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Goal 3: Tourism

Attract tourism through well planned events and recreational opportunities to a Town with an inviting appearance.

Objective 3.1: Promote the Town park as a festival venue for tourism related events such as car shows, open air concerts, craft beer festivals, farmer's market, and craft fairs.

Action 3.1.1 Appoint an events/ activities coordinator to promote and organize public and private activities in Town parks.

Action 3.1.2 Consider erecting an outdoor stage to host music festivals or outdoor theater on the lawn at the Town park.

Action 3.1.3 Collaborate with public and private partners who currently have a stake in existing ecotourism infrastructure and have a vested interest in sustaining ecotourism activities.

Action 3.1.4 Create a user-friendly map that is updated regularly of current recreational opportunities, retail businesses, agricultural businesses, parks, and other areas of interest in Westerlo.

Objective 3.2: Construct, promote, and maintain a multi use, non motorized trail network for hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, and horseback riding.

Action 3.2.1 Offer incentives to landowners who provide recreational access such as liability protection and/or tax incentives.

Objective 3.3: In conjunction with Local Snowmobling clubs, encourage landowners to continue providing trails use throughout the Town of Westerlo.

Action 3.2.1 Offer incentives to landowners who provide recreational access such as liability protection and/or tax incentives.

Tourism

Objective 3.4: Encourage and actively support a Town wide real property “pride of ownership “ program to enhance the appearance of the community.

Action 3.4.1 Encourage the enforcement of restricting unlicensed vehicles stored on a parcel or group of adjacent parcels under common ownership within reason.

Action 3.4.2 Consider restrictions on temporary storage containers on residential parcels visible from the road.

Action 3.4.3 Require burned out structures to be demolished and the debris properly disposed of within a reasonable amount of time.

Action 3.4.4 Consider a limited year tax incentive for acquisition and demolition or restoration of properties that have become attractive nuisances.

Action 3.4.5 Sponsor a community clean up day semiannually where Town employees and/or volunteers would collect and properly dispose of non hazardous unwanted and unsightly debris.

Action 3.4.6 Periodically sponsor and publicize and coordinate a household hazardous waste collection and disposal day with adjacent municipalities.

Action 3.4.7 Consistently and assertively enforce the zoning regulations.

Goal 4: Hamlet

Goal: Enhance the Hamlet areas through economic development opportunities and improved amenities for residents.

Objective 4.1: Improve the water quality of water district #1 by remediation of the Bromomethane content.

Action 4.1.1 Develop and fund a remediation plan.

- Identify potential sources of bromomethane contamination
- Identify options for mitigating bromomethane
- Re-evaluate the current remediation plan
- Negotiate a remediation timeline with Albany County Health Department
- Choose and fund a bromomethane mitigation plan

Objective 4.2: Encourage economic development in the Hamlet of Westerlo by installing a municipal wastewater treatment system.

Action 4.2.1 Incentivize commercial and residential development in the Hamlet of Westerlo to expand the water district assessment base and support a wastewater treatment system.

Objective 4.3: Support the continued development and expansion of the library and museum.

Action 4.3.1 Investigate additional funding for the Westerlo Public Library.

Action 4.3.2 Support the revitalization of the Westerlo Museum and the Westerlo Historical Society.

Appendices

Appendix A - Comprehensive Plan Maps

Appendix B - Existing Conditions Report

Appendix C - Survey Data Report

Mapping Disclosure- Mapping contained within may not be 100% accurate.
The mapping is determined by the Tax Parcel Data gathered by Albany County.

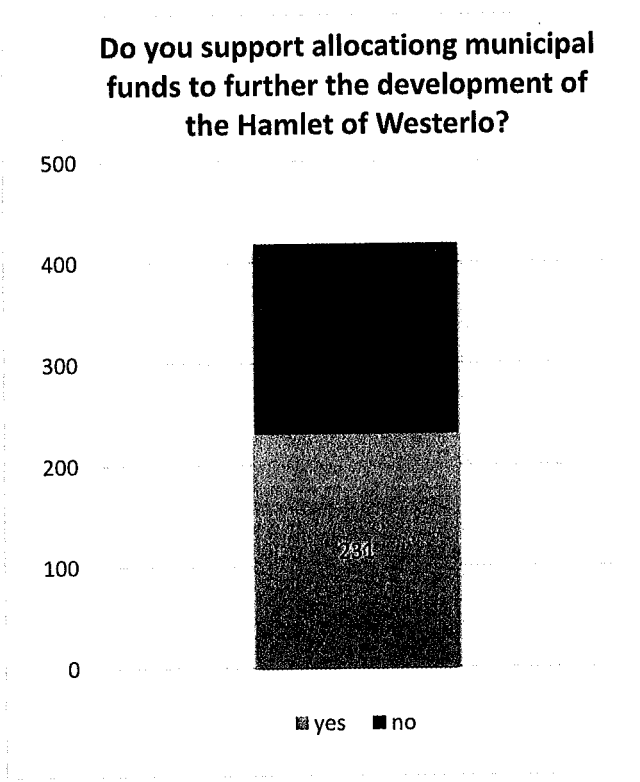


Figure 5. Respondents that support funding hamlet development.

