

20/20 VISION
VILLAGE OF WILLIAMSVILLE COMMUNITY PLAN
COMMUNITY PLAN COMMITTEE

DRAFT MEETING NOTES – JANUARY 29, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 PM.

Community Plan Committee Attendees: Walter Pacer (Chair), Charles Akers, David Brody, Paul Iskalo, Victor Paquet, Charles Rizzone, David Vitka, Kate Waterman-Kulpa

Absent: Steve Appler, Mary Carr, Thomas Claxton, Kim Gianelli-Calos, Carolyn Schlifke, Wesley Stone, Ed Zabel

Consultant/Town/Village Staff Present: Lawrence Bice, Joelle Guy, Dan Howard, Lynda Juul

Board Members: Mary Lowther, Basil Piazza

Residents/Other Attendees: Chris Church (NYS DOT), Thomas Frank, Neil Frank

ACCEPTANCE OF MEETING NOTES

On motion by David Brody, seconded by Chuck Rizzone, the meeting notes of November 6, 2007 were accepted.

Unanimously Carried.

DISCUSSION & DISPOSITION OF PUBLIC HEARING COMMENTS

The committee discussed a spreadsheet with the comments given at the public hearing and the responses suggested by Behan Planning.

BUILDING HEIGHT

David Brody discussed comments MS-16 and MS-17 which pertained to building height and density in the proposed Village Mixed Use land classification. The classification currently calls for a maximum height of 6 stories. He feels this is an issue the committee can not resolve themselves. He suggested adding commentary stating that the committee was split on the issue of density, and that while some felt it was not appropriate, others felt it was. With that comment, he is ready to recommend the Plan to the Village Board.

He felt Lawrence did a great job incorporating all of the commentary into the plan, and did not have any issues with any other topics.

Paul Iskalo felt we should let the height/density issue go without making any changes. He feels the consensus of the committee is the way the plan is currently written, so it should stay the way it is written. Many of the comments are a single comment by one individual, and there are many individuals in the Village of Williamsville. Changing the plan for one comment does not make sense. Paul felt we have spent a lot of time on this issue and that the focus should be the Village as a whole, and not one individual area. There should be some opportunity for higher density and height, and it was decided by the Committee to put this on the east end of the Village.

Lawrence added that this does not mean that the entire area will be six (6) story buildings. Adjacent land uses would be taken into account prior to development. He also stated that part of the charge is to review the feedback from the public and determine if something should be changed in the plan or not.

The committee was polled on leaving the Plan the way it is currently written, and including Paul's comments in the write-up on the spreadsheet (i.e. the east end of the Village being chosen to accommodate this type of development); all were in favor of this.

SOUTH LONG STREET CONCEPT

Wally Pacer suggested that we should respond more appropriately to the areas such as South Long Street, where we receive a lot of commentary.

The modification to page 58 of the Plan, which was inadvertently left out of the mailing to the Committee, was handed out and approved by the Committee as changed by Lawrence.

Chuck Akers suggested treating the form letters as only one vote, and stated that he has seen them treated this way in other situations. He felt that if the residents were really concerned, they would have sent separate letters, written themselves.

Vic Paquet disagreed and felt that it's similar to a petition.

David Brody was concerned because he thought all the drawings relating to the park area involved creating more park land, not reducing the park land. Lawrence said this was true, but there was a section at the end in an earlier version of the Plan that showed housing opportunities where the current park exists.

David Brody suggested agreeing with the letters that park space should not be reduced, but indicating that there may be a better configuration for use.

Lawrence felt this is still very conceptual. The form letter sends a message that there is a strong feeling about this. The language of the Plan talks about flexibility. He doesn't think we need to get into too much detail; the renderings are very general.

Chuck Rizzone reads this to be that the people do not want the park space moved at all. He doesn't feel it's about not reducing park space – it's about moving park space.

Paul Iskalo wondered when master planning takes over in the process. He feels it is not just the California and Milton residents' park; it's the entire Village's park. There is a point in time when certain things will improve the entire Village. He feels that park is not that great of a park to begin with, and that it is not successful in allowing interaction to occur. He believes this is an area that presents an opportunity for the Village to be much more than it is now. This would make it a greater asset for the residents, and for the Village as a whole.

Lawrence showed the board where the potential new housing areas were removed behind California Drive. He reminded the Committee that this is not a blue print of what is going to happen in the Village. By removing the one area, this will appease the residents. There is a larger overall park in the rendering – it increases from under 5 acres to over 7 acres. There are many complications to re-designating park land. This is a battle that doesn't need to be fought now. At the very least this is a park that could be improved.

Kate Kulpa felt that the concern was putting potential new housing with the park. She doesn't like the two uses together.

Lawrence felt that the Plan is trying to establish a relationship between open space and housing. It would be nice to re-use these areas so they work together. Each strengthens the other and creates a unified area. He feels it's good to show the housing and the park land together. If you disassemble it, it loses its power.

Chuck Rizzone felt this was the most under-developed area of the Village, with the most specific concepts.

Wally compared this to Lehigh Memory Trail. He stated that if you asked anyone if they like Lehigh Memory Trail the answer would be yes. However, there was a lot of resistance from the neighbors at that time. He feels this is the same kind of NIMBY (not in my back yard) attitude. The Committee has looked at this carefully. The Plan preserves the park, and actually added to the park land.

David Brody thought it would be nice to work something into the text, and on the spreadsheet comment that changes have been made to the text and the Plan.

Paul Iskalo suggested modifying the response to indicate that a new map has been incorporated to clarify that there is no intent to decrease park land.

