



TOWN OF ROCHESTER

50 Scenic Drive • P.O. Box 65
Accord, NY 12404

Planning and Zoning Committee Meeting Notes

January 11, 2006

Submitted by Gene Moncrief

In attendance:

Town Board Members	Planning and Zoning Committee Members
Alex Miller Tony Spano Ron Santosky Francis Gray Pam Duke - Supervisor	Bev Schoonmaker Dan Davis Bill DeGraw Mike Baden Donna Ragonese Ruth Bendelius Stanley Hudson Marijane Knudson Mel Tapper Walter Levy
Consultants	
Peter Fairweather Susan Blickstein	

The meeting opened with Pam Duke inviting participants to pledge allegiance to the flag.

Duke opened the meeting with an overview of what brought us to this point of updating the 1969 Comprehensive Plan. She went on to say, that, for the past two years, members of the Town Board solicited input from residents on ideas on ways the Town government might address issues related to the tremendous rate of growth that our community has experienced in the past few years. In a series of Town Hall meetings conducted in 2004 and 2005 as well as a town-wide survey conducted in May 2005, residents told us that a revision of our Town's Comprehensive Plan is necessary. This Plan, which sets a vision for the future of our town, was last revised in 1969, although there was an unsuccessful attempt to revise it in 1990. The next step is to move forward with the revision of our Town's Comprehensive Plan.

In a resolution at the January 5, 2006 Town Board Meeting, the Town Board retained the services of Fairweather Associates (<http://www.fairweatherconsulting.com>) to assist the Town in revising its comprehensive plan in accordance with its written proposal during the period of January 2006 to January 2007.

We are also very fortunate to have Susan Blickstein from The Chazen Companies to help us in this process.

The Planning & Zoning Committee will be the committee to work on the update with the Town Board. PZC was established in 2005 and each of its members, representing

various constituencies of the town, is appointed by the Town Council. Each meeting will be a special Town Board meeting so that all council members can attend. The Town Clerk will advertise these special meetings in the official newspaper, in the Town website and to post the notice.

The purpose of tonight's meeting is for our consultant, Peter Fairweather to share with us what a Comprehensive Plan is, what the process is, issues and opportunities, a period to ask questions and discuss the next steps.

Each committee and Town Board member introduced themselves and shared what board, commission or organization they represented.

Gene Moncrief took notes.

A resolution was proposed, and approved, to appoint Walter Levy as Co-Chair to the Planning & Zoning Committee.

Peter Fairweather shared the company's qualifications and resources:

Tom Shepstone of Shepstone Associates and Susan Blickstein of The Chazen Companies will be working on the project. We know the area, the issues, and Shepstone and I frequently work together.

Fairweather & Associates has assisted other townships: Plattekill, Sullivan, Wawarsing, and some in Western Pennsylvania.

Fairweather is an Ulster County native and has lived in New Paltz his whole life, so he understands the region and the demographics.

Fairweather's points:

A Comprehensive Plan is a public process to supply a legal basis to create or amend zoning ordinance