
TOWN OF COLONIE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

TOWN OF COLONIE
ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CPAC) MEETING



To: Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)
From: Katie Crawford, Land Use Planner I – Barton & Loguidice, D.P.C.
Re: April 26, 2017 Committee Meeting - Summary Notes
Date: April 27, 2017

Meeting Location: Town of Colonie Public Operations Building
Meeting Time: 6:00 pm – 8:00pm
Meeting Attendees: Committee, Barton & Loguidice, and several members of the general public

Summary Notes

This was the eighth meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) for the Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan project. The meeting was attended by the CPAC, consultants (B&L), and several members of the general public.

This meeting was dedicated to the following agenda items:

- Welcome and Agenda Review
- Community Outreach Process
- Update – Status of Related Projects
- Comprehensive Plan Vision & Goals
- Next Steps
- Public Comment
- Wrap-up and Adjournment

Community Outreach Process

- Community Survey
 - Schedule
 - Early April – surveys mailed out
 - Siena College Research Institute has begun to receive survey responses, most are coming back by mail (about ¼ via the web)
 - Late May – close survey collection
 - June – presentation of data to CPAC
 - Raise Awareness – get the word out so that residents who receive the survey questionnaire are more likely to recognize its importance and complete the survey.
 - The Town put out a press release last week regarding the survey – it was featured in the “Spotlight”
 - Town will put an announcement on the Town's website

- The Committee suggested posting on the sign in front of Town Hall, reaching out to the community groups that were involved in earlier public outreach efforts (email), posting signs during "Conservation Day", and placing signs at the Crossings and Library as other ways to increase awareness of the survey
- Colonie Connect – looking to schedule a new date soon

Update – Status of Related Projects

- CDTC – Joe LaCivita noted that the Albany Shaker Road Corridor Study is well underway
 - Albany County, Town of Colonie, & CDTC partnered together to complete the corridor study using grant funds
 - The committee has been meeting for the past month – the group includes CDTA, CDRPC, & the Albany Airport
 - Looking to begin public outreach with a public workshop at the end of May and perhaps a second public meeting at the end of June or early July
 - Study findings should be available around August
 - Currently looking at impact of maximum build-out on vacant lots under existing zoning
- Lincoln Avenue Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA)
 - \$266,000 grant award from 2011 for study of an existing brownfield area near the City of Watervliet
 - A committee is currently being set up
 - Kick-off meeting towards the end of June

Comprehensive Plan Vision & Goals

- Review of 2005 Plan's Vision & Goals – Mr. Welty explained that we are turning the corner from discussing existing conditions and community concerns. Will now start to focus more on the Vision and Goals – and eventually recommendations - for the future. Survey responses, which will be available at our next meeting, will be valuable input for this next phase. But for tonight, the committee will start to review the Vision and Goals from the 2005 Comprehensive Plan – a preliminary discussion about what still sounds relevant, things that may have changed in some way, or current concerns that may be missing from the 2005 Vision and Goals. The Committee should continue thinking about this between meetings since updating the Vision and Goals will be one subject of our discussion next time.
 - Vision Statement: looks to describe the Town in the year 2020
 - Suggested planning period: perhaps 2030
 - The committee provided the following initial comments on the original vision statement:
 - A lot of this still holds true as a vision for the future of Colonie
 - Maintain status as affordable & desirable for living, learning, & doing business; Stabilize existing neighborhoods; Maintain well-established commercial & industrial areas
 - Include well maintained infrastructure in the vision – recognizing that much has been done and must continue to be done to maintain aging infrastructure
 - Parks, the environment, and river resources were left out of the 2005 statement

- Maintain low taxes –fiscally responsibility while maintaining and improving infrastructure: affordable while providing a high level of services
- Include enhancing existing neighborhoods & conservation of natural resources
- Continued focus on appropriate, well-designed, commercial development moving forward to maintain existing tax structure

Goal 1: Provide opportunities and incentives for the development and redevelopment of a variety of housing options in the Town to meet the needs of its increasingly diverse population

- Post-recession housing market has shifted to more diverse housing types. But affordability remains an issue that could be addressed in the plan and through incentives in the Town's local land use regulations
- Affordability, in many ways, is out of the Town's control due to state and federal regulations
- This goal may have been encouraged to address the issue of senior housing – senior housing options have expanded over the past 15 years in Colonie
- May need to focus on attracting the right kind of industries rather than the right kind of housing

Goal 2: Maintain the integrity of residential and mixed-use neighborhoods throughout the Town

- This goal has withstood the test of time – improved partnerships between planning and neighborhood groups should be promoted
- Neighborhood boundaries could be identified and planning could be improved by defining these areas
- Existing neighborhood associations are not formally structured (some more effective than others) - perhaps the Town could encourage the formation and development of stronger neighborhood associations
 - A "Community Board" type of concept may increase public access into local government

Goal 3: Improve mobility throughout the Town

- This goal is still relevant to the Town
- In the future, needs surrounding automobiles and mobility may change drastically – ride sharing, autonomous vehicles, and other technology-related changes
- Walkability should be a focus to attract a new workforce and provide adequate facilities for existing aging residents

Goal 4: Encourage the reuse or redevelopment of existing sites and buildings

- This will become increasingly important over time due to changes in retail markets and the services malls and shopping centers offer

Goal 5: Promote commercial and industrial growth in specifically designated areas, taking advantage of the Town's infrastructure, location, and critical regional assets

- Moving forward, target desired industries to encourage economic development

Goal 6: Improve the development approval process by establishing land use regulations that guide development in a manner that is consistent with the vision, goals, and recommendation contained in this plan

- Since the adoption of the 2005 plan the process has been completely redone which has improved the development approval process – use of Town-designated engineers has also made the process more professional and fair.