Vic Paquet suggested changing the response wording from “could be” to “has been”.

On motion by Chuck Akers, seconded by David Brody, it was moved to accept the change to Lawrence's response as per Vic's suggestion, and insert the modified map into the Plan.

Unanimously Carried.

Chuck Akers asked if Lawrence could somehow put the outline of the existing park into the map, so that the drawing shows that the park land has been increased in the conceptual plan. He suggested using a dotted line to show this. Lawrence stated he would find a way to incorporate this.

OTHER ISSUES

Chuck Rizzone asked if there was any progress with meeting with UB regarding their 2020 plan. Lawrence indicated that he sent an e-mail that he would be in town and wanted to meet, but that he never received a response. Dan Howard thought the University's plan for expansion could have an impact on the housing demand and traffic in the Village. He felt it is worth acknowledging in the Plan that the University is going to grow significantly. Chuck asked about the Greenway plan as well. Lawrence suggested this could be an opportunity for park linkages. Dan Howard also discussed that there is another initiative that we haven't addressed; Erie County's Framework for Regional Growth. The framework doesn't project anything significantly different than what the Village is, but it does recognize the Village as an area where growth and redevelopment should be encouraged. This includes investing in infrastructure in areas that have already been developed. He thought it's a good idea to acknowledge other plans, and that we could add a section to the Plan on initiatives outside the Village. The committee was in agreement with that. The committee gave Lawrence the authority to write this up.

Chuck Rizzone suggested a change to the proposed wording on page 58, to include the word "residents". He feels that "businesses" and "user" are referenced quite a bit, but that residents could be referenced more often. The committee was in favor of this.

On motion by David Brody, seconded by Chuck Akers, it was moved to accept all modifications, subject to the changes that were discussed and approved tonight.

Unanimously carried.

RESOLUTION TO RECOMMEND THE COMMUNITY PLAN

The committee reviewed a draft resolution to recommend the Community Plan to the Village Board. Two changes were made – removing the word "all" from the second whereas, pertaining to the members of the Planning Board (one member is not on the Community Plan Committee); and to add the words "and stakeholders" to the same

paragraph after the word “residents” (since some stakeholders are not residents). The committee also requested that the Village attorney review the resolution.

On motion by David Brody, seconded by Chuck Akers, the draft resolution was adopted with the noted changes.

Unanimously carried.

FUTURE STEPS

Wally commented that the committee has done a lot of work on this plan, and he does not want to see it gather dust. He asked if there is anything the Committee wants to do to encourage the Village Board to move forward with the Community Plan. David Brody suggested that he would make himself available should the Board want to have a session with the Committee. As individuals, they could go to the Board and ask the progress of moving the Plan along. David Vitka suggested that it’s all about perception and how one understands this very complex document. He feels there needs to be some sort of recommendation that the Committee make itself available. David Brody reminded that members of the Board have been present at many meetings; Dave Vitka responded that there are members who haven’t been here as well, and who don’t necessarily know much about the Plan. Chuck Akers suggested that Wally write a cover letter to go with the resolution, letting the Village Board know that the committee is available as a resource. Dave Vitka feels time is of the essence to change the zoning code. If more than a year goes by, we could get another Walgreens, or other developments with parking lots in the front of the parcel. Kate Waterman-Kulpa felt that design guidelines are also very important. Lawrence added that the Plan takes some of these ideas fairly far. The Committee agreed that the following should be incorporated into the cover letter: (1) that the committee is available as a resource to the Village Board, and (2) that time is of the essence to adopt the plan and a new zoning code.

Lawrence suggested that members of the Community Plan Committee attend the Village Board’s public hearing for support.

Dave Brody asked if any of the current Board members present had any suggestions for things that would be helpful in the cover letter.

Trustee Piazza stated that the Board wants to move forward, and that they have been talking about updating the zoning code. They want to hold the public hearing and look at any ramifications for zoning. It will probably take some time, but they may move forward on some zoning changes.

Mayor Lowther felt it would take some time to make zoning changes that are reflective of the Plan. She felt it would be good to get a complete, finalized draft of the Community Plan on the web site, along with the cover letter.

Chuck Rizzone asked about doing something easier, such as dealing with traffic issues, which could be easier to do more quickly.

Mayor Lowther reported that the NYSDOT is going to be at the next Traffic & Safety meeting. She stated that she feels the Village Board is taking a pro-active approach before this is even accepted by looking at zoning and Main Street.

Dave Vitka asked how the Village Board would go about amending a part of a plan. Mayor Lowther reported that any changes would be made, then it would go to public hearing, and then potential adoption. This may be an area where they will be looking for clarification from the Committee.

David Brody asked about getting a full revised copy of the Plan. Lynda suggested we do it by request, as some members may prefer a CD over a printed copy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Thomas Frank, 225C Evans Street

Mr. Frank discussed the UB 2020 Plan, the GBNRTC, traffic, the bicentennial of the Town of Clarence, removal of the Williamsville toll barrier removal, the Greenway concept, the Mill, and the Early American Industrial Revolution.

Mary Lowther expressed the Board's appreciation for all the effort, and time the Committee has spent on this Plan on behalf of the Village Board, the citizens of the Village, and the businesses in the Village.

Paul Iskalo thanked Wally Pacer on behalf of the committee for leading everyone in this project.

Wally thanked the committee and expressed his pride in the Community Plan document.

CLOSE OF MEETING

On Motion by David Brody, seconded by Kate Waterman-Kulpa, the meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.

Unanimously Carried.