



**Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee  
Zoom Hybrid Meeting  
Meeting Minutes  
June 14, 2023  
Approved: July 5, 2023**

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Ann DiPetta, Roxanne Marino, Elizabeth Weatherby, Rebecca Schneider, Mo Klein, Alison Weaver, Rosemarie Hanson  
**Committee Members Absent:** Diane Cohen, Katelin Olson, Tai Basilius  
**Other Town Staff Present:** Town Planner Niels Tygesen, Mollie Duell  
**Members of the Public Present:** Tim Fallon

**Proceedings**

Chair DiPetta called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**Approval of Agenda**

**Motion:** Schneider made a motion to approve the agenda; Klein seconded.

**Vote:** Marino, aye; Weatherby, aye; Klein, aye; Schneider, aye; Weaver, aye; Chair DiPetta, aye.

**Motion Carried.**

**Approval of Past Minutes**

**Motion:** Schneider made a motion to approve the May 10<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes; Klein seconded.

**Vote:** Klein aye; Marino aye; Weatherby aye; Schneider, aye; Weaver, aye; Chair DiPetta aye.

**Motion Carried.**

**Privilege of the Floor**

Tim Fallon read a letter to the Committee sharing opinions about weaknesses from the previous plan's development process:

Ulysses Town Comprehensive Plan Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your Committee work. First, thank you for your willingness to serve. My thoughts are largely based on the previous Town Comprehensive Plan and the turmoil felt by many residents. The "PLAN" seemingly became the focus for much of the Town Board activity, a be all and end all unto itself, and seemingly full of personal agendas and preferences. I would ask that you proceed with some sense of restraint so to speak. It is quite amazing that a relatively small group can direct and assert so much direction.

Some issues with the previous Comprehensive Plan were surveys that were interpreted quite differently than I, as a responder, could have imagined. For example, I recall a question 'Are you in favor of zoning?' I answered YES because our experience was that the zoning process was reasonable and flexible enough to work for the residents. I believe the Comp Plan Committee took a YES to mean we wanted MORE zoning which was NOT the case. There were some real basic

misunderstandings with the survey. Please phrase your surveys carefully, and please try to not let agendas or biases form your decision making.

A particular water front group claimed to represent and speak for the majority of waterfront residents. That was simply not the situation. When conversation with their leadership occurred, early in the process, that expressed disagreement with that waterfront-group's position, the arrogant reply was 'Well too bad, you better get on board because this (their agenda) is happening.' The initial zoning that was proposed, based on the first Comprehensive Plan, was frustrating for both the Town Board and the Residents. To hear that that plan provided a good foundation feels like here we go again. I so hope we don't have to do that again. I know your task is huge, and again thank you for your time and thoughtful deliberations.

## **Old Business Items**

### **A. Work Plan**

#### **I. DEC Climate Smart Communities Grant**

Tygesen updated the Committee on the status of the DEC Climate Smart Communities Grant, stating no finalized information is available yet, but a revised work plan with changes will be determined. Comments and recommendations will be gathered to present to the Town Board at a meeting in late July.

#### **II. Continued Committee Membership Outreach**

Tygesen noted that there is 1 membership slot left, and lake shore representation is desired by the Town Board, preferably a resident homeowner on the waterfront rather than a business owner. The Committee will continue seeking an additional member.

## **New Business Items**

### **A. Comprehensive Plans Elements, Goals, and Policies Comparisons**

In preparation for this evening's meeting, Tygesen collected comments from Committee members to facilitate the beginning stages of plan development. The Committee was asked to read through comprehensive plans from other municipalities. Members noted what they thought could be added or improved, what is already strong, and what should be omitted or reduced in preparation for the meeting.

