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COMPREHENSIVE PLAN COMMITTEE
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
MAY 12, 2015 AT 7 PM

Call to Order: 7:03 pm.

Present: Joanne Klepetar, Michael Dobis, Steve Streicher, Chris Ramsdill, Robert Barrett, Jaclyn Hakes, AICP; Kristen Gaynor, Ryan Riper, P.E.; Lucy Harlow and Mark Mykins.

Absent: Ron Slone; Amy DiLeone

Also Present: Connie Towers, Nancy Dwyer, Dave Buchyn, Tina Weber, Owen and Marilyn Monroe, Gerard Zabala, Martha Devaney, Rick Fish.

Ryan Riper briefly summarizes what the committee has done to date: in September 2014 the Town Supervisor Art Johnson appointed the comprehensive plan update committee. The members were tasked with updating the 2004 Wilton Comprehensive Plan. The committee is made up of two members from each board: the Town Board, the Planning Board and the Zoning Board. Also the Town Attorney, Mark Schachner, the zoning officer, Mark Mykins, and members of the town staff are among the committee members. Jaclyn Hakes with MJ Engineering & Land Surveying, Co. is acting as consultant. There have been 12 meetings open to the public beginning on September 25, 2014 with the last meeting on March 26th, 2015. The meeting schedules and the agendas have been on the town website and posted on the town bulletin board. There is a comment link to the town website and contact information for the committee coordinator, Ryan Riper, and secretary, Lucy Harlow.

Ms. Hakes describes what a comprehensive plan is and the function of this committee has in updating the Wilton Comprehensive Plan. The comprehensive plan is broad in nature and looks at the community in terms of a variety of topics and issues; (1) what the current state of the community is; (2) what the community is going to look like in the future; (3) identifying an action plan and the steps that the community needs to take to get there; and (4) how to implement the plan. A point of clarification, a comprehensive plan is not zoning, it is not parcel specific; it is broad and comprehensive and it doesn't address specific projects. Rather it provides direction for what should be included in the zoning to support the vision and support the future of the community. The dynamics are constantly changing in a community, the population, the economic health and sustainability and a variety of other things that make up the community and its character. One task of the committee is to find how those factors are integrated into the future of the community. The review of a comprehensive plan can be every 5 to 10 years or if there are any substantial changes or the economy that is impacting the community has changed. The land use and zoning requests are another indication of a possible review being needed.

The Comprehensive Plan Update Committee went through the 2004 Comprehensive Plan chapter by chapter. As part of the support for the committee to understand what was changing, demographic updates, traffic study updates and educational sessions on key topics such as transportation, land conservation and natural resources were provided. The direction that the community is heading is really not changed and still on track in terms of those actions identified in 2004. The plans that have been prepared over the last 10 years such as the Open Space Recreation Pathways Plan and the Exit 16 Linkage Study are now referenced and integrated into the plan update. The focus is on the implementation of elements of those plans. The revised implementation priority table identifies priorities in terms of immediate, short term, on-going and long-term actions. One of the immediate actions that the committee identified is to amend the zoning ordinance. Another is to create a master mobility plan which looks at multiple modes of transportation and how they can work together and looks specifically at key areas such as Route 9 and Route 50 and intersections like Jones Road and Ingersol Road.

Mr. Riper opens the floor for public comments and questions. Nancy Dwyer sat in on several meetings and she remarks that she has a lot of respect and admiration for the time and effort the committee put forth on this project. She values many of the comments that were shared and questions that were asked.