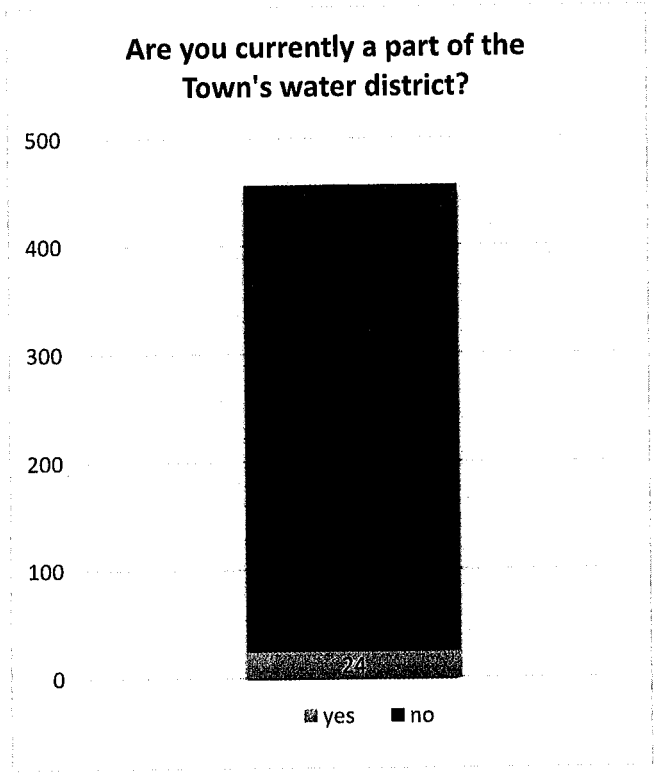


Figure 6. Respondents living within water district.

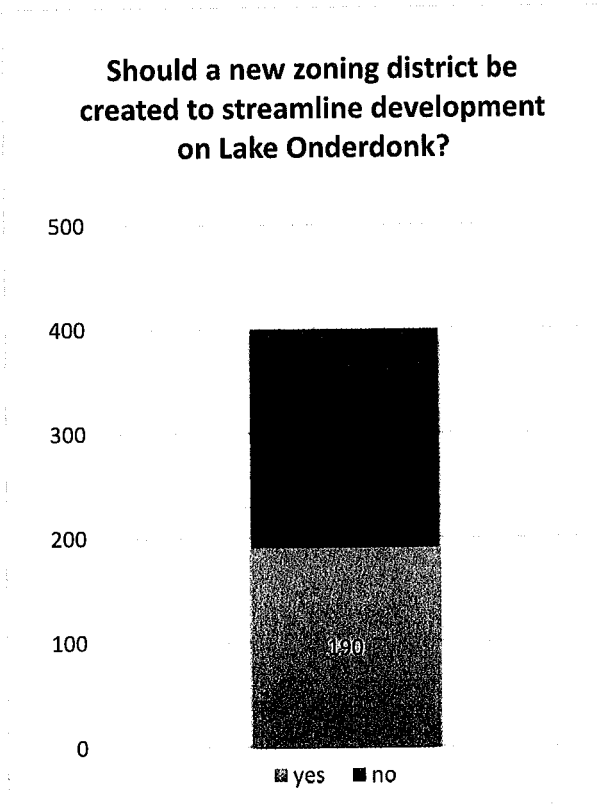


Figure 7. Respondents that support specialized zoning for the Lake Onderdonk area.

Appendix D – SWOT Report

A SWOT analysis was completed on August 12th 2020, with members of the Town Board invited to contribute. These points were contributed by various members of the town and not limited to elected town officials. The goal of this process was to collect information on what aspects of the town were seen as Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT).