#### **To be Improved:**

Schneider mentioned multiple CPSC Members agreed that action items were laid out better in other plans, and organization throughout the Ulysses plan has room for improvement. Weatherby mentioned recent comprehensive plans are more illustrative, using graphs, charts, and diagrams to visualize information, while the 2009 Plan is very heavy in text. Chair DiPetta agreed with Schneider and Weatherby, expressing a need for a clear timeline regarding action items, which Brockport's plan provides a good example of. Chair DiPetta also expressed interest in including interactive elements as seen in other plans. Klein agreed, noting that technology improvements since 2009 should allow for new features to be implemented, and some plans have included videos to present information. Schneider liked the economic analysis in Corning's plan, and noted Ulysses needs to branch out from land use, which was a primary topic in the 2009 plan. Weatherby agreed that key focuses have changed as new issues have emerged, and global issues have also expanded. Economics, housing, environment, sustainability, and climate issues have grown considerably in the last decade. Weaver agreed that business needs a greater focus, and the Town should consider what types of businesses are coming and going, as well as what kind of business the Town wants to draw. Residents must travel into Ithaca or Watkins for certain services that are missing or less accessible in Ulysses.

Marino echoed Fallon's earlier statement that wording must be considered carefully when developing surveys and interpreting responses. Zoning is desired by many residents, but not necessarily an increase rather than an adjustment. Maintaining a rural environment and open space is known to be highly valued by current residents, but what exactly is being desired within this concept could be developed further.

Schneider noted that Ulysses' 2009 plan contains a significant amount of discussion regarding the environment and compared the ecotourism challenges of Ulysses to Southampton while reviewing their plan. Southampton thoroughly confronts the challenges of balancing the environment with the tourism economy and understands the importance of maintaining natural resources while using them sustainably. Southampton has also experienced similar zoning and variance situations as Ulysses. Schneider stated the problems surrounding lack of affordable housing need to be improved while considering how to preserve the environment.

Rose Hanson arrived at 6:22 pm. Hanson introduced herself as a new committee member whose role is to act a liaison to the Village of Trumansburg. Hanson mentioned the County's comprehensive plan and expressed that coordination could be better between the Village of Trumansburg and Town of Ulysses. Hanson noted she thought that development should happen where it already is taking place, but water and sewer services are missing from areas such as Jacksonville. Hanson added that farming should be preserved where it already is, and growth should be limited to areas that already have higher density. Hanson continued to speak about the village and the goal of making the area more self-sustaining by improving local services. While developing the plan's structure, Hanson advised fellow Committee members to think of the plan as a web, where many topics, such as sustainability, will coincide with each other and be discussed repeatedly.

Marino stated that transportation options are an issue to be addressed. Alternate energy was not discussed in depth previously, an issue that has also expanded significantly since 2009. Schneider noted community identity is imperative, and mentioned different formats seen in other plans, like word clouds and the "Aunt Sally postcard", are a more creative format of sourcing data that could initiate more participation.

#### **Strengths in the Existing Plan:**

Weatherby noted land use was previously covered well; Hanson mentioned that there has been opposition to the preservation of land. Some famers have been dissatisfied with attempts to limit development, since selling off land has been a common retirement plan in the farming community. Marino expressed that finding the balance between what direction different residents would like to see the Town take has been a long and continuous struggle. Marino mentioned the discussion of nodes in the 2009 plan; Jacksonville and the Village of Trumansburg are nodes of development and the Town has ideally wanted no extensive development taking place between these nodes. Recognizing youth and recreation were strong in the previous plan and helped with strengthening community identity. History was thoroughly discussed in the previous plan, but this section could be restructured.

#### **Areas to Delete or Reduce:**

Tygesen asked about elements that are problematic or should be omitted. Schneider noted history is important to the town and should be part of the plan, but history sections should be reorganized to not take up excessive valuable space. With technology improvements, linking to information online with visuals, videos, and information would be better than having everything in the plan. Committee members agreed that the history section is too dense.

Hanson stated that she was not a fan of the identity piece at the end of the plan and thought this section seemed confused. Weatherby agreed, noting that there are too many photos. Klein mentioned his experience in previously developing a plan in another state and suggested limiting reexamination of the

2009 plan too much; so many things have changed and this could become tedious. Weaver noted she likes the idea of starting over.

