

Committee Attendance:

Edie Greenwood

Lance Middlebrook

Ed Downey

John Crodelle

Dianne Engleke

Steve Waite

Absent:

John Midwood

Dale Culver

The Committee interviewed two planning consultants.

The first was Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning and Environmental Associates (Berne, NY).

She said a comprehensive plan is a living document that allows you to market yourself. She seeks long-term, collaborative relationships with her clients. Her role is to facilitate the process of finding innovative solutions to attain goals of a comprehensive plan.

She has many years' experience working in Dutchess County. Her recent work was a strategic trail system for Pine Plains. In 2015, her firm was the consultants for the Dutchess County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan.

A comprehensive plan can be boiled down to three questions:

- (1) What are the current conditions and issues facing the town?
- (2) What does the town want to be like in the future?
- (3) How does the town reach that future state?

Public visioning workshops are a way to get people in a big group to develop a list of the strengths and weaknesses of the community. Because we are doing a joint plan, it's important to get town and village boards, elected officials, planning boards, ZBA, code enforcement, highway, etc. to have a discussion. She discussed the three phases of a project:

- Phase 1: Assess the current conditions.
- Phase 2: What is the community saying they want in the future. This will lead to the establishment of a vision and goals. She doesn't looking at planning or zoning regulations until she knows what our vision and goals are.
- Phase 3: Develop a set of actions, strategies, programs and policies with implementation time frames.

Nan said the goals we want to assess are to keep sustainability, address the community character, economic enhancements, and the historical resources and natural resources. She said it's important that plans have a list, a chart, a matrix or a tool that gives the town board a checklist and these are the first things that you should use the first year after adopting a plan. The failure of a comprehensive plan is because people don't know how to implement it.

She said the current Comprehensive Plan has a lot of good ideas and one of the things we should do is assess if any of these ideas have been implemented; if they haven't, which of these are still valid? Sometimes an update is focused to revalidating the direction.

Questions:

Dianne: What have you done in communities where there are radical points of view and visions of the community?

Nan: Start with listening and hear what the perspectives are. It's getting those people together and starting with common ground. That's where the visions and goals are really important. Can we find a direction that at least has some common understanding? If they are radically different, you might need to have broader community input to see if a small vocal group is representing how the rest of the community feel. Sometimes it's necessary to take a survey and have more community meetings to try and find a middle ground.

Edie: One of our concerns is getting people to come to meetings. Is it appropriate to go out and interview people?

Nan: Absolutely. The plan will identify who you talk to and you have to ask people the same questions. It's very hard to get people to attend. You need a combination of focus groups, community workshops, interviews and surveys. The survey can be very important since it will be sent to everyone. You need to be innovative – put information on your website, interviews on radio stations, press releases, etc.

Ed Downey: We need to use different media to connect with the community.

Nan: There are mechanisms such as setting up text messages with a question to groups. You can make community-wide conference calls to get participation.

John C: We have so many second home owners here. They have a vested interest on what goes on here but they are not available seven days a week.

Nan: Many communities she has worked with have that same issue. She said we will have to work on weekends to accommodate them. If the community has events such as a fall festival, firehouse pancake breakfast; have a committee member there and ask people if they want to be kept up with what's going on. Have them sign up for email so you can build an email list.

Steve: We use the village newsletter that goes when water bills get sent out.

Nan: Facebook is great as long as there is someone to keep up with it.

Ed: We have the data from three different community surveys that were done in conjunction with planning exercises, one done in 1974, one in 1988 and one in 2004. Is there any value to them?

Nan: From a perspective of looking back and comparing it to how people feel now, she has found that over the years, communities in their broad thinking don't change a great deal over time. To update a Comprehensive Plan based on 30-year-old public input would not be a good thing. It would be informative but should not be relied upon totally.

Ed: Does your engineering person have any expertise in helping communities identify what sort of broadband capacities they should seek to have to encourage economic development?

Nan: Not so much the engineer but her economic development planner has worked with a lot of communities and understands the broadband needs. Don Meltz has been very involved in Columbia County working to develop their broadband maps.

Steve: What about your experience with small communities that don't have a wastewater system or sewer system but are interested in looking at that down the road?

Nan: Most of the communities don't have that infrastructure.

Steve: How many of them have that on their list as something to pursue?

Nan: Some do and some don't. Some communities are looking at alternative systems instead of sewer.

John C: Have you found any communities that you work with that the state has mandated them to have a wastewater system because of conditions where sewer is running into a water system?

Nan: Just in the Catskills but that is connected to the NYC water system.

John C: Do you know of any public funding that is available for a community like Millerton and North East to build a waste water system where it wasn't part of the NYC watershed?

Nan: Yes, the Town of Berne.

Steve: How familiar are you with grants and funding that are out there?

Nan: Very familiar, I write grants each year for clients. Most grants require matching funds and that is very challenging.

Eddie thanked Nan for attending the meeting.

The second planner was Will Agresta, Director of Planning for Matthew D. Rudikoff Associates, Inc.

Will has done planning with communities for over 30 years, been with Matthew Rudikoff Associates for 25 years and has been the planning consultant for the Town of North East for ten years. He said the last big project was the Hannaford grocery store.