GENERAL SWOT ANALYSIS 8/12/2020

Strengths (+)	Weaknesses (-)
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Low crime2. Rural character3. Excellent views/vistas4. Clean air / ground water quality5. Open space6. Educated population7. Nice parks8. Low taxes9. Diverse population10. Good schools11. Hannay Reels (family-owned businesses)12. Existing commercial tax base13. Recreational opportunities14. Relatively close to Albany15. Good municipal workforce16. Community Involvement17. Regional connections with Rt 32 and 8518. Dark skies due to limited light pollution19. Experienced and knowledgeable community20. Big uptick in real estate just south of Westerlo providing opportunity21. Volunteer fire department22. Library	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Water quality in homes in the Hamlet2. Internet coverage and speed3. Lack of commerce in general4. Lack of chamber of commerce5. Poor cell phone coverage6. Lack of identity (as belonging to Westerlo)7. Lack of amenities8. No sidewalks/few sidewalks9. Lack of expanding commercial tax base10. Poorly harnessed scientific knowledge (not enough knowledge to properly serve opportunities)11. Highway Infrastructure12. Lack of development at Lake Onderdonk13. Abandoned homes14. Aging/Elderly population15. Lack of and not attracting young adults and families to town16. Lack of recreational opportunities (ATVs, boating, City of Albany owns much of the lands ie. Basic Reservoir)17. Poor community communication18. Tax assessments19. Lack of knowledge about available agricultural products and services20. Lack of total community benefit from solar21. Greater community involvement needed22. Us versus them, divisive attitudes and politics23. Not using resources available in town.24. Town divided into two separate school districts contributes to lack of unified identity

Opportunities (+)

1. Intermunicipal cooperation for broadband within the Hilltowns.
2. Agritourism
3. Destination businesses such as a pie shop, family restaurant, or bakery
4. Farmers markets
5. Increased recreation at Basic Reservoir, Alcove Reservoir, Bear swamp, Town Park
6. Town Park space for festivals
7. Community green and renewable energy initiatives
8. Hydro Power
9. Wind Power
10. Space for Solar
11. Promote and develop a commercial corridor on 32,143, and 85.
12. Westerlo should become the base for county provided emergency services (preemptive planning)
13. Dark skies make for great star gazing, astronomy setting and an observatory of some kind.
14. Hiking, biking, horseback riding opportunities on pipelines and other paths, other non-motorized use.
15. Proactively address the decommissioning and removal of renewable energy projects
16. Creating consortiums with other Hilltowns- we have neighboring communities that are of like scale and aspect.
17. Change taxes to be fair to new residents and adopt a welcoming attitude toward them

Threats (-)

1. Aging residential solar panels and there is confusion over their disposal
2. Aging tax base
3. Aging residents
4. Lack of senior housing and services for seniors
5. Loss of Hannay Reels
6. No local urgent care in the area
7. Aging housing stock
8. Vanishing views for various reasons
9. Lack of some types of infrastructure
10. Recession and difficulty attracting economic development and business.
11. Rural decay
12. Loss of agricultural land to non-agricultural uses
13. Lack of active farmers to maintain farmland
14. Aging farmers
15. Next generation perspectives on rural land
16. Resistance to new farming technologies
17. Fear of development of a new landfill for Albany County
18. Translocation of youth
19. Environmentally damaging industries and activities

Appendix E – Focus Group Document

Town of Westerlo Comprehensive Plan Committee Sublevel Meetings: Meeting Format and Agenda

- Each meeting to be held online with committee members either present at town hall or via Zoom link.
- Each meeting will start with a pledge to the flag and introductions of committee members to the public.
- The intent of these meetings should be clearly explained at the outset:
The intent of the Comprehensive Plan Committee's sublevel meetings is to gather more specific information from the community at large to take into consideration for the town's developing comprehensive plan. These meetings will provide valuable insight into the concerns of the town residents and search for solutions amongst them.

I. **Agriculture: Tom DellaRocco, Dave Lendrum, Barb Russell, Guy Weidman, Bill Scrafford** **Guiding Principles:**

- A. Preserve and maintain the character and beauty of the rural landscape of Westerlo
- B. Protects and promotes agricultural operations and farmlands within the Town of Westerlo, pursuant to Albany County 'Right to Farm law'.

Topics of concern:

- Loss of farmland and family farms
- Full Value Assessment and its financial impacts
- Supporting land owners with small commercial operations
- Renewable energy's impact on farm land
 - Infrastructure expansion and its impact on farmland
 - The Town's level of responsibility in construction of renewable projects
- Necessity of a Town Ag Committee
 - Grant writing
 - How-to workshops
 - Educating beginning farmers

Discussion points:

1. There are a wide variety of services, both financial and informational, available to farmers through the county, state, and federal agencies. What method would be most valuable to you to access and learn about what's available? (websites, workshops, on-farm visits or other).
 - All of the above, age of the farmer would dictate the best practice, but all of the above would be helpful.
 - Farmer visits and tutorials and support might be the best support
 - Who would be doing the on-farm visits? (Concern over agency agenda)
 - This would be dependent on the topic
2. How can the Town of Westerlo support your operation and continue or improve your success?
 - Make decisions that minimize fees and taxes for farmers to limit the financial burden on farms.
 - The town does not have a right to farm law, though the county does. This grants simple protections to a farmer's way of life.
 - Check into any downsides to a Right to Farm Law.