David Buchyn echoes her comments. He attended 4 or 5 of the meetings and there was a lot of detail in the process of reviewing the document. Mr. Buchyn comments about the work that went into the Comprehensive Plan of 2004 and in looking back in the past 11 years, asks if there were things in the 2004 Plan that the committee wished had been done differently and in view of all the development over the last decade, did it follow the way the committee thought it would develop. Mr. Dobis responds affirmatively, that overall the 2004 plan worked. Mr. Streicher asks if that was true of the hamlet zone. Mr. Barrett comments that the hamlet zone is not panning out as originally planned. Mr. Dobis compares the plan to a roadmap where there may be occasions when a different direction might have been taken. The hamlet idea was approved but the zoning allowed in the hamlet was “the bump in the road.” Mr. Barrett adds that the question Mr. Buchyn asked was more general and re-words the question; is there anything in the 2004 plan that fell by the way side? Mr. Barrett adds that was the whole point of the revisions. Mr. Ramsdill asks if it was true, that without the extension of sewer and water that was a way to restrict growth which perhaps didn’t pan out.

Mr. Dobis said when the original committee finished the Comprehensive Plan and turned it over to the Town Board; the Town Board took a look and made changes. At the same time there were discussions with WW&SA with the expectation that there would probably be development in the areas where there were no utilities. This was a way of looking at residential and commercial density. As more development came in and WW&SA offered utilities in areas that in 2004 were not considered, there was an opportunity lost to channel development away from those areas. There was also the consideration of ground water levels and soil conditions - all of those factors were put together as a planning tool but when things started to change, the ability to limit legally what developers could do was lost.

Mr. Barrett comments that elements of the Comprehensive Plan are dependent on county and state government such as NYSDOT. A lot of the roads in the town are county roads or state roads. Those present limitations and a big hurdle in terms of the lack of control over certain county and state roads and the ability to address some of the needs in terms of traffic congestion, for example the Exit 16

Bridge. Another factor was the economy which tanked in late 2006 and affected the plans for developing the Exit 16 area. The Exit 16 Bridge is the target of much commentary from the public in terms of the congestion. But it is a state bridge with a county road over it.

Dave Buchyn says it sounds like everybody was happy with the plan in 2004 but subsequent to that reality happened, such as the water and sewer development and the change in the economy. The committee did the best it could in 2004 but things evolved from there that were not within the committee's control. Mr. Dobis comments it will be how the economy grows over the next 5 or 6 years that will foretell whether this committee's projections are on target.

Mr. Buchyn comments that the political history of the Town from 2009 up till now was very divisive and there was a lot of fighting over planning, zoning and general land use. Mr. Mykins states that there was a lot of arguing over zoning changes and what was going on with the Town at the time. The Comprehensive Plan guides some of that and some of the changes weren't in line with the Comprehensive Plan. There wasn't a lot of openness about the whole thing. That is completely different from what is going on here. The Comprehensive Plan was already there – it just wasn't directly followed. Things didn't go quite the way they should have. The Comprehensive Plan stayed the same, but zoning changes were done without a lot of input of the kind you have in the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Buchyn asks whether from 2009 to the present if the Comprehensive Plan was followed. He read in the paper that the Town wasn't following the plan, specifically along Route 9. Mr. Mykins explains that the Plan is a general vague document. It is not a zoning document. There was some confusion about that. Mr. Buchyn says that may be true but in the public sphere, talking to various townspeople as well as political leaders and community leaders, there was a lot of consternation over this time period. He says maybe they were confused when there were suggestions that the Comprehensive Plan was not being followed. An example was the development of the hamlet up by Ballard and Northern Pines and the feeling that there were too many apartment buildings on Route 9. His observation was that there was a lot of antagonism from different parties as far as development and growth, such as, are we following the plan; are people doing shady things not following the plan. He is wondering if this new plan will alleviate some of that.

Mr. Barrett thinks interpretations vary, the general public may view the Comprehensive Plan as a specific document addressing specific things, but it's not. It's a general document with a whole lot of wiggle room. Mr. Ramsdill agrees that historically there's been some tension within the community about the direction the people were going in and whether there were political motivations behind it. This review was not a political event in any way. He feels there was input from many ideologies and perspectives and it included participation from Saratoga PLAN and information from financial and traffic studies that have been prepared. This wasn't a contentious process; it had a lot of input from all the players and a lot of consideration of all sides. His feeling is that this is a document that meets people's needs well and is inclusive of any party or ideology. In Wilton we have everything in one place. If there were changes, everyone was in agreement with the final revision. Once everyone put their suggestions in by the time the revisions were made, everyone at the table was in agreement.