He said meetings are important but they can add a lot of cost. PACE University can do public scoping (he thinks they provide their work without charge). The committee can do surveys, engage locally to get the word out - schools, email blast, etc., and attend community events to get the word out and get people involved and talking.

His role is to take what we have and what we want in the plan and then give us tools to apply to achieve them.

Questions:

Eddie: Would you help us craft the right questions to start this process going?

Will: Yes, his role is to keep the conversation moving. You can word questions in certain ways to get useful information.

Eddie: When you have two incorporated entities, do they ever share a zoning code?

Will: Historically, most places where you have a village like we have, they have selected to do it separately but that doesn't mean it has to be done in one code. The town and village should look at each other's zoning and how they can be compatible.

Steve said there is a pedestrian plan in place that is a joint project between the town and the village that includes plan to extend the sidewalks.

Lance: When you identify a problem and know the solution but it has never been implemented because the money isn't there, so what is the point?

Will: That is addressed by my idea of targeting and focusing the plan. He thinks there are still ideas in our plan that are valid and you still want them in the plan but you don't have the money. He said to focus on a hit list on things that we think are achievable.

Lance: We always talk about infrastructure. If you don't have the infrastructure, you can't go to the next level. Infrastructure is a lot of money spent that people don't see.

Will: The lack of sewer plays a big part in stopping development from happening. Focus on things that you can achieve. Economic development doesn't have to mean buildings. He used agro tourism as an example that doesn't require sewer.

Eddie: One of our issues is affordable workforce housing. Without sewer, we don't have the ability to divide big homes into apartments. Merchants can't find employees because the employees can't find housing that they can afford. We need guidance and a road map. We want to maintain the rural character of the community and enhance the vitality of the village.

Will: Weekenders are your economic generator.

John C: They're not here to live; they're here to utilize the shopping.

Will: Focus on the town's assets and evaluate them as opposed to create new ones.

Ed: Had a question on page 3, "The field of planning continues to evolve with a broad array of issues....." What kinds of issues and management practices do you see that are not now being addressed that we should be thinking about?

Will: Energy sustainability, solar energy – where's the best place to put those things? He mentioned Airbnbs and that home occupation is another growth area.

Steve: Communities like ours become more sought after because of intimacy.

Will: The walkability is important.

Eddie: Realistically, can we get a draft updated Plan in front of boards by the first quarter of 2019?

Will: If you as a committee commit to that, yes. It's going to be hard if you don't get quorums at meetings.

Eddie: How regularly do comprehensive plan committees meet?

Will: It varies, some meet every two weeks. You have to meet periodically to keep it alive. You need to keep to schedule and give direction back to the consultants.

Eddie thanked Will for coming.

Committee comments on each planner:

Dianne saw a vision of getting the plan done when Nan was speaking but she didn't feel the same with Will.

Lance said Nan was a little more creative. He was concerned when Will said if you can't do a sewer system, then don't do it and work with what you can do. Lance said having a sewer system hinges on a lot of the other ideas. Without a sewer system, you would have to redo the plan to accommodate not having a sewer system.

Ed said you write a plan that deals with both issues.

John C. asked if Will has worked with the town. Eddie replied that he is the Town's current planner and that Dale is very pleased with his work.

Steve said Nan was much more detailed and Eddie commented that she gave us a much clearer road map.

Dianne asked how much higher Will's rates are. Edie said he gave a \$35,000-\$40,000 range.

Ed said he thinks from an expense standpoint that there are two different business models. Will's firm has higher overhead and he expects working with Will's firm will end up costing more.

John C. asked how much we have to spend. Edie said we have to wait to see if the grant was approved and should know by the third week of October. The grant is for \$25,000 and she has raised an additional \$5,000 from the Town, Village and Townscape. She said we have a \$30,000 budget to start with.

Steve: The decision here is to basically decide which planner to go with once the grant is approved.

Lance liked that Nan has a small firm. Edie said she had checked one of Nan's references who worked with her on the Comprehensive Plan for Ancram. He said Nan gave options, not answers. He felt strongly that she understood the rural sensibility and how to mesh with villages.

Lance said he votes for Nan.

John C. said we have a sense of responsibility since we are dealing with taxpayers' money. Since they are both offering the same thing, we would be remiss to choose the higher priced planning consultant.

Lance said he liked that Nan has an environmental background and that's important and Steve agreed.

Lance said Nan has no connection with our communities and felt that was good. As consultant to the North East Planning Board, Will is involved with every controversial application. He thought Will may have already developed biases.

Ed: When you have somebody who's been your planner and, if during a community discussion, there is something that somebody doesn't like, the planner becomes a target.

Ed said it's important that we are comfortable with the person.

Edie said they are very different but Nan seems to want this assignment more than Will. Nan was the only one of the four who were interviewed that sent a thank you note and has been very responsive.

Edie said the materials she has seen from Will in planning board matters have been top shelf; he's thorough, complete, and he knows our code. She mentioned his lack of ability to work with us in the afternoon was a drawback.

Edie said the next order of business is when we do find out about the grant, shall we identify a smaller group to be dealing with the details of the contract?

Ed agreed; Edie volunteered herself and asked Ed and Dianne to continue on. They agreed.

The next meeting will be October 26, 2017.

Meeting adjourned at 6:15 PM.