
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: Michael Welti, AICP – Barton & Loguidice, D.P.C.
Re: November 15, 2017 Committee Meeting - Summary Notes
Date: November 22, 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 twelfth meeting of the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC) for the Town of Colonie Comprehensive Plan Update project. The meeting was attended by the CPAC, consultants (B&L), and several members of the general public.

The meeting began with a review of the agenda (attached).

Update – Status of Related Projects

Mr. Welti noted that he and Mr. LaCivita met with the planning teams for the Airport Area GEIS (CHA) and the Albany Shaker Road Study (CME and CDTC) on October 30th. As the Comprehensive Plan Update process moves into draft recommendations over the next few months, continued coordination with these two studies and the Lincoln Ave. BOA study will be important.

- Airport Area Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS)
 - Mr. LaCivita noted that the Planning Board established itself as Lead Agency for the GEIS at its meeting last night.
- CDTC – Albany Shaker Road Corridor Study
 - Public Meeting #2 will be held tomorrow (11/16) from 6:00 to 8:00 PM at the Shaker Road Loudonville Fire Department
- Lincoln Avenue Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Study
 - First Steering Committee was held on October 3rd, so this project is now underway. Mr. LaCivita noted that the Town did receive an extension from the Department of State (DOS) for the grant that is funding this study.
- IDA Retail and Hospitality Analysis – Mr. LaCivita noted that a draft report from Camoin Associates will be ready soon.

Community Outreach Process

- School Districts - Mr. Welti and Mr. LaCivita met with the Superintendents of the North Colonie and South Colonie School Districts earlier today. Topics discussed included growth and school enrollment projections and an interest in meeting more than once a year with the Town to share information (perhaps every six months to start).
 - It was noted that the Niskayuna School District has recently completed a very thorough analysis of its projected growth and suggested that we take a look at that as well.
- Business Roundtable – Mr. LaCivita said he is hoping to hold this meeting in December or January. He would like B&L and Camoin Associates to be involved.

Revised Draft Vision and Goals

Mr. Welti noted that the committee reviewed an initial draft of the vision and goals at its last meeting in July. Based on comments received at that meeting, and subsequent emails from the Committee, a revised draft was prepared. He reviewed the revised draft (November 2017) and indicated changes in comparison to the original, July version. Comments and suggestions from the CPAC follow:

- The Vision statement is fine as is.
- Housing goal – there was some discussion about what “incentives” mean and how we might try to achieve the goal of affordability or encourage mixed-income developments and multi-generational neighborhoods. It was noted that “the devil is in the details” and more discussion of this topic will need to occur when we start talking about actual recommendations. In terms of multi-generational housing, it was noted that making it easier for older residents to stay in Colonie is an important consideration. Services for seniors are increasingly important and there are a lot of opportunities to expand community-based services.
- Transportation goal – it was suggested that we remove the word “worst” in the second sentence. Because some of these issues are not controlled by the Town alone, we should also reference the continued need to work with partners such as the County, the State, and CDTA.
- Development approval process goal – replace “maintain” with “ensure”
- Natural resources goal – add language as follows: “...ensure that necessary clearing and site disturbances are minimized and consistent with approvals.”
- Infrastructure goal – there was discussion about the second sentence: “Focus development where infrastructure already exists.” It was noted that developers generally pay the cost of expanding infrastructure to new areas; however, the Town bears the cost of long-term maintenance of this infrastructure. It was suggested that this part of the infrastructure goal is consistent with the emphasis on redevelopment of existing sites and buildings that is called for in an earlier goal; and perhaps this sentence could be incorporated into that earlier goal instead. In terms of maintaining and enhancing infrastructure, it was suggested that the goal also mention the need to partner with utilities and other new infrastructure service providers to maintain and enhance these types of infrastructure as well as the traditional water, sewer, and roadway infrastructure.
- There was discussion about resiliency related to climate change. With the town’s location along the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers, and the increasing intensity of rainfall events in recent years, resiliency should be mentioned in the goals. Though this came up in the context of the energy efficiency and conservation goal, it was suggested that this might be better incorporated into the infrastructure goal.

- There was discussion about the town identity goal that was in the 2005 plan and whether that should be removed in this update. Some members of the committee would prefer to leave it in, even if it is not a major driver of recommendations in the comprehensive plan update.

Mr. Welti will update the Vision and Goals with the comments from this meeting. These will not be the focus of discussion at the next meeting, but further refinements can be made as the committee works toward the plan recommendations and reaches out to the public again early next year. None of this is "final" until the committee votes to send its Draft Comprehensive Plan Update to the Town Board for adoption.

