

Committee Attendance:

Edie Greenwood	Dianne Engleke	Absent: John Midwood
John Crodelle	Patti VandeBogart	
Ed Downey	Steve Waite	
Dale Culver		

Town officials present: George Kaye, supervisor; Ken McLaughlin, building inspector; board members Chris Kennan, Ralph Fedele, John Merwin; planning board members Bill Kish, Leslie Farhangi; ZBA members Julie Schroeder, Karen Pitcher.

Village officials present: Debbie Middlebrook, mayor; trustees Dave Sherman, Christine Bates; Village Planning board members Lance Middlebrook, Linda Orlando; Village ZBA members Matt Hartzog, Eliot Ramos, John Eboli, Ed Stillman. Planning consultant Nan Stolzenburg opened the meeting with an overview of what a comprehensive plan is. The three big questions in a Comprehensive Plan are: What's going on now, where do you want to be, and how are you going to get there. She said the most important piece will be developing the strategies and actions to get us to our goals. A Comp Plan (C.P.) covers land use issues; economic issues; natural resources and infrastructure needs. The benefit of a C.P. is practical – it's important for the community to work together and see where they want to be; and philosophical – a C.P. is the basis for land use; others agencies such as the DOT are required to look at a C.P. when looking at road work, bridgework, etc. A C.P. is critical for grant writing. A C.P. will include a database of maps, demographic information, economic information and housing. She explained that this meeting was meant to be an informal discussion to hear perspectives from Town and Village officials.

Nan listed the focus groups: Artisans and musicians, CAC, emergency services, farmers/farmers' market, Latino mothers, Millerton business association members, the North East Community Center, library, nutrition center, Oblong Valley Indivisible Group, real estate and mortgage banker representatives, recreation committee, Webutuck senior class, weekenders and various other individuals.

The public visioning workshop held in January which Nan facilitated looked at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. A survey was generated from the results of the workshop. A postcard requesting people to participate in the survey was mailed on March 1 and the deadline to complete the survey is March 25.

Nan asked the officials to outline the challenges and issues they felt were most important to the village and town.

Debbie Middlebrook: The biggest challenge is the lack of financial resources.

Christine Bates: Needs to spend money on the aging infrastructure, the water system needs attention, a sewer system is needed.

Bill Kish: Obsolete zoning regulations are inconsistent and are affecting planning board decisions.

George Kaye: Housing issues are limited due to lack of sewer; aging population; some type of housing for veterans.

Chris Kennan: Infrastructure and sewer need to be addressed, it's important to have a wish list, need to keep younger people here for greater development.

Ellen Pemrick of Community Planning and Environmental Associates asked planning board member Bill Kish if the planning board gets many proposals for the creation of jobs. He said most applications are for subdivisions.

Christine Bates: Recreation, it has been declining since the closing of the Denny Pool, Rudd Pond has been suffering and the sale of Millerton Elementary School ended the use of the gym.

Leslie Farhangi: There is nothing in the code regarding conservation easements.

Matt Hartzog: No checklist to streamline the process for ZBA applications, no transfer/recycling station.

Ken McLaughlin: Competing philosophies between the town and village; land uses are outdated; need a comprehensive plan to determine what you want.

Nan asked for an example. Ken mentioned Dunkin' Donuts as an example. It's a conflict: it will produce jobs for younger people but it's not the character that some people want.

Lance Middlebrook: There are buildings that are zoned for one thing and nothing else can go in them. The committee should look at adapting reuse such as old churches that could be used for housing.

Dale Culver: There are many vacant agricultural buildings that will never be used for what they were built for; they will be either be painted and left as an ornament or they will decay because they are too big to maintain when they have no purpose. They could be used for affordable housing; keep landscape as is by using those buildings for another purpose.

Christine Bates: Expand on infrastructure; broadband would attract business.

Ellen asked if there are particular areas that don't have broadband.

Christine Bates: Mostly outside the village.

Nan said these areas can be mapped through the NYS Broadband.

Eliot Ramos: Technology, young people need internet; create a Wi-Fi community that would be more affordable than what is offered now.