Mr. Buchyn attended half the meetings and saw the hard work that was done, it was not political and it was very good work. That still doesn't change the fact that from 2009 to the present there was a lot of consternation in the community. Mr. Barrett is not sure what that has to do with the revision of this

document. That was then, this is now. Mr. Buchyn responds that it is not necessarily the revisions of the document but just the presentation of the document; he wonders have there been changes made to the master plan that will alleviate some of those contentious issues. Mr. Ramsdill says the committee knew coming into the meeting about the one of the biggest concerns the community had about the scale of the hamlet, the development being out of proportion for what people had anticipated those buildings would be like. We made a recommendation to eliminate one hamlet and reduce the size of the Ballard Road hamlet. Those were formal recommendations in the plan which was hopefully responsive to the concerns of people in the community and their interpretation that the old plan wasn't consistent with how it was being implemented. "We tried to provide a better framework for people who would be using that plan moving forward and it was a little clearer about what we felt the community wanted."

Mr. Riper reads from the hand out, Chapter 3 Section III-19, specifically rezoning existing H-1 hamlet area to a new H-2 hamlet area, this H-2 area would differ from H-1 by encouraging less density and smaller scale development that that of the H-1 area to complement the character of the adjacent R-2 residential areas. That hamlet H-2 area would be the Route 9 – Ballard Road hamlet area. Buchyn says that is the answer he was looking for, that the concerns of the community were heard and here's what has been done to alleviate that. Mr. Riper mentions that architectural standards and details were emphasized as well in terms of what the hamlet is. Mr. Buchyn concludes that committee members have been aware of these issues; they have heard the comments and are attempting to address them in this new document.

Connie Towers wants to commend the committee that took so much time into this massive project and it shows because of the months of time taken by volunteers and by town employees. She applauds the committee for looking at that and updating what has been done in the last few years. She has always felt that the town is like a living breathing organism. It can't be stagnant, it has to grow, and it has to be nurtured. "We all look towards protecting our own neighborhood where we live. Overall, what affects one side of town will ultimately affect the other side, whether it's the traffic, natural resources, everything that we know – all these little arms and spider webs that connect the entire town." With the traffic coming down Route 9 and the massive size of the Gordon development; it was just, in her opinion, too big for the area. She describes what happened in the instance of the hamlet zoning where there were gray areas. "Mixed use" was a term that was never identified. In parentheses in the Comprehensive Plan it says small scale retail combining housing and neighborhood service oriented businesses. Look at a hamlet and the architectural renderings for the hamlet; it was going to be smaller buildings with small scale retail on the first floor and residences/apartments on the second floor. Instead there was one big connected building with only apartments. So the area right around CVS was going to be pivotal as far as traffic and everything else. She says the other hamlet where Ridgeview is, that was an attempt at a hamlet, that same kind of building structure- it was a little bit more in sync, the density there was 12 units per acre. Mr. Mykins interjects that the density of the hamlet at Ballard Road was 22 units per acre. So it was scaled back. It was decided to change the code.

Ms. Towers continues, so it wasn't just looking at the Comprehensive Plan, and quoting from that, it was the hamlet zoning itself, and then the density – the lack of clarity on the density – that was driving a lot of people crazy. Mr. Mykins says those are zoning regulations. So in order to promote appropriate scale and redesign, there's an H-2 hamlet. So her question is what would you propose the density being at that hamlet? Mr. Mykins says that's a whole another committee sitting down with a public hearings. Mr. Riper says we realize that zone right there at Route 9 and Ballard Road, the land

use there is a little bit different. The existing parcel sizes there are small. They have water and sewer there now but those existing structures, the old fire house, the kitchen supply company that's something we realize is probably not going to be the same as the hamlet on Route 9 and Northern Pines, where it's more commercial.