- What can be done to support produce farmers to provide food for local schools. Connecting students to local producers and products.
3. What agricultural workshops would you like to see to help support the growth of your operation?
 - Grant writing workshops for new and existing farms
 - Creation of a local network that provides link to resources and connections to farmer that have used those resources.
 - Brochure of the town and location of locally grown or made products.
 - Listings for part time help or resources.
 4. Would you be willing to participate in an agricultural committee?
 - No response
 5. How can we get the youth of the Hilltowns involved in agriculture and excited about agriculture as a career?
 - Connected with part time jobs and showing youth the role of the agricultural producer.
 - Supporting the FFA and the development of Ag classes at BKW and Greenville.
 6. How can we support the connections between landowners and farmers to establish a positive relationship and renewed stewardship of the land?
 - Agricultural tax exemptions are extended to land owners from the farmer that works the fields.
 - Resource connecting landowners to farmers
 - Co-op of people interested in that product. Local support of that production and protecting the farmer in adverse years. Creating consumer dependence on local farms.
 7. How many farms have installed solar panels and have taken advantage of the NEXAMP 10% electric reduced rate?
 - Educating farmers on the benefits of renewable energy and its uses on the farm.
 8. What is a farm and who are farmers?
 - Various definitions.
 - Albany County Agricultural Plan: Definition lacks a dollar value.
 9. How will this document be used to influence the town, zoning, and planning boards?
 - The Comprehensive Plan is used to guide the decisions of the various boards to influence their decisions.
 10. Maintaining farmland as such should be one of the priorities of the comprehensive plan. Fragmentation of farm land makes it much more difficult to farm.
 11. The impact of 4G and 5G internet development and implementation on farm and open land should be taken in consideration. Land resources and animal health impacts should be considered.

II. Development: Steve Cornell, Bill Scrafford, Dave Lendrum

Guiding Principles:

- A. Provides for orderly and sustainable growth on a suitable scale conducive to local roads, utilities, waste and water systems, and infrastructure conditions,
- B. Promotes continued recreational opportunities,
- C. Improve and expand municipal infrastructure to support new development and encourage state of the art telecommunications infrastructure to spark business development and technology growth.
- D. Address the financial stability/sustainability of the town.

Discussion Points

1. Should the Town of Westerlo encourage and support attractive, environmentally friendly commercial development to increase the tax base?

Responses:

1. Why do we want to increase the tax base? Some residents may not desire to increase the tax base.
 - There are concerns that commercial and economic growth could transform the rural community into something different or less desirable.
 - Westerlo is located within a driving distance to amenities that residents need.
2. A key to economic development is to focus on the town's strengths rather than try to correct all weaknesses. What are the economic strengths of the town that can be built on?
 - Low taxes compared to surrounding towns.
 - Local family owned businesses with owners that are town residents.
 - Natural beauty and environment as one of our strengths in town. Possibly to increase tourism.
 - Increase in B and Bs and experiences in town.
3. What types of businesses would you like to see come to the town?
 - Feed stores.
 - Coffee shop or family restaurant.
 - Arts and crafts. Framing shops, paint galleries, other shops to promote artisans and local beauty.
4. To help preserve the rural character of the town, should commercial development be limited to designated areas?
 - A. In or adjacent to the hamlets where infrastructure is present or accessible?
 - B. Along major state highways where traffic volume is higher?
 - Major state highways would be likely more successful but, in the Hamlet, would be beneficial to the residents of the town.
 - Hamlet development would promote a walkable community. Maybe develop greater appeal to live in the hamlet.
 - Businesses in villages and homes are allowed and should not be restricted.
 - Route 143 should be included in the major highways as development area.
5. Since almost all businesses require a web presence today, what can the town do to incentivize high speed internet access for business development purposes?
 - Could the town provide a list of interested customers to internet service providers to encourage development
 - Improve cellular coverage in dead zones in town.
 - Encourage tax breaks to ISPs to come in.
 - The cost to install is the prohibiting factor to development.
 - Can the town secure grants for development?

6. Encouraging entrepreneurs to locate new businesses in the town is a reasonable economic development approach for rural communities. What can the town do to encourage entrepreneurship?

- A. Capital sources?
- B. Ease regulations?
- C. Advocate to assist with the startup process?
 - Having rental spaces available makes it easier for new businesses to start up.

7. Are there current zoning issues that are getting in the way of economic development?

- Easy access to zoning issues will support the answer to this concern.
- The zoning regulations are on the town website.
- Special use permits would be required for development and approval by the planning board.
- A step-by-step tutorial could be provided either online or in a workshop to educate the residents on developing new businesses.

8. Are there incentives that the town can offer to encourage private investment in the community?

- This could be something that the committee researches for the benefit of the community.

9. Outdoor recreation is one of the biggest growth industries for rural communities –biking, hiking, outdoor festivals, agritourism. What assets does the town currently have that could be built on to promote outdoor recreation and attract tourism from urban and suburban areas?

