

May 25, 2017

Town of North East/Village of Millerton Comprehensive Plan Update Committee

Committee Attendance:

Edie Greenwood
John Crodelle
Lance Middlebrook

Diane Engleke
Ed Downey

Absent:

Debbie Middlebrook
Dale Culver
John Midwood

Guest: George Kaye

Edie handed out a survey that Ron Hicks, Assistant Dutchess County Executive, sent to every elected official in Dutchess County with the caveat that some of the survey questions don't apply to a community of less than 3,000 residents.

Edie said the Planner subcommittee comprised of Ed Downey, Dianne Engleke and herself were going to meet with Will Agresta on June 2. She hopes this meeting will help the subcommittee develop a framework for its meetings with the other four candidates.

Using the Dutchess County Survey the Committee went through the relevant questions.

Edie asked if coordinating building inspections and certificates of occupancy were done by the same person. Lance responded yes, they are. Ed mentioned that the term certificate of occupancy is used but the term should be certificate of compliance with zoning. Ed said in 2008, the town developed a proposed amendment to subdivision regulations but he was not sure it was ever implemented. He explained it was a checklist of resources for an applicant to consult with before appearing before the Planning Board. Edie asked when the last major subdivision in North East was approved; no one could recall. Ed said that Briarwood and Rudd Pond Estates occurred around the same time and those two projects lead to the first the comprehensive plan that was done in the 1970s.

Edie said the Committee could decide to do a generic environmental impact statement (GEIS) instead of a SEQRA. A GEIS is described as an overview document. Ed said it's supposed to make the SEQRA process easier for developers and planners who can use it as a template.

Edie asked which item(s) in question 8 could have the most support.

Dianne said Main Street and the fact that businesses disappear. Edie mentioned that Saperstein's and Terni's don't have family members interested in taking over these existing businesses.

Ed said the need to create guidelines for any site plan; i.e. bury cable and electrical lines to create a better visual appearance.

John Crodelle mentioned that Dick Hermans didn't know of any merchants who would be willing to see their taxes increase with sewer put in. Lance said most of the merchants don't live in Millerton. Ed said investors will appreciate the value of the benefit of sewer that would enable them to repurpose and expand their use opportunities. The investors know that capital improvements can add value to their property.

Lance said the restaurants have limited seating because of a lack of sewer. Ed said there is a real opportunity for the community to become a restaurant mecca. Ed said tourism is an important component to the community. The Rail Trail attracts many people and there are lots of different ways to attract people here because of the rural surroundings and landscape.

Edie asked if assessed valuation is different for residential and commercial. Ed said yes, there can be a formula that attributes a percentage of income for commercial whereas there is no such formula used for residential assessment.

Edie mentioned that Dick Hermans said businesses have a problem finding employees because there is no housing for them. John asked what a ballpark figure for affordable housing would be. Edie said that it has to do with income levels.

Lance (as a landlord) said property owners have to get a certain amount to cover their expenses and balance out what renters can pay. Edie suggested finding a roommate to help offset the cost of rent. She also said making buildings more appealing for that kind of arrangement is a possibility.

The topic of Airbnb was addressed. Edie said Dutchess County has entered into agreement with Airbnb effective March 1, 2017 whereby the County receives a 4% occupancy tax from all Airbnb bookings. Ed said there are many land use issues associated with Airbnb. He said Pace University is a valuable resource and that the key to addressing many of the Village's issues is infrastructure.

The topics of broadband and the definition of "home occupations" were discussed. From the information sent by John Midwood, the NYS rural broadband program Phase 2 has provided 28 broadband connections in Millerton and 243 in Pine Plains. Lance said Ken McLaughlin told him we should address broadband last because everything is moving quickly and broadband will be obsolete.

Edie observed that the Town hasn't attracted medical offices. Lance said that was in the original plan. Edie commented that the demographics need to be right. The VA in Pine Plains and Urgent Care in Copake and Rhinebeck were mentioned.

Lance said planning boards can drive away businesses. John said if word gets out that planning boards won't work with businesses then developers will go elsewhere. John Crodelle asked if there have been any projects in the last 10 years that have been turned down. Lance said Harney Tea wanted to put a bottling plant behind their existing facility at Rte. 22 and Rte. 199. There were issues with the application submitted to the Town Planning Board. Subsequently, the City of Hudson welcomed the Harney bottling plant, with the expectation of job creation.

Dianne asked if Silo Ridge was going to provide housing for their employees. George Kaye said that it won't happen.

Lance said people have told him if Amenia gets a sewer before Millerton does, they will move their business to Amenia.

Ed said there are records of sewer planning in the Village from after World War II. He said there should be ways to make it affordable for communities and noted that Hillsdale has sewer. George said Hillsdale has one that is designed with smaller collection places versus having one collection site. Ed said we need to think beyond a conventional system which is designed for larger communities. Lance pointed out that Millerton sits on top of an aquifer and all the separate septic systems is not good for our environment.

Edie discussed Columbia County initiative of partnering with Habitat for Humanity. She said Frank Martucci is working with Habitat to create inexpensive energy-efficient housing for farmers.

Edie said one of the benefits of the Village is that it is walkable. You can provide housing for people without transportation and they can utilize the Community Center's care car.

Lance said the old comprehensive plan had plans for affordable housing on Sharon Road at the former Oakhurst Inn property.

John asked if the group is interested in participating in a transfer station. Dianne said we could share one with Pine Plains but would have to start from scratch. George said you would have to look into the participation of a major waste hauler and Welsh Sanitation is not very enthusiastic about the idea.

Edie said she is planning to invite Ron Hicks, Assistant Dutchess County Executive, and Eoin Wrafter, Dutchess County Planning Commissioner to come to our June meeting.

Edie said the Greenway Compact grant application is due September and asked George if there was a lengthy turnaround on applications. He said the turnaround isn't long.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30 PM.