

Comprehensive Plan Committee Minutes
February 5, 2020

The meeting was called to order by Dave Lendrum at 7 PM at the Westerlo Town Hall.

Members in attendance: Dave Lendrum, Bill Scrafford, John Sefcik, Dotty Verch, Sue Fancher, Tom Della Rocco, Kelley Keefe, and Jill Henck, as well as consultant Chuck Voss

Other attendees: Dianne Sefcik and Dennis Fancher.

After some discussion, the minutes of the Dec 18th meeting were approved (5 ayes and 3 abstains).

There was discussion on adhering to the Open Meetings Law. As long as our meetings are held on the 3rd Wednesday of the month, there is no need to re-advertise. But changes of date and special meetings need to be advertised in the Altamont Enterprise. It should also go on the Town of Westerlo web site.

Dianne Sefcik has volunteered to create and manage the Comprehensive Plan document, using the input from the committee. The committee voted 8 ayes to have Dianne assume this role. Dianne handed out a draft Table of Contents for our new Westerlo Comprehensive Plan, which she developed by researching what many other towns had done.

The committee decided to stay at one meeting per month. The next two meetings are scheduled for March 18th and April 15th (i.e. the normal meeting date of the 3rd Wed of the month). John Sefcik suggested having members work on tasks between the meetings.

Noah Zweifel from the Altamont Enterprise has reached out to Dave for information on our CPC work. We should draft a press release to control the information. Dave will answer Noah's questions in a draft response and forward it out for the committee's review so that the answers can be reviewed and approved by the committee at the next meeting.

Dave wanted the committee to break out into groups tonight and formulate ideas for a survey based on the input that was collected at the workshop on January 15th. Dave had consolidated all of the community workshop feedback into a list for us to use.

Before breaking into 2 groups, there was general survey discussion. Some of the comments were:

- How specific should the questions be (e.g. on taxes)? Chuck suggested to make it more general and tie back to a tangible. For example, ask if people are comfortable with the community services they get. Or ask if farmland is taxed too high.
- Should we do a 1-5 rating on questions and provide for open input?
- How many demographic questions should we ask (just 1-2, or more)? One suggestion was to put the demographic questions at the end of the survey.

- Should it be a paper version as well as on the Town website? Who will fill out the survey? Should there be one survey/household or per person? Should we provide a link on the web site? Should we number the surveys and have the person sign in with a key and answer the survey?
- Chuck said surveys are usually mailed to households. There are 1326 households in Westerlo (Capital District Regional Planning Commission) and about 3400 people in the Town of Westerlo.
- Kelley Keefe said the cost of the Fire Company calendar mailing was \$400 for 1600 homes. The mailing list was generated from the assessment data.
- Chuck suggested a 2-page (one sheet front and back) survey with approximately 20 questions. A good return is usually about 10% back of the surveys sent out. Chuck offered to find a couple of different surveys and we could distill down to what is applicable to Westerlo.
- Jill offered to look for services to do mailings. Chuck said they used SurveyMonkey in New Scotland. Each household had a key and they had a good response.

In the end, there were no decisions made on the survey details and the process. We do intend to do a survey though, as it will provide a good source of input as we develop our goals and recommendations.

Dianne Sefcik asked if the committee sees value in using the self-assessment tools independent of public input. We could also do a SWOT (strengths weaknesses opportunities threats) analysis. Chuck said the SWOT analysis is often done with the public and that could work.

We also discussed the idea of doing focus area meetings, such as on agriculture, solar, the hamlets, businesses, etc. Sue offered to provide a list of farmers in order to invite those interested in agriculture.

We broke into 2 groups at 8:00 PM. One group was to focus on the input from the Agriculture and Development tables (tables 1 and 2), and the other group on the input from the Environment and Planning and Zoning tables (tables 3 and 4).

Here is the summary info from each of the 2 groups at the end of the meeting (not discussed by the committee as a whole):

Tables 1 (Agriculture) and 2 (Development)

households

<\$400

Jill-use a service to output the survey

Focus Meeting

Agriculture-Ag district

Business- Business listing and in-home

Solar/Wind/Renewable

Survey

Draft goals and recommendations

Demographics

1. Age Range
2. Years lived here
3. Year round or seasonal
4. Rent or own

Agriculture

1. How could the town do a better job of promoting agriculture?
 - a. What resources could be improved to support financial development?
2. What could the town do to support new and existing farmers?
3. Would you support non-traditional, ag-related land uses on farms such as wedding venues, glamping, pay to work, etc. to increase income?
4. Should the town adopt a 'Right to Farm Law' that protects farmers from petty issues with non- farm entities?

Development

1. Is your current access to the Internet adequate for your usage at this time? (range)
2. What types of businesses or services would you like to see added to the town?
3. What additional services could the town provide to support pride in and beautification of the town?
4. How willing would you be to support a community clean-up day to help residents that are unable to maintain their property? (range)
5. How much effort should the town put into developing outdoor activities/recreational amenities?
 - a. What would you like to see?

Tables 3 (Environment) and 4 (Planning and Zoning)

The list of topics for potential survey questions is:

- Solar
- General question on renewable energy
- Multi-generational housing (options)
- Infrastructure for the hamlets of Westerlo and S Westerlo (sewer, water)
- Lake Onderdonk
- Zoning inhibitors to business
- Open space retention
- Youth retention (housing, jobs, activities)
- General question: What do you like about Westerlo?
- General question: What improvements are needed in Westerlo?
- Maybe a list of land uses and ask about them

The target date for a survey is April. Jill Henck made motion to adjourn, 2nd by Kelley Keefe.
The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Submitted by,

John Sefcik