- Fishing from the Basic Reservoir.
- Town of Westerlo Day. Promotion of the town and events held to promote businesses, museums, the library, and other entities could be continued to promote existing businesses and resources. (promote town businesses first)
- The town park could be promoted as a festival venue.
- Consideration of a town park farmer's market could be positive.
- Blaisdel Park? Not as big, or accessible, and does not yet have restrooms.
- Promotion of the town resources may bring people into town with little return. Which businesses will benefit?
- Promotion of town resources may encourage people to want to move into town.
- Farmers market keeps money in town. Supports local farmers. These should include other artisans, musicians, and others that would bring in patrons from outside of Westerlo.
- Town has considered a pool, though there are upfront costs, what are the concerns.
- There is a farmers market currently at the Reinharts Shell Inn on State Route 85.

III. Environment: John Sefcik, Jill Henck

Guiding Principles:

- A. Protects and preserves existing open space and forested lands, and preserves existing water resources.
- B. Address siting and planning of renewable and nonrenewable energy sources.
- C. Plan for Climate Resilience

Questions: (for conversation)

1. Is preserving the rural character of Westerlo important to you.
 - The rural character of the Town of Westerlo is one of the greatest reasons that people are drawn to the town.
 - Yes, the last thing we need is taxing out the farms until we end up with home lots and subdivisions instead of agriculture.
 - Extremely important and why people live here.
2. Is diversity of animal life (deer, bear, fisher, herons, hawks, etc.) important to you?
 - To many, the deer and turkey populations are an important asset to the community for food.
 - Bird watching goes along with the rural character.
 - Top or apex predators indicate a diverse and healthy prey population and ecosystem.
3. How important is air, water, and land quality in Westerlo to you?
 - Extremely important. Well water quality directly impacts my wellbeing and my animals as well as wildlife in the area.
 - Conscious and concerned about fracking in the area and the impact on our water supplies.
 - Extremely important to preserve the quality of our environment for the next generation.
4. Should there be Incentives and actions to help preserve open space?
 - Absolutely.
 - Westerlo has no conservation easements and those can/should be encouraged in the plan.
 - Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy will purchase land tracts to remain wild and undeveloped. (This land is lost from the tax roll)
 - Can incentives be provided for larger scale farms to reduce tax burden over hobby or smaller farms.
5. The current lot size outside the hamlets is 3 acres. Should there be clustered housing and larger lot sizes to preserve more open space?
 - Larger lot sizes are not conducive to preserving agriculture. Larger size lots fall to disrepair or become un farmed.
 - Encourage development within the hamlet. Tax breaks or other incentives could help.
6. Because of natural disasters (e.g., Hurricane Irene/Lee), should Westerlo restrict development in 100-year floodplains.
 - Most municipalities do restrict development on floodplains.
 - This should be looked into deeper. Other solutions could be viable rather than just limit the location of houses.
7. Do you have concerns with the existing gas and liquid propane pipelines in Westerlo, or new pipelines or infrastructure coming into Westerlo?

- Concerns over pipelines relate to the age of pipelines and the deterioration of the infrastructure.
- Development of pipelines does not coincide with a green initiative to support renewable resources.
- Responsibility for the condition of the pipeline often falls to the landowners and homeowners and not always the gas company.
- Resources could be provided to the community to help them keep an eye on changes or deterioration of the pipeline.
-

8. For background: Brief explanation of the new Office of Renewable Energy Siting (replaces Article 10 for large utility solar farms)

- A law outright banning renewable energy sources will not be legal or appropriate.
- A strategic approach could be a more progressive and accepted approach that provides guidance to the location of installations with an effort to preserve open land.
- Could the town restrict the development of solar installations on prime soils and important farmland within the community?
-

9. What is your view of solar farms (residential, commercial, and utility (20+ mW))- in Westerlo?

a. Where in Westerlo is an appropriate location for solar?

- Not on prime and important soils.
- Where are locations that solar actually works in the town?
- Research on appropriate locations could guide our wording on the comprehensive plan.
- Current limited 3-phase capability will not limit future solar development. The state will incentivize upgrading infrastructure to maximize renewables.
- The professional mapping inventory that Jill is doing for solar is a great asset for town decision makers as well as for dealing with the state's push for utility solar. That will be an excellent basis for CP recommendations to the town board
-

b. What is an appropriate size for a solar array within Town limits?

c. Host communities often benefit from community benefit agreements with solar companies. What amenities would you like to see from these agreements? Tax breaks, parks, electricity discounts?

10. What is your view of wind farms in Westerlo?

a. Where in Westerlo is an appropriate location for wind?

b. What is an appropriate height for wind turbines?

