



Town of Mount Hope Comprehensive Plan Update



Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) Committee Meeting #3

Mount Hope Town Hall
Thursday, September 29, 2016

Meeting Notes

The following members of the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC) were present:

- Dominick Cambareri,
- Daniel Golebiowski,
- Matthew Howell,
- Ike Palmer, and
- Lee Runnalls

Also in attendance were:

- David Bavoso (Town Attorney),
- Michael Welti (B&L), and
- 2 members of the public – Orrin Pierson and Kathie Yedziniak

The meeting began at 5:00 PM. Mr. Welti welcomed everyone, reviewed the meeting agenda (attached), and began discussion of committee business.

Committee Business

The Committee reviewed the notes from its last meeting (July 21st) and agreed that they were complete. The notes will be posted on the comprehensive plan page of the Town's website. The committee also briefly discussed the comprehensive plan webpage. The page was set-up over the summer by the Town with assistance from the Town's web designer and B&L. The committee noted that the webpage looks good and that it contains all of the information that was requested in July. Mr. Welti said that he would work with the Town to keep the information on the webpage up-to-date, and he mentioned that the CPUC email address was ready and working for those members of the public who wish to submit comments to the committee.

Commercial Solar

In recognition of the moratorium on large scale solar projects adopted by the Town in April, Mr.

Welti and Mr. Bavoso suggested that the development of zoning for this new, hot button issue should be done on a separate, expedited track rather than waiting for completion of the plan and the subsequent zoning amendment process. The committee agreed. Mr. Bavoso indicated that the Town Board and/or the Planning Board could take the lead preparing proposed zoning. To that end, Mr. Welti provided three sample zoning laws that address solar as a starting point for consideration by the Town. The first was a Model Solar Energy Law prepared by Sustainable CUNY, Pace Law School's Land Use Law Center, and the NY Solar Smart Planning and Zoning Working Group. The second was a sample solar ordinance prepared by another community in Orange County; and the third was a local zoning law recently adopted by the Town of New Scotland in Albany County. Mr. Welti highlighted the main features of the three sample laws and discussed the similarities and differences between them. There was some discussion among the committee.

In the end, Mr. Bavoso said that his firm would piece together the best elements of these and other sample laws and prepare a draft law for the Town's consideration. The committee felt this was a good idea and suggested that a joint meeting between the Town Board, Planning Board, and this committee might be appropriate to review and discuss Mr. Bavoso's draft.

Community Workshop

Mr. Welti reviewed the meeting notes from the committee's first public workshop last week. The "Issues Identification Workshop" was held at the Community Center in the evening on Tuesday, September 20th. He noted that the turnout was a little disappointing but that the people who did attend were highly engaged. He acknowledged that one possible reason for the lower than expected turnout was that the workshop conflicted with open house night at the school. In the future, the Committee will be asked to help identify such potential conflicts before public meetings are scheduled.

As Mr. Welti reviewed the feedback received from the public, the committee discussed some of the issues that were raised by attendees. Topics that were discussed included:

- Town/ Village consolidation – there are a number of reasons that consolidation has been discussed from time to time in the community. Reducing layers of government and cutting costs are two frequently cited reasons. New York State has been pushing for this (across the state) and numerous studies have been done by local municipalities with State funding in recent years. Still, the number of successful examples are few. One unique rationale for considering consolidation that was mentioned by the public was the fear of a takeover of local government by specific religious or ethnic groups, though it was unclear to the committee how consolidation would prevent this from occurring.
- Former research lab parcels north of Otisville on Old Mountain Road – the committee agreed that these buildings could be an opportunity but their condition is believed to be deteriorating. Unfortunately, the current owners do not appear interested in doing

anything with the buildings and the Town does not have a mechanism in place for preventing the further deterioration of these structures.

- High density housing pressures – there was some discussion about the experiences of other communities in Orange and Sullivan counties with respect to high density housing sponsored by particular religious and ethnic groups and the local municipalities’ ability to regulate such development. It was agreed that Mount Hope – as a rural community – does not really have the infrastructure to support such development, nor would such development be consistent with the Town’s desire to retain its rural character. It was acknowledged that this was going to be a difficult issue to address.
- Changing zoning pressures – Mr. Welti asked the committee to help him interpret this comment. It was suggested that the comment indicated a desire to look at the Town’s zoning in its entirety (not in a piecemeal fashion) and to bring it up-to-date in terms of procedures and content.
- Rural character – there was a brief discussion about right to farm laws and the importance of educating new residents about the realities of rural life.
- Wetlands – it was suggested that the comment about examining wetland regulations was intended to ensure that these resources are being adequately protected.
- Water and sewer infrastructure – it was noted that there is only one sewer district in the Town (Hidden Valley) and that it serves one particular housing development. The Village of Otisville does not have sewer.
- Heritage Trail extension – the committee agreed with the public enthusiasm related to a potential future extension of the county’s Heritage Trail and the desirability of making connections to other trails and recreational resources such as the Long Path.
- Local library - the committee discussed the comment that this is something lacking in Mount Hope. Given the town’s population, the committee did not think a library was something that could be supported. It was noted, however, that the Town does have an arrangement with the Port Jervis Library under which it purchases over 100 annual library passes and provides these free to town residents who request them. With the library pass, residents have access to the Port Jervis library and to all libraries and resources in the Ramapo Catskill Library System.