Karen Pitcher: Outdated codes need to be revised and should be reviewed and updated more frequently.

Nan recommended an annual review of the codes and look at zoning to see how the town and village will get to their vision.

Nan asked if officials feel they have the tools to do their job.

Ken McLaughlin: There are maps that exist.

Dale Culver: The codes don't match or give us guidance.

Leslie Farhangi: The codes don't have easy enforcement mechanisms regarding the planning board.

Nan asked if they take any training.

Leslie Farhangi: The town board gets training. Some courses are more valuable than others.

Lance Middlebrook: We all do training and they exceed the required time; Millbrook offers good courses.

Nan asked if the board change in membership.

George Kaye: The town board has instituted a local law that requires applicants to take planning and zoning board training requirements.

Nan asked if the members are steady; new members?

Debbie Middlebrook: There is continuity, no mass exodus.

Nan asked about issues/concerns related to environmental/natural resources.

Bill Kish: Would like to see a Dark Sky Community in the Comprehensive Plan.

Chris Kennan: The town passed a motion to become a climate smart community; it fits in with the type of environment we live in.

Dale Culver: You have to look at what possible uses the land is zoned for but there are issues with wetland and bog turtles. You want to work with the applicant for the project they're seeking but sometime constraints make it a tightrope.

Leslie Farhangi: Zoning codes can differ where Hudsonia says a species needs protection.

Nan said you can bring that in through SEQRA review. There are lots of land use techniques that can be incorporated to use that information.

Dale Culver: Zoning reports concerning wetlands were done 40 years ago, Hudsonia did them five years ago and they don't match since wetlands change over the years.

Dianne Engleke: Vernal pools dry up. There was not much attention to them 40 years ago.

Nan said zoning should define vernal pools.

Dave Sherman: The village is surrounded by wetlands. He is concerned about protecting the village aquifer.

Nan asked if the village has a reservoir or wells.

Ken McLaughlin: Town water.

Nan asked if there are other issues besides wetlands, such as steep slopes of other kinds of issues that have come up at the town level.

Ken McLaughlin: Floodplains are an issue.

Dale Culver: There are problems with storm water management; it has to be stipulated where it's going.

Nan asked if there are any issues with solar, wind or renewable energy.

Lance Middlebrook: There is a committee dealing with solar energy.

Christine Bates: The community relies on volunteers for ambulance and fire but they are aging out due and potential volunteers need to take on second jobs and often work farther away.

Ralph Fedele: It's a serious issue.

John Crodelle: It's a problem all over the region.

George Kaye: Take a regional approach to ambulance issue.

John Crodelle: The mandated training discourages volunteers.

Nan asked about roads/highway concerns.

Bill Kish: The widening of Route 22 will be down the road; doesn't think many people will want to see Route 22 turn into a four-lane highway.

Nan asked about highway equipment/buildings/bridges issues.

George Kaye: The highway garage is a major one. A joint town/village highway garage is in the works. He said the current town hall is not ADA accessible and the weight limits exceed what the floors should hold.

Nan asked if there are any shared agreements with the town/village highway.

George Kaye: Pretty much separate. Hopefully with the joint highway building project, there will be more shared services.

George Kaye: The town highway equipment is too big for village roads.

Nan asked if roads need to be changed or improved for farm vehicles. There was no comment.

Nan asked if there are bridges that require maintenance.

George Kaye: We have applied annually to the NYS Bridge Program for grants but we haven't received anything. We have several culverts that are major water thoroughfares that need work but the problem is funding.

Nan asked about sidewalks and street lights.

Debbie Middlebrook: We apply every year for grant money for sidewalks and sometimes it gets awarded to us.

Dale Culver: There are so many infrastructure needs but funds are limited and you can't parse it out and have any impact anywhere.

Nan asked about a capital improvement plan:

Dale Culver: There is limited tax base coming in; we need state help for shared services. One of our problems is that we border another state; we can't share anything with our neighbor to the east, Connecticut.

Nan asked about what shared services do exist.

George Kaye: Town garage, recreation, police, courts, assessor, shared equipment with other town highway departments.

Nan asked if there were opportunities for more sharing.