11. Should Westerlo work regionally to coordinate renewable energy regulations?

Climate Smart Communities (CSC) Comprehensive Plan Sustainability Elements

- Support smart growth principles in land use policies
- Conserve natural areas (including strategies to designate open space and protect it from development)
- Promote a healthy and safe community

- Foster equity (including strategies for housing, schools, transportation, recreation, food and environmental exposures)
- Foster green economic development
- Decrease dependence on fossil fuels and support energy efficiency and renewable energy production
- Foster efficient use of natural resources (e.g., water conservation)
- Promote the development of (or conservation of) local food systems
- Minimize solid waste
- Protect drinking water sources from pollution

IV. Planning and Zoning: Guy Weidman, Kelley Keefe, John Sefcik
Guiding Principles:

- A. Adequately and sufficiently protects neighboring land uses from potentially objectionable aspects of new development through the use of Site Plan Review and Special Use Permitting processes.
- B. Control the location, size, and scope of new development through the use of zoning tools.
- C. Promote commercial expansion, niche retail and specialty farming, along with small technology companies, which will flourish with enhanced telecommunications infrastructure

Questions: (for conversation)

1. Are you familiar with Westerlo's Zoning Law (originally adopted in 1989)?
 - Those that apply to building a house.
 - They are available online through the town website.
2. Are there any particular things in our Zoning Law that you think should be changed?
 - Not interested in lowering the minimum acreage below 3 acres. Comments based on septic and well requirements.
 - Minimum lot size should be context sensitive to retain the rural character.
 - Growth areas could be designated that might have smaller lot sizes to promote growth in one particular area.
 - A large development is subject to planning board approval.
 - Setback requirements, particularly in the Hamlet, should be reconsidered.
3. Are there things that should be added to our Zoning Law?
 - A. Should there be regulations for short term rentals? (e.g., Airbnb)
 - Airbnb are not taxable as businesses or commercial property
 - What is the town's responsibility regarding rentals?
 - B. Should we have wind farm regulations similar to what we have for solar farms?
 - Residents may be more in favor of wind power than solar power.

- What regulations would be necessary?
- Location of wind may be very different from solar locations. Investigations and mapping of possible locations of wind power would be necessary before creating regulations.
- Implementation of a vegetative buffer between solar and wind farms would improve the appearance of these land uses.
- The planning board has the authority to place restrictions on special use permits as needed.
- There are public hearings that accompany these large scale installations. Improved advertising would benefit the community.

4. Are the property line setbacks (in general, 50 feet for most of Westerlo, 30 in the hamlets, and 100 for commercial) appropriate?

- Adjustment of these setbacks would limit the development or improvement of the town including pedestrian traffic.
- This includes setbacks for solar panels and accessory structures.
-

5. Should we have a commercial zone in Westerlo? (Currently, there is no commercial zone.)

Commercial zones would still allow other businesses to exist or develop outside of the commercial zone.

- The cost of residential development is more expensive to a town than commercial development.
- Routes 32 and 85 have been suggested for commercial zones because of sheer traffic considerations.
- The hamlet could be considered as a commercial zone to encourage development. This could also be considered as a different zone than route 32. Hamlet development could encourage more small scale businesses.
- The water system has room for expansion within its reach

6. Should Westerlo have more zoning districts? (Currently, all of Westerlo is Rural Development/Agriculture except Hannay Reels and the hamlets of Westerlo and South Westerlo)

- Lake Onderdonk should be its own district due to its unique building challenges and necessities for variances.
-

7. Should there be changes in our zoning laws to better accommodate housing for seniors, elderly parents, and young people?

- Westerlo could consider accessory buildings to be built on the same property to accommodate seniors. Allowing accessory dwelling units on primary dwelling unit properties.
- Duplexes are allowed through a special permit process.
- Albany County Health department regulations may be a challenge to sharing a lot.
- The shape of the hamlet should be considered and mapped to support development within those lines.

8. Should there be any restrictions on the type and number of animals that people are allowed to have, or the type of farming that is allowed?

- There are already restrictions as to what animals you can have and where.
- Is there a farm type we are concerned about?
- There are no current concerns regarding a specific farm type, but nuisances from large farms may need to be considered.

9. Are there any particular scenic or historic locations in Westerlo that should be protected from certain types of development?

- The hamlet itself has charms that need to be identified and maintained. Farms, family run businesses, beauty of the town and its character need to be maintained.
-

10. Are there certain types of businesses or activities that Westerlo should encourage or discourage?

- Encourage family-run businesses and small privately owned shops. (Crafts, Arts, Antiques, Farm stands)
- Home businesses should be encouraged within the hamlet
- Rezoning the town could provide a place where the town could meet the needs of its residents.
-

V. Onderdonk: Dave Landrum, Jill Henck, Bill Strafford

Questions and Concerns:

1. What can be done proactively to protect the water quality in Lake Onderdonk for future generations?

What can be done to minimize erosion into the lake?

Should fertilizer use be restricted to prevent aquatic growth?

Do fuel tanks, either underground or above ground, pose a threat to water quality and, if so, what should be done to minimize the threat?

