

Town of Westerlo

Comprehensive Plan Committee

Mtg on Wednesday, September 11th, 2019

The Town of Westerlo Comprehensive Plan Committee held their initial meeting on Wednesday September 11, 2019 at the Town Hall located at 933 County Route 401, Westerlo, NY. Committee Chair David Lendrum opened the meeting at 7 PM with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Attending Committee members: (all were present)

Dave Lendrum, Dorothy Verch, Steve Cornell, Bill Scrafford, John Sefcik, Sue Fancher, Jill Henck, Kelly Keefe, Tom Della Rocco

Others in attendance: Supervisor Bill Bichteman, Town Clerk Kathy Spinnato, and 4 members of the public.

Kathy Spinnato had everyone take the oath of office as a Comprehensive Plan Committee member or chairman and sign the applicable paperwork.

Agenda of meeting:

I. Introductions: Who, Where, What and Why?

We went around the table and each member provided some information about themselves, including background and skills that will be useful when working on the comp plan.

II. Scheduling future meetings and anticipated meeting times.

Meeting time and frequency: We decided to start by meeting once a month, on the third Wednesday of the month, from 7:00 – 9:00 PM. The next meetings will be on October 16th, November 20th, December 18th, and January 15th. We were not sure about February, but by then we will decide if we need to adjust our meeting schedule going forward.

Document process: We had a brief discussion on the type of document to use for our new comp plan, who should have write access, and how often we wanted to share it with the public. No decisions were made.

Meeting minutes: We need to have minutes from our meetings. For most other town committees, the town pays a clerk to attend the meetings and write minutes. John Sefcik suggested that it would be efficient and cost effective if one of the committee members wrote the minutes (as they would be more familiar with the material, and the town would only need to pay for time writing minutes, if they paid for anything). No decision was made. John volunteered to write the minutes for this meeting.

III. Current Comprehensive Plan Overview:

- A. Discussion of where it falls short.
- B. Committee's personal concerns.
- C. The town board's personal concerns/ areas of interest

Most of the rest of the meeting was spent on the list of topics that we should consider when working on the comp plan. Bill Bichteman provided a list of topics and suggestions that were a compilation of his thoughts and those of the Town Board members who responded to his request for input. We went through the list and made some of our own additions to it.

The base list below is the one provided by the Town Board. Any bulleted item that has ** at the start of the text is one that we added to their list. Any information in parentheses in the bullets below was added from our committee discussion (by a committee member or member of the audience).

Comprehensive Plan Features:

- Develop a Strategy for Wise and Cost-effective Use of Consultant Services
- Provide a Vision Statement
- Establish Guiding Principles
- Set Forth A Methodology with Goals, Objectives and Strategy
- Be Cognizant of Both the Long Term and Short-Term Economic Impacts of a Proposed Plan
- Recognize the Historical and Rural Nature of the Community
- Apply Our Town's History to the Towns Future (more historical information needs to be added to the comp plan)
- Develop Demographic and Economic Profiles
- Keep the Citizenry Involved
 - Public Hearings/Meetings (to bring more people in, have targeted/theme sessions; we have many different groups – the hamlets (and all are different), Onderdonk, ag/farmers, et. al.)
 - Written Surveys
 - Personal Interviews
 - Vision and Imagery Preferences
 - Resident Sub-Committees
 - Diversity of Opinions; Youth, Seniors, all Socio-economic Sectors
- Onderdonk Lake
 - Zoning Regulation Modifications
 - Separate Lake Zone
 - Environmental Considerations
 - Fuel tanks, Fertilizers, Erosion Controls
 - Address Seasonal RV's and Camper Use
- Taxes / Assessments
 - Full Value Assessment vs Partial Value
 - Revaluation of Properties
- Treasure Our Resources
 - Historical and Cultural (the southern half of Westerlo considers themselves to be Greenville; starting to get more people moving in from downstate who

- have new/different ideas)
 - Environmental
 - Open Space
 - Moderate Taxation
- Agriculture Protection
 - Employ Agricultural Steering Committee
 - Adoption of Right to Farm
 - Agricultural Zones
 - Protect and Preserve Open Space and Agricultural Land as is Reasonable (there are about 50 farms in Westerlo, although the definition of a farm varies; look for things we can do for hobby farms; need to look for ways to get young people involved; transfer of development rights is a way for individuals to get \$\$)
- Tourism
 - Destinations (cycling)
 - Recreation (need to consider temp rentals, such as Airbnb)
 - Activities
- Infrastructure
 - Wi-Fi Development (working with Mid-Hudson Cable and Mid-Tel)
 - Communications
 - Roads & Highways
- Economic Development (need infrastructure enhancements.)
 - Commercial Space / Corridor Designation (discussed trying to bring in businesses. Rt 32 corridor is mostly Greenville school, Rt 85 is mostly BKW; these two routes are often suggested as the major roads for infrastructure improvements and businesses; Phase 3 needed to get businesses)
 - Encourage Development of Business types that reflect both the Needs of the Residents and the Character of the Community
 - ** Hannay Reels (key to the community)
- Shale Gas / Hydrofracking (shale is at the surface here)
- Renewable Energies (a key factor is where we want to see it)
 - Solar Power (would be nice if the leases benefited Westerlo residents more instead of non-residents)
 - Wind Power (nothing in the town zoning law on wind; there are people in the area who have been approached about it)
 - Energy Storage
 - ** Pipelines (need to consider them, as the Constitution Pipeline is back on; dangers when gas is pushed through old pipes; Iroquois pipeline is in Westerlo)
 - Area limits
 - Site Specific
 - Town Wide
- Hamlet Development—Westerlo, South Westerlo, & Dormansville
 - Water District

- Sewer Systems (will probably eventually need a hamlet sewer system)
- Walk-able Development
- Keys to Revitalization
- Water District #1- Westerlo
 - Identify Long Term Solutions (Bill Bichteman said the cheapest water bill next year will be about \$700 for the year; the system was designed for 24,000 gal a day and is currently at 6,000 per day)
- ** Transfer station (Town Board is currently working on changes; perhaps have a pickup/curb garage day once or twice a year)
- Housing Needs
 - Senior Housing
 - Affordable Housing (there is a town law on abandoned property, but it is not well written)
- Population Erosion (Westerlo dropped about 200 people in the 2010 census)

IV. Discussion of ways to communicate with the community

Barb Russell gave us a survey that the Town of Wright just distributed to residents to assist them in developing their comprehensive plan.

V. Necessity of a planning adviser (paid professional)

The Town Board had selected Barton & Lajudice (Chuck Voss) to work with us as a consultant. He was not asked to attend tonight's meeting. The committee decided that we will meet again next month without the consultant, while we decide on what role we want them to play. For now, Chuck is available as needed on an hourly basis.

VI. Exploration of grants for support

Nicole Ambrosio is submitting applications for a couple of possible grants. For the Hudson Valley Greenway Grant for Comprehensive Plans, we will need to keep track of our Comp Plan Committee hours to use as our matching grant (i.e. hours converted into dollars). We did not decide on a process for doing this. Nicole is working on breaking out the parts of the Agricultural grant that we will need to focus on.

Homework for the next meeting:

- Look at Comprehensive Plans for town similar to Westerlo (e.g. Berne, Knox, Rensselaerville, Schoharie ...). Especially look at the methodology that they used.
- Think about the need for a survey and bring potential questions to the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 PM.

Submitted by,

John Sefcik
Comp Plan Committee member