Ms. Towers asks about the architectural guidelines that will be put in place if the hamlet abuts a residential area - that it will flow more with the existing neighborhood. Mr. Mykins says there are already some architectural standards for the hamlet zone; they need to be better defined. The attempt was to clarify the hamlet in more detail.

Ms. Towers asks about the definition of pedestrian scale. Mr. Mykins mentions the mobility plan. Unfortunately all those sidewalks won't be connected there so people are thinking there is this many more units going here, and there, hopefully people will walk across the street to the post office. Mr. Mykins: you have the hamlet zone, it was ten years ago that it was thought out and its now just starting to develop and the hope is that it continue to develop and those sidewalks will all connect, that will take time, it could take another 20 or 30 years. Ms. Towers comments that those centers will become more bicycle and pedestrian friendly by pulling all this open space and having that connectivity. Her next question is about traffic congestion, and not just the main roads. When they do a traffic study, what do they take into account - the traffic studies say how many cars pass by, and Maple Avenue School does under 50% of what they think they could handle there. Mr. Riper knows there is an issue there. Mr. Ramsdill states that traffic was one of the largest issues. We felt like we don't have any ability really to make any immediate changes to Rt. 50 or Rt. 9, but with the Comprehensive Plan, with those recommendations and his understanding was if they want to do any changes to those roads, they have to address that we'd included those areas as areas of concern. So by putting it in the Comprehensive Plan, at least we can force their hand if they want to make changes to at least address those issues. Mr. Barrett says it's the State that controls Rt. 9 - they decide where the left turns are, the traffic signs and traffic lights go along that corridor. All we can do is put those concerns in the plan recommendations. Mr. Riper says a lot of NYSDOT's justification is based on accident data. If there are accidents, then they know there is an issue. Delays are a level of service to them - they understand that people are delayed but compare Saratoga County to downstate. Ms. Towers states how difficult it is for people on the north side to get to Exit 15 - so even with all the alternate routes, so the simple 10 minute drive to Saratoga Springs is doubled. Another intersection is just past Traver on Ballard Road, it took her 15 minutes to get on the Northway with the tractor trailers nudging out - it was about 5:10 pm. That's what happening just on a small scale. Mr. Riper says it's throughout the country.

Ms. Hakes says what is really good about this plan, is that it has a series of town wide recommendations related to transportation, some of the bigger items, but then within each planning area, this committee spent a lot of time saying: this is a problem from a transportation standpoint, and then there are specific recommendations within each planning area about specific roadways to evaluate. Some are town roads that are on the radar, but some are not under the jurisdiction of the Town. It was very important to identify those as problem areas. It will be cause for DOT to stop and take a look and consider local desires and local impacts. Ms. Towers comments about the CDTA stops in different areas of town and park n' ride at Ex. 16 being in the plan so at least it will be brought to DOT's attention. The traffic congestion does impact the quality of life.

Mr. Buchyn asks if another building like the Gordon project could be built on Route 9. Mr. Riper states it depends on the zone; additional apartments could go in on Rt. 9. The Comprehensive Plan

update does not change the zoning. That would take another process. Mr. Mykins states that development could take place only along a certain area of Route 9. The hamlet is a relatively small area and there are only 2 or 3 large parcels left. There is the potential for more apartments to be built.

Ms. Nancy Dwyer says the public needs to be vigilant about attending planning and zoning meetings. Staying awake and aware of what's going on in those meetings which are more micro. This Comprehensive Plan is more macro; it's to be used as a guide only. Those very specific questions about planning and zoning, people need to attend those meetings and make them heard. As Mark said, some things happened that probably shouldn't have happened and might not have been done above board. I don't know that there are enough people that are involved on a regular basis to keep things in check. That being said, I'm also hearing that the Town still has to approve this plan and can take it or leave it, can change it. Mr. Mykins says the reason for the public hearing is so that you can comment. All through this process the website has been available to the public, where comments could be submitted. As the changes came out, they were put on the website, they were posted and the committee welcomed any comments. The hearing is for the public to give the committee feedback so that changes can be made.