- Albany county to check septic systems.
- New homes on or near the lake should have raised bed septic systems. The lot size prohibits distance from septic systems to wells.
- Minimize erosion with trees and shrubs planted along the lake shore and limit tree removal along the lake shore.
- Fertilizer, residents should be using only green or limit fertilizer on lawns or other areas.
- Fuel tanks should be checked by qualified persons from oil companies, whether above ground or below ground.
- Tanks should be checked before property changes ownership.
- Holding tanks for septic systems should be mandated because of the difficulty of constructing a raised bed system. On the road side of the lake there is very limited space.
- Trees are not a viable option along the lake shore since they are hard to remove when they fall in. Bushes could be a better solution along the lake shore to prevent erosion.

2. Are there zoning changes that need to be made to facilitate positive change around the Lake?

- Zoning for new homes should be at least 3 acres. There should be front and side setback amounts.
 - There is a DEC setback from bodies of water. This could be looked into to clarify this zoning issue.
 - Many of the houses on the lake have lot sizes smaller than an acre.
 - The ownership of the lake is in limbo. It was assumed to be owned by Albany County.
3. Should the Lake Onderdonk area be a separate zoning district with its own unique set of requirements?
- Some lake owners would like to have a specific zone district that might include the lake and surrounding roads.
 - A town district could work to support the lake association in its attempts to maintain the lake in its current state or implement improvement to the lake.
4. Are there any specific or unique issues that should be addressed to improve the Lake Onderdonk community?
- Should the lake consider a sewer system. May be costly for residents of the lake.
 - How to preserve the lake's integrity, water quality and other factors are most important. Ownership of the lake seems to be the factor that would allow the lake association to maintain its users and the cleanliness, impact of invasives on the lake.
 - The county may own the lake bottom and allows the residents to use the water and maintain it as such.
 - The dam needs to be inspected as per Encon. Maybe the town engineer could come to inspect the dam for safety.
 - If the town inspects the dam, the ownership and liability lies with the town.
 - Ownership of the road, dam, and lake need to be investigated to clarify the responsibility of the dam and water.
5. What can the town do to assist our resident's ability to enhance their pride of ownership in their property and their neighborhood?
- Should the town set up a zoning district and use that district to fund the management and maintenance of the lake? This would require a separate taxing district. This could also include maintenance of the dam.
6. Several lots around the lake have seasonal recreational vehicles or campers situated on them. Are there unique issues relating to these situations that should be addressed?
- There should not be seasonal vehicles that remain on an open lot for the year/long season.
 - Zoning should include wording indicating that a recreational vehicle could be permitted along with a permanent residence.

VI. Hamlet of Westerlo: Kelley Keefe,

1. Promote the health, safety and welfare of the community
2. Preserve and maintain the character and beauty of the rural landscape of Westerlo
3. Provide for orderly and sustainable growth on a suitable scale conducive to local road, utilities, waste and water systems, and infrastructure conditions
4. Control the location, size, and scope of new development through the use of zoning tools.
5. Promote commercial expansion, niche retail and specialty farming, along with small technology companies, which will flourish with enhanced telecommunications infrastructure

Questions: (for conversation)

1. What advantages/disadvantages do you see with living in the Hamlet?

You are part of a neighborhood.

Walkable to various amenities. Can walk to the library, the store, the post office, and the park. Still has a rural feel.

You know your neighbors.

Traffic in and out of town, but is tolerable.

2. What amenities would draw someone to the Hamlet?

- A. Sidewalks?
- B. Retail/Dining?
- C. Recreation?
- D. Rural Charm?

- Sidewalks would improve safety and could make the town feel more connected. Sidewalks might interfere with the water lines with the water district.
- Condition of the road could be improved through the hamlet.
- A restaurant or diner within town would improve the curbside appeal. A sit-down type diner would improve the aesthetics of the town.
- Bike tours or other hikes that are based out of town could use local amenities.
- The town could facilitate events that draw people to the town and to town businesses.
- Improving the nature trail in the town park could draw attention to the town.
- Farmers market or artisan market in the town park.
- Business seminars could be hosted in the town park.

3. Much conversation has taken place regarding the Water District. If you are in the Hamlet and are not on the water line, why? If you aren't within its reach now, would you hook up if it was available?

- The water district is dealing with some issues with water quality.
- Some residents claim to purchase water because of the taste of the town's water.

4. Do you feel that the current sanitation systems in the Hamlet, i.e., Septic, are a drawback to people choosing to live on these narrower lots? Do you think a sewer system would make a significant difference in the desirability of living within the Hamlet?

- The vacated houses don't have lots that are large enough to put a septic system on.
- Red Thompson of the diner put in a new system that may bypass the current challenges.
- Rennselaerville has both a water and sewer district that should be asked about.

5. The former Diederich's Market beside the Post Office has set empty for some time. The location is nearly ready for a tenant to come in and operate a restaurant there. What would entice someone to make the decision to open here? There are also retail spots available there. What sort of businesses would you hope to see there? Are there certain types of businesses or activities that Westerlo should encourage or discourage?