Brainstorming: Major Initiatives

Now that they have some agreement about the Vision and Goals, Mr. Welti noted that the Committee will be turning its attention to plan recommendations in the coming weeks. He asked committee members to start thinking about the major initiatives that they see emerging from the comprehensive plan. To start the conversation, he had three big picture ideas that he had been thinking about for Colonie based on the public input and CPAC discussions thus far:

- An Open Space Conservation Program – this was something discussed in the 2005 comprehensive plan, but never fully executed. There seems to be a lot of interest in this still today. The Comprehensive Plan Update should provide guidance about how the Town could establish a sustainable program for open space conservation. Such a program would involve establishing priorities, providing information about conservation tools and techniques available to the community, education and outreach to the public, and identifying sources of funding. Mr. Welti noted that he and Mr. LaCivita have been working on developing an inventory of existing open space resources in the Town. The inventory will be shared at a future CPAC Meeting. This information can serve as a starting point, but the plan recommendations should make suggestions for how the Town can organize this effort.
- A Complete Streets Initiative – building from the recommendations in the Albany-Shaker Road Corridor Study, the Town could take a closer look at other corridors. The Town might want to talk to CDTC about funding an Active Transportation Plan for Colonie.
- Zoning refinements – Mr. Welti said that he does not anticipate a major overhaul of the Town's zoning based on the discussions thus far, but the plan will include recommendations for refinements to certain portions of the zoning that have been identified as problematic.

The Committee was encouraged to provide other ideas.

- The Town Attorney's office is using a grant to prepare an inventory of vacant properties – so called "zombie properties". There is interest in creating a land bank (like Albany County) to facilitate the reuse or redevelopment of these properties - getting them back on the tax rolls and, perhaps, providing opportunities for affordable housing.
- The Town Attorney's office is also concerned about abandonment of big box stores in light of changes to the retail economy. They are working on ways to protect the Town from the blight that these large, vacant structures can cause.
- It was suggested that infrastructure maintenance could be another initiative and that this could even piggyback on the Open Space Initiative. Recent examples from Community Preservation Programs on Long Island have shown how funds for infrastructure maintenance can be obtained outside of the property tax base.

- Climate Smart Communities – it was suggested that the Town could consider participating in programs through NYSDEC and NYSEDA that encourage greater use of renewable energy and promote energy conservation as part of the Governor's efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Next Steps

- Upcoming CPAC Meeting: December 20th, 6:00 pm @ Public Operations Building

Public Comments

Mr. Welti opened the floor for comments from members of the public in attendance.

Don Porter – handed out information about the DEC's Climate Smart Communities program and NYSEDA's Clean Energy Communities program. He suggested that the Comprehensive Plan could encourage participation in these programs to advance clean energy and prevent climate change.

Ms. Weed noted that Colonie was recently designated a Tree City.

Marybeth Buckner – stated that the 2005 plan included some good examples of gateways and suggested that these would be a nice addition to the entranceways to Colonie. She also said she was disappointed by the discussion about traffic congestion earlier in the meeting because she does not like to think that there isn't more that can be done. She encouraged the committee to be creative.

Dick – noted that a couple of the goals mention increasing density and he is concerned about how this is done in his neighborhood along Maxwell Road. He said that the Town has allowed density increases in areas where it is not appropriate.

Paul Bergdorf – suggested that instead of removing the word "worst" from the transportation goal, it might be better to substitute the word "significant." He also asked Mr. LaCivita what the proper way is for the public to comment on the draft Vision and Goals.

Mr. LaCivita said that the Vision and Goals will be posted on the project webpage and that the email link on the website was the best way to get comments to the Committee.

Mr. Bergdorf suggested that the plan should make some statement about the maintenance of solid waste infrastructure. He is concerned that capacity in the landfill be reserved for town residents.

Susan Weber – asked about the submission of comments via the website – is there a way to see what comments have been submitted? Mr. LaCivita said that he would put the comments received to date on the website. Ms. Weber was also pleased to learn that we are developing an inventory of existing open space resources.

Curtis – thinks the identity of Colonie issue is an appropriate one to include in the plan. He noted that he bought his house in Loudonville 8 years ago but only recently learned that it was part of the Town of Colonie. He suggested that the committee think about the trajectory of the Town – not just where we are now but where we are headed. Instead of incentivizing redevelopment as discussed in the Vision and Goals, he wondered whether it would be possible to disincentivize

new development. And finally, he asked whether it is possible for a Town to develop its own public transportation (instead of relying on CDTA).

Paul Bergdorf – encouraged people to attend the Public Meeting for the Albany-Shaker Road Corridor Study tomorrow night. He saw of preview of the presentation and thinks it will be worth everyone's time to go to the meeting.

Wrap-up and Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned around 8:15 pm.



Town of Colonie
Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC)
November 15, 2017, 6:00 PM
Agenda

- I. **Welcome and Agenda Review**

- II. **Update – Status of Related Projects**
 - Airport Area GEIS
 - CDTC - Albany Shaker Road Corridor Study

Public Meeting #2 – Tomorrow (11/16), 6:00 to 8:00 PM @ Shaker Road Loudonville Fire Department

 - Lincoln Ave. BOA (Brownfield Opportunity Area)

- III. **Community Outreach Process**
 - Meeting with School Superintendents
 - Business Roundtable?

- IV. **Revised Draft Vision and Goals**
 - Preliminary discussion 7/19/17
 - Committee comments via email
 - Review and discuss revised vision and goals

- V. **Brainstorming: Major Initiatives**
 - What are some of the major initiatives that we see emerging from the Comprehensive Plan?

- VI. **Next Steps**
 - Upcoming CPAC Meeting: December 20th, 6:00 PM

- VII. **Public Comment**

- VIII. **Wrap-up and Adjournment**