenges, but there are short term and long term fixes. This board becomes in essence, in terms of economic growth, the gatekeeper.

J. Laquatra said that when people come to us, we move things pretty quickly from the sketch plan to site plan review.

W. Martin wouldn't be critical of the fact that up to this point we have had the staff that we have had because they have done a tremendous amount of work to put those guidelines in place.

Mr. Schickel returned to his comparison with other towns.

W. Martin suggested that maybe we are mis-communicating. What she is pointing to is these towns going forward are not developing the way they could have if they had the staff that we did. Our town is going to benefit from the staff that we have had. If she looked at other Town's plans and they were comparable, then she would agree but they are not as good as our and she disagrees with cutting the staff hours.

H. Maniscalco asked Mr. Schickel what kind of building he would encourage in Dryden, apartments, single family homes or half million dollar homes? Lansing can get the high dollar homes because they have the lake front. Certainly we would prefer \$500,000 homes but how do we get them without a lake front? She understands it is different from an economic perspective, but from the rural environment and sustainability perspective, she doesn't want a subdivision across from her home.

M. Hatch pointed out that one aspect of our design guidelines is to encourage cluster development. H. Maniscalco asked what the minimum acreage is to have a private septic system. Mr. Schickel said it is generally no less than 2 acres.

Mr. Schickel said realtors have had a hard time selling houses in the village and the tax rate comes up frequently.

H. Maniscalco asked what was in Dryden to cause people to want to move here and be willing to pay the high taxes. She wondered what should be worked on first, the infrastructure or the people.

W. Martin, lives in the Village of Dryden, feels that the Village has little to offer people living in the Village. "Downtown" doesn't have anything going on and it would be wonderful to create a group that will encourage development.

M. Hatch pointed out that a large part of the Town of Dryden is west of here, there is a very big chunk of people there that don't even think that they are in Dryden. Having talked to them, they are very eager to keep a rural, residential feel to Dryden as a Town. We have taken into consideration all points of view. There are different views of rural residential and rural in different areas of the Town. The planning and zoning guidelines attempt to do that. This is an opportunity to look at Planning as a foundation and then work on building that. Having been on the Planning Board for 5 years or so, he sees the benefit of the Planning Department in the way they have tried to deal with all the various pressures and interests from different groups.

Mr. Schickel said that the guidelines can be used to advance or hinder development. His point is that he hopes they will use them to encourage development.

Most members of the Planning Board feel that they move things along positively as much as possible. They agreed that there might be a perception that Dryden is trying to hinder development because of the zoning guidelines but in reality, they are not that restrictive.

Supervisor Sumner joined the meeting at 8:20 PM.

Resolution #13 Recommendation to include economic development in the Director of Planning position

Whereas, there are some properties that could be developed such as the New York State Electric and Gas building and the former Wernick's building; and

Whereas, economic growth and a broader tax base will benefit the community;

Therefore, be it resolved that the Planning Board recommends to the Town Board that the requirements for the Director of Planning position include an awareness and experience in the various sides of Planning including economic development.

The motion was approved by Martin Hatch, seconded by Wendy Martin and approved unanimously.

M. Hatch believes that the Planning Board should express to the Town Board what we, the Planning Board, feel is a useful configuration of the planning and zoning work that is going on so that it can advance quality of life in a comprehensive way – it is not just economic development, it's trails and farmers' markets, etc.

Mr. Schickel pointed out that some of the other towns that have come up in discussion are not in a situation like Dryden where the Mall and big box stores are nearby. It makes it tougher for local businesses to compete or attract customers.

C Anderson said the question came up of where to put the farmer's market and the fact that the market would attract a different niche of people than those who patronize Dedrick's Fruit Stand.

W. Martin suggested that the economic development group could work with the existing businesses to enhance them. For example, wouldn't it be nice if Clark's had nicer produce in his store.

M. Hatch said that the planner needs to be able to look at the whole picture and the needs and desired outcome of the Dryden community. We don't want just any business in the town and we are not other towns. What works for Caroline and Trumansburg is not necessarily what we want in Dryden.

Supervisor Sumner said Tompkins County has significant assessment variation. Town of Ulysses assessment is much lower than the Town of Dryden, but there is higher individual assessment. Dryden is twice the assessed value. (There are 2600 taxable parcels in the Town of Ulysses and about 5800 in the Town of Dryden.)

C. Anderson said that we need to work with the businesses that are here. For example, we need to have a ribbon cutting at the yogurt place (That Indian Drink).

Mr. Schickel said the Varna Plan has accomplished nothing. Supervisor Sumner pointed out that the Varna Plan was recently completed and has won two awards.

M. Hatch said he thinks big developers are looking for a lot of money rather than understanding or appreciating the view of Varna that a lot of residents have.