- Laundromat
- Ice Cream Shop
- Diner/Restaurants
- Hair/Nail salon
- Liquor Store

6. What are your thoughts on the homes that are on our "Main Street" that are in disrepair, or are a complete loss? What do you feel should be done?

- Many houses in disrepair could be flipped if they could get a building permit.
- Town building inspector could be involved to discuss how to improve these homes.
- The town could purchase the houses and sell them.
- There are no ways to encourage residents to improve the curbside appeal of their houses.
- Residents of Westerlo may live here because they don't have to keep up with their neighbors.
- A community group or homeowners association could be established that could support their neighbors.
- A hamlet resident round table or park gathering would allow the town to see how those within the hamlet would want to see the town change and improve.

7. What could we do to unify our "Main Street" and make it more appealing?

- a. Flags along the street?
- b. Hanging flower baskets?
- c. Themed event like Cats in Catskill; Ducks in Greenville?

- Yes, and yes. Artists could paint these and sell them for income within the town.

Lamp posts along a sidewalk would improve aesthetics.

8. Hamlet to & from Park, trail(s). i.e., trail to the park and back - walking, biking, skating, skiing, etc.

9. Any questions/comments/concerns from Hannay. Do they know about the CPC FGM?

VII Final Meeting 7/29/2020

1. What is your view of wind farms in Westerlo?

Wind turbines would be most appropriate on the highest hills in the town. If we could benefit from them, some residents would be for it.

a. Where in Westerlo is an appropriate location for wind?

- The construction of wind structures should take in consideration the views that would be affected by their placement.
- Wind may be well received here in the town.
- Would this fall under the category of imminent domain?
- Personal installations would need to be considered before installing based on their impact

2. Should Westerlo work regionally to coordinate renewable energy regulations?

- Westerlo could have conversations with other municipalities to discuss large scale installations and how we could all benefit from those.
- An inter town committee could be developed to implement large renewable installations.
 - Is coordination between the Hilltowns challenged because of the two different power companies?
- The scale of the installation may impact the size and location of the site.
- With the regional approach, the school districts benefit from pilot money.

3. The Rapp Road Landfill, owned by the City of Albany and used by many local municipalities for a fee, is rapidly reaching its capacity. Should the Town of Westerlo proactively prohibit the siting of any type of landfill (Solid Waste, Construction Debris, etc.) within its boundaries?

- The impact on groundwater sources would be a concern.
- The traffic of large trucks would be of concern.
- Would a monetary benefit outweigh the concerns over a landfill?

4. To protect ground water resources from contamination, should the town periodically provide for the collection of hazardous wastes that residents have accumulated?

- There are likely grants available through the state to support this initiative and can be done in conjunction with the other Hilltowns.
- Advertisement of these programs could be improved to educate the public on the removal of these contaminants.
- Could residents pay a fee to discard these toxins?

5. If a major housing subdivision were to be proposed, would you favor clustering the homes on smaller (one acre) lots to preserve a larger block of open space (2 acres times the number of homes)?

- Only if there is a plan for wastewater.
- Water resources would be a concern as well.
- The location of a subdivision would be favored around the hamlet and not randomly throughout the town.

6. What can be done about abandoned vehicles along our roadways and detracting from our properties? Is there a town ordinance that could be applied and enforced?
- Town law prevents you from having more than two unlicensed vehicles on your property.
 - Enforcement may be worth looking into.
 - Town support of scrap metal collectors could be encouraged.
 - Abandoned vehicles detract from the property values surrounding these sites.
7. What can be done about abandoned homes in the Onderdonk Lake area? Could a similar solution work for the Lake as the Hamlet?
- County owned buildings are often auctioned off and can be purchased and flipped. These are often homes that owed taxes and fell under county ownership.
 - Maybe the town could offer tax breaks to new owners who purchase and improve abandoned homes.
 - This is an area to research as a committee.
 - Albany county land bank.
 - Albany County Real Property Tax Services Agency.
8. What funds could be generated through grant writing to support Lake maintenance from weed growth and wake control? Should a Lake maintenance district be established and how would it be funded?
- NYS Boating Manual describes boat wake and laws regarding distance from shore with appropriate wake.
 - Lake Onderdonk is a protected NYS Wetland.
 - Grants may exist for the improvement of the lake.
 - Those that are zoned within the "Lake" zone, could be included in a maintenance group that would benefit those surrounding the lake and the town at large.
 - If the town contributed to the lake maintenance group, would the residents have access to the lake?
 - Can/should lake use be restricted to non-motorized use? Who can establish this ruling?
 - Aquathal K/ Elodea (anacharis)
 - The lake needs to be evaluated by an engineer for safety and integrity, as per request of the DEC. Who will take responsibility for the dam?