Goal 7: Provide a business-friendly environment that is supportive of local businesses, that encourages entrepreneurship, and that helps assure the provision of quality employment and a diverse economic base in community

- Economic analysis of the Town, initiated by the IDA, will be completed within the timeframe of this planning process and can help inform the final recommendations
 - Being particular and selective with economic development moving forward will be incorporated within the goal

Goal 8: Protect the Town's important natural resources such as stream corridors, steep slopes, floodplains, wetland systems, and unique ecosystems

- This goal is still relevant and important
- Aside from regulations, there is currently no mechanism for the Town to meet this goal – CAC is looking into grant funding that could be available to improve information about the Town's environmental resources

Goal 9: Enhance the Town's Mohawk River waterfront

- Mohawk River waterfront was the focus of a separate study done around the time of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan
- Natural resources & habitats constantly face pressure by development – this goal may need some refinement

Goal 10: Encourage the conservation of viable farmland and significant open spaces throughout the Town

- This goal is still relevant – an inventory of the existing farmland and open space should be created
- Trends such as more small-scale farming catering to local markets, "agri-hood" concept, and other changes to farming have some traction in Colonie

Goal 11: Develop a network of open lands to provide wildlife habitat and potential recreational trail corridors

- This goal remains relevant – results of the survey will inform this goal

Goal 12: Expand active and passive recreational resources available in the Town to meet the growing and changing demand for these amenities

- This goal remains relevant

Goal 13: Maintain the Town's high level of public safety services; community services for youth, seniors, and the public at large; and public utility infrastructure and services

- Infrastructure may need to be separated out from the rest of the goal

Goal 14: Protect and promote the Town's significant cultural and historic resources

- This goal remains relevant

Goal 15: Establish an identity for the Town of Colonie that transcends the Town's size and diversity while maintaining the integrity and distinctiveness of individual neighborhoods

- The committee did not provide comment at this time

Goal 16: Expand opportunities for sharing information and for encouraging community involvement. Promote volunteerism and community service

- This goal remains relevant – a routine system of dispersing information to residents should be established (beyond the website)
 - Potentially with the school districts

Goal 17: Cooperate with the Villages of Colonie & Menands, and other neighboring and regional municipalities, agencies, and organizations on issues of mutual concern

- This goal remains relevant

As noted earlier, the committee will continue reviewing the 2005 Vision and Goals for further discussion at the next meeting.

Next Steps

The next CPAC meeting has been set for June 21st, 2017 and will be held at the Colonie Public Operations Building at 6:00 pm. Representatives of the Siena College Research Institute will be at the meeting to present the community survey results.

A meeting with business groups in the Town will be held later in the summer as well as a next round of public meetings in the summer or early fall. Mr. LaCivita has compiled comments received through the website and will provide these to the committee via email soon.

Public Comments

- Mary Beth - received the survey questionnaire in the mail. She feels that the Supervisor's letter should not have been included in the front of the survey questionnaire due to conflict of interest. She had concerns about the wording of a few questions on the survey based on the options provided. Suggested that a pedestrian safety educational component should be included in the goals – roundabout education, use of reflective or other safety gear, etc. Also suggested that Town Board members might better represent the diversity of neighborhoods in the Town if they were selected from different areas of the Town.
- Paul B. - submitted his comments to the committee. Concern that existing PDD & Senior Citizen incentives are not achieving the intended results - this law should be revisited in the planning process due to the impacts on traffic, etc. and potential issues with enforcing 55+ requirements. He noted challenges with voicing comments through the website's public comment section – comments are being left off and the Town's planning process is not being transparent. Traffic and development considerations should be included in the goals.

- Susan – had a question about how public comments and survey results will be incorporated into the vision, goals, and recommendations. Suggested that to promote neighborhood involvement the Town Board should be elected by neighborhood to represent geographically rather than Town-wide. The plan should determine how to protect the natural resources we have available. The Town Planning Department needs increased staffing to allow the Town to pursue more grant funding.
- Suzanne - the Town should be better positioned to obtain funding through grant resources for a variety of programs. All of the Town's existing assets should be better inventoried in order to be prepared to take advantage of funding programs.
- Paul R. – has been looking at enrollment data from the State. South Colonie CSD enrollment has decreased from the early 2000s & North Colonie CSD enrollment has decreased from the early 2000s - although other figures need to be assessed to fully understand the issues and challenges within each school district. Discussion about historical school enrollment data, future enrollment projections, and the complex issues facing schools
- Tim - plan should emphasize working cooperatively with the school districts & ways that this could be accomplished – increased from the current biannual meetings schedule
- Lisa - climate change has not been adequately addressed in discussions thus far and should be reflected within the vision, goals, & recommendations in the plan
- Tim - turnover of real estate is challenging to forecast & changes the way that the community plans for the future, it is currently hard to see this on the ground in the community
- Linda - approval of PDD's is impacting existing neighborhoods. Concern about how projects change and whether they are monitored properly.

Wrap-up and Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at about 8:20 PM.