Mr. Schickel responded that Varna is planned to the nth degree and any developer that is coming in has to conform to all those plans; development is messy and needs flexibility.

W. Martin interjected that Mr. Schickel was innovative and thought outside the box but the Varna community and the Varna plan are forcing him to stay in the box.

Mr. Schickel offered an example of when he wanted to build a series of multi-family houses on a property that he owned in Varna and when he came to get a permit, he was turned down. The reason was simply that the buildings were not attached. He thinks the town has over-planned and over-prescribed. Those plans and prescriptions don't have to be a problem if you have an attitude that says we are looking to get to yes.

Supervisor Sumner said that when they talked to contractors about the design guidelines they seemed to appreciate the clarity of the Comprehensive plan and the Varna plan. The contractors know what is acceptable and what is not.

Mr. Schickel asked if anyone is going out and attempting to get business in.

Supervisor Sumner said that will not happen until the improvements are finished, the sidewalks, etc. It is taking time to get there but it is a huge step in the right direction.

Mr. Schickel said when he built in Brooktondale, they didn't have a vision or models to go on and he was able to carve some territory. He is concerned that too many rules can smother innovation.

M. Hatch agreed that too many rules can smother innovation but when you built your Brooktondale project, it has proven itself. However, it doesn't mean that what we have in the guidelines is restrictive. It doesn't mean that at all. He said it sounds as though Mr. Schickel would like to remove some of the rules.

Mr. Schickel's point is that the rules are restrictive but he is not suggesting changing them. He wants to see the rules used to help and promote business. Use the rules to say yes.

H. Maniscalco pointed out that the zoning and guidelines can be used to say yes but sometimes they need to be used to protect people's property. Property values on homes go down when they are near or around rental properties. If someone bought a house for \$350,000, they won't ever get their house value back. It is easier to make an exception to Zoning than to roll back anything.

C. Anderson said that he believes everyone is on the same page, everyone recognizes that the subdivision guidelines and the zoning ordinance are good. The focus is how do we get the growth in the Town that the Town wants.

W. Martin said what she is hearing about Varna is if you have an idea that is outside the box that you can bring to the table, you have to make sure it comes to the table and didn't get stopped somewhere because it doesn't fit within our criteria. We have to be open-minded to look at new and innovative ideas.

Supervisor Sumner pointed out that the Planning Department and Board were willing to work with Mr. Lucente (in terms of a project in Varna) but the residents of Varna were against it.

Mr. Schickel pointed out that we all want affordable housing ; a rental property is usually more affordable. The zoning ordinance took out all of the multi-family homes because people have a similar reaction that says my property value is going down.

The members of the Planning Board disputed Mr. Schickel's contention that the multi-family housing is not permitted anymore. They were quite certain that it is still permitted.

W. Martin recommended that someone should look at a map and see if there is an area in Town that you feel needs more rentals, then seek out developers.

Meeting adjourned at 9:05PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erin A. Bieber
Deputy Town Clerk

Town by Town comparison of Building / Zoning / Planning Depts.

10/17/13

By Bruno Schickel 607-227-4791

Town of Dryden

1. Pop. 14,435
2. Total permits 170 +- (Village of Dryden _____ ??)
3. Building / Zoning dept. staff 3 1/2 = 2- full time Building / Zoning insp. &
1- full time Sec. 1- part time filer
4. Planning / Zoning dept. staff 3 1/2 = 3- full time, 1- part time
(this does not include the sustainability planner which is funded with a grant)

Town of Lansing

1. Pop. 11,033
2. Total permits 181 +-
3. Building / Zoning dept. staff 2 = 1- full time Building / Zoning insp. 1- full time Sec.
4. Planning / Zoning dept. staff 1/2 = 1- half time Planner

Town of Groton

1. Pop. 5,950
2. Total permits 131 +-
3. Building / Zoning dept. staff 3/4 = 1-half time Building/Zoning insp., 1- quarter time Sec.
4. Planning / Zoning dept. staff none

Town of Caroline

1. Pop. 3,282
2. Total permits 80 +-
3. Building / Zoning dept. staff 1/2 = 1 half time Building inspector
4. Planning / Zoning dept. staff none

Village of Lansing

1. Pop. 3,529
2. Total permits 100 +-
3. Building/ Zoning dept. staff 1 1/4 = 1- full time Zoning / Building insp. 1- 1/4 time Fire insp
4. Planning / Zoning dept. staff none

Town of Ulysses

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| 1. Pop. | 4,900 |
| 2. Total permits | 60 +- |
| 3. Building and Zoning dept. staff | 1 ¼ = one full time, 1/4 time fire insp. |
| 4. Planning and Zoning dept. staff | 1 = one full time |