George Kaye: We look for as many as we can.

Ken McLaughlin: The village is more densely populated; needs are different.

George Kaye: The commercial aspect is much more concentrated.

Nan asked what projects or initiatives that the town and village have worked on.

George Kaye: A fueling system that will be part of the highway garage complex.

Debbie Middlebrook: The village received a CFA grant for feasibility study of a sewer system.

Eddie Greenwood: Pedestrian plan.

Nan asked what other things that haven't been discussed.

Steve Waite: Shared responsibilities regarding the Rail Trail. Village has responsibility to maintain trailheads.

Dave Sherman: What will the impact be when the next section of the Rail Trail opens?

Chris Kennan: Millerton is the only location on the trail where it goes through the middle of the village. The new extension will be a great asset to Millerton.

Steve Waite: The Rail Trail is an economic boost to our community.

Ellen asked if there was any information on how many people use the trail each year. No one is attendance had information but thought the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association or the county might have some data on utilization.

Nan asked if there is structure set up to work with the county and others on the Rail Trail.

Debbie Middlebrook: Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association (HVRTA).

Nan asked if the HVRTA looked at parking and signage needs.

Debbie Middlebrook: We have a space that that is owned by the county on South Center Street that is used for parking. When the current Town garage is moved, their location could be used for more parking. There was a project a few years ago with Townscape to bury power lines on Main Street but it was stalled due to lack of funds.

Nan asked if the interest was still there.

Debbie Middlebrook: Yes.

Chris Kennan: That would also fit in with making the community more resilient with the effects of climate change.

Dale Culver: Need to integrate pieces of the Pedestrian Plan into the Comprehensive Plan.

Nan said at the last meeting the Pedestrian Plan was talked about as an appendix to the Comprehensive Plan.

Ralph Fedele: When you look at population trends, what affect do weekenders have on the community, getting weekenders to register to vote here, need to provide services seven days a week? It's the wave of the future; development of larger homes creates an imbalance to types of businesses; price levels need to support the locals and the aging population.

Nan asked if there are any wish list ideas that haven't been addressed yet.

Ralph Fedele: Convince the county and state to participate; the issues are not town/village specific.

Dale Culver: The current cost of housing is not affordable for younger generations.

Ralph Fedele: The cost of housing has affected school population.

Steve Waite: Loss of major employers.

Ellen Pemrick asked if nearby towns have the same issues:

Steve Waite: Yes.

Dale Culver: The Harlem Valley was hit hard with the closing of Wassaic Developmental Center (WDC).

John Crodelle: There was a big impact with the closing of two institutions, WDC and Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center in Wingdale.

George Kaye: Amenia has development in the form of Silo Ridge.

Bill Kish: Silo Ridge will primarily create services jobs but not everyone wants them.

Steve Waite: It's important for people to take the survey and address those issues.

Ellen Pemrick asked what potential there is here for entrepreneurs.

Bill Kish: Start-up plan; the problem for technology is pulling in talent.

Ellen Pemrick asked if there are existing facilities.

Bill Kish: Millerton Elementary School; retrofitting farm buildings is tough.

Nan asked the committee if they had any questions.

John Crodelle: It's important to get residents to take the survey. Weekenders are important to the town and village, their input is needed.

Matt Harzog: There is resentment from locals to weekenders. The committee needs to knit things together.

Dale Culver: The Comprehensive Plan is for everyone.

Ralph Fedele: There is interaction with locals and weekenders at Irving Farm.

Edie Greenwood: There is a need for a local event communications platform.

Dale Culver: Suggested having a shared community calendar between the town and village to avoid conflicting events.

Ed Downey: Asked participants to list three greatest strengths and to describe community character.

Responses: Location, young people, Moviehouse, Rail Trail, natural beauty, intimacy of small community, North East Community Center, art community, volunteer base, private schools, BerkshireTaconic Foundation, access to NYC.

Leslie Farhangi: It is important to create a mix of opportunities.

Eliot Ramos: Like to see a park near the Rail Trail.

Nan thanked everyone for sharing their ideas.

Meeting was adjourned at 9PM.