Ms. Dwyer thinks the process has been very good. She wants to understand that this is a proposal and a proposal only. That it does not get adopted until the Town Board adopts it and the Town Board has the ability to reject it. The Town Board has the ability to change the plan based on the public's outcry or not at all. The final say on what gets done is the Town Board. It is the legislative body of the community they are the only ones who have the ability legally to adopt the Comprehensive Plan or to make any changes it sees fit. Mr. Streicher states that any changes made by the Town Board would be pointed out. There is another public hearing being held by the Town Board. If there is no response, they could possibly adopt it in the same meeting or wait to see if there is more response. The final format will be made available before the plan is voted on and adopted. It is in draft until it is adopted. Is there any timeline set for the reevaluation of the plan in future? Ms. Hakes says that in the long term actions stated in Chapter V, one action is to revisit the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan on a five year basis to determine if there are any major shifts. It may not be a process like this; it could be something like a community report card, a check-in to see if these actions and/or recommendations have been completed.

Mr. Barrett comments that the Town of Wilton has one of the best websites for a town in New York – there is a lot of information on it – the minutes for all the meetings, there's an area for public comment. The public has the ability to read the plan revisions. Mr. Ramsdill emphasized that what can occur in the Town is in the Town Code – it is not necessarily modified or changed in the zoning board or planning board meetings. The regulations are pre-set. The boards are bound by the ordinances and the Town Code. The planning board may have a little bit more say on some projects than the zoning board but a lot of what is pre-established in the Town is set in the codebook. If you really want something changed you have to speak out at a Town Board meeting. Mr. Barrett comments that this plan tied up a lot of loose ends, it is more specific about certain subjects and it has eliminated the generalizations and much of what was repetitious. It's a good plan that keeps the Town going in the same direction but has been improved and the contents tweaked. Mr. Ramsdill says it is such a massive plan it was important to simplify it and make it more concise and user-friendly.

Ms. Towers would like to know what the committee thinks are the priorities in terms of amending the zoning, for instance a proposal about solar energy or alternative resources and light and noise pollution

Mr. Barrett remarks that green energy has been addressed in the Comprehensive Plan; there is a new section about renewable energy, but light and noise pollution are addressed in the Zoning Ordinance. Once the plan is adopted, there will be another committee formed to try to bring the Zoning Code into line with the Comprehensive Plan. That's the next step. Ms. Hakes adds that periodically throughout the process there were discussions about the buffers either along the roadway or between transition areas, and different types of land uses, to help address not only the aesthetics but that helps address some noise; there are a variety of things that talk about buffering; so by default some of the things that were discussed which would be codified in the zoning, which is what Mr. Barrett was talking about.

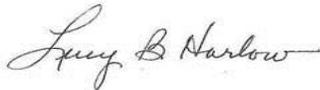
Mr. Riper concludes that the process worked well; there were a lot of good discussions and ideas that came out of that process. He comments on how diligent the committee has been in participating and working through the 2004 plan page by page. There were a lot of great discussions on all of the elements that go into updating and revising a comprehensive plan. Mr. Ramsdill thanks the members of the committee and comments that it was a pleasure working through the paperwork and studies and feels that the whole process was collaborative and respectful and everyone had the opportunity to share ideas in a way that was supportive and inclusive. Mr. Streicher comments on the good job everyone did.

There is applause from the public in recognition of the Committee's efforts.

Mr. Riper asks for the motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Ramsdill seconds the motion, all in favor. The meeting is adjourned at 8:25 pm.

The committee is looking for photos of the town and they can be sent to wiltonphotos@mjels.com.

Approved:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lucy B. Harlow".

May 28, 2015