#### **Other Elements to Add to the Plan:**

Weatherby noted that Dryden's plan thoroughly discussed viability of the agricultural community and focused on the people while Ulysses focuses too much on land; the new plan should mention the human component of farming and address various issues that farmers are facing, such as the rise in invasive species, increased property taxes making land unaffordable to keep, and other complications farmers are facing due to climate change. Hanson noted the average age of farmers is older now, around 58, and keeping the practice of farming in the town is as big of an issue as preserving the land. Weatherby shared concerns from citizens that the Town has shown appreciation for a "farm feel" more than farmers and farming. Klein mentioned most people do not understand the full scope of what farmers are facing. Hanson also mentioned that Potsdam's plan had concerns listed along with thorough explanations of what exactly is at stake if these issues aren't solved. Marino agreed that the scope of each challenge could be better explained in the new plan.

The Committee discussed the concept of buying land to preserve it; Southampton has a small tax for a land acquisition fund. Marino noted that NYS allows this but the process needs to be looked into. Klein mentioned various considerations in future planning such as cluster homes developments and figuring out where to focus business developments. Route 96 is the main way to Ithaca and there are businesses along the road, but whenever something is added to this route, traffic risks increase. Another consideration of a busier main road is an increased need for services from the police and fire departments, which could develop into further financial strains. Klein floated the idea of an industrial park to organize business developments.

Chair DiPetta expressed uncertainty with how many surveys would be needed and what the community should be asked. Tygesen noted many surveys can initiate burnout, and an attempt should be made to make the format more appealing. Discussion ensued on survey methods to be developed. Chair DiPetta suggested that asking for feedback from the youth could be fun. Klein suggested using QR codes in local papers. Hanson suggested developing a better newsletter and list of emails.

Marino reminded the Committee that a portion of the town is not in the Trumansburg School District, and the Committee must consider how to make everyone feel included. The Committee continued to discuss places where community engagement could happen, including the Racker Center, Ulysses Library, and the Farmer's Market. Klein noted that feedback tends to be most active when it is already too late and people are dissatisfied. Hanson suggested figuring out a system to provide periodic updates, and Chair DiPetta added that communication is easier in 2023 than 2009.

Weatherby mentioned the Ag Committee is reforming, and specific issues should be discussed with directly affected communities individually, rather than facing all problems all at once in a disorganized meeting. Klein agreed that each group could be separately heard to pinpoint objectives and direct the focus of discussions. Weaver noted that meeting attendance could improve when each community is addressed individually.

Chair DiPetta asked about a social media plan; Weatherby noted that a Social Media policy is under review by the Town Board.

#### **B. Meeting Schedule**

The Committee discussed member availability and tentative meeting dates. Future meeting dates were scheduled for July 5 and August 2. The Committee may continue to follow a schedule of meeting on the first Wednesday of each month.

**Next Steps**

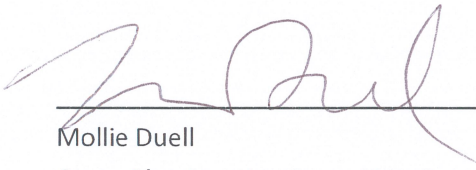
Tygesen asked Committee members to clarify their main topics of focus to discuss with the future consultant. Further details will be clarified as the DEC grant is finalized. Weatherby reminded the board to keep track of time spent on CPSC tasks, including meetings.

**Motion:** Klein made a motion to adjourn; Schneider seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Marino, aye; Schneider, aye; Klein, aye; Weatherby, aye; Weaver, aye; Hanson, aye; Chair DiPetta, aye.

**Motion Carried.**

**Meeting adjourned at 7:23 pm.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mollie Duell", is written over a horizontal line.

Mollie Duell

Comp Plan Steering Committee Secretary