The committee discussed a number of additional subjects that were inspired by the public comments received at the workshop. It was noted that the Town adopted a moratorium on proposals for clustered subdivisions over the summer. The committee is interested in learning how to improve its provisions for clustering given the community’s desire to protect rural character. Making it clear that clustering is a density neutral technique that simply addresses the form of development will be a challenge. Mr. Bavoso suggested that the Town look at the Town of Wawayanda’s approach to clustering as a good model. Mr. Welti said that he would discuss “conservation subdivisions” with the committee and the public in the future. The committee also discussed recent dialogue between the Towns of Mount Hope and Greenville and the City of Middletown regarding water issues.

Mr. Welti asked the committee to think about the comments received and to list what they thought were the priority issues. The committee suggested the following as priorities for future discussion in the plan:

- Rural preservation – farmland and open space
- Low density housing – clustering and other techniques
- Trail connections and recreation
- Modernizing zoning procedures to facilitate appropriate development
- Opportunities for small business growth

At the end of this robust discussion, the committee agreed that the meeting notes were ready to be posted (as is) on the comprehensive plan page of the Town's website.

Inventory and Analysis (initial draft)

Mr. Welti updated the committee about B&L's collection of data and information for the existing conditions portion of the comprehensive plan. He noted that an initial draft of the existing conditions report was almost ready for the committee's review. He will email this to the committee within the next two weeks so that they have time to review the draft in advance of the next committee meeting.

Next Steps

The next committee meeting was set for Thursday, October 27th at 5:00 PM at Town Hall.

Mr. Welti said that the committee should schedule its next public workshop – Visioning – for a date in early December. It was noted that the 1st and 3rd Mondays are not good (Town Board), and 3rd Wednesdays are not good (Planning Board). Mr. Welti will identify a few possible dates and coordinate with the Town Clerk about the availability of the Community Center. Options will be emailed to the committee at some point in the next two weeks with the goal of having a date/location selected prior to the next committee meeting.

With a Public Workshop scheduled for December, it is likely that the committee will not meet separately in December. Mr. Runnalls requested that a committee meeting be scheduled for the first week in January instead – that way he will be able to attend before he leaves for Florida. It was agreed that this should be possible and the schedule will be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Public Comment

Mr. Pierson asked the committee about the origin of one of the sample solar laws discussed earlier. Mr. Welti noted that it was recently adopted by the Town of New Scotland. Chuck Voss, from the B&L team is the Planning Board Chairman in New Scotland and he offered it up

as a sample for consideration. Mr. Pierson asked whether the Town had a right to farm law. Unfortunately Matt Howell had to leave the meeting early. The other members of the committee were not certain but would confirm. Mr. Pierson expressed support for the idea of the Heritage Trail extension and connections to other trails in the Town and the region. Mr. Pierson concluded by expressing that the committee was doing a good job.

Ms. Yedziniak had several comments for the committee. She questioned the need for a decommissioning provision in a solar law (should the Town include one) and asked whether it mattered if the solar panels were operating or not. In terms of getting the word out about future public meetings, Ms. Yedziniak noted that although the Town does not have a presence on Facebook, there are several Facebook pages that address local issues. It would be helpful to get information about future public meetings to the organizers of these Facebook pages in order to spread the word. In terms of the Town's old zoning laws, Ms. Yedziniak suggested that a lot of people like the old laws and don't like change – especially if the change is too large or too fast. She said that the old laws have helped to create and maintain the character that the Town does have – so changes should be gradual. Finally, she asked for copies of the sample solar laws that were reviewed by the committee. Since the committee had some additional copies, they were provided to both Ms. Yedziniak and Mr. Pierson.

Adjourn

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at about 6:45 PM.



**Town of Mount Hope
Comprehensive Plan Update
AGENDA**



**Comprehensive Plan Update Committee (CPUC)
Meeting #3**

Mount Hope Town Hall
Thursday, September 29, 2016 - 5:00 PM

1. Welcome and Agenda Review

2. Committee Business

- Meeting notes from July 21st
- Project website

3. Commercial Solar – Sample Local Laws

4. Community Workshop

- Review meeting notes from Issues Identification Workshop on September 20th

5. Inventory and Analysis (initial draft)

6. Next Steps

- Set next committee meeting – October 27th?

7. Public Comment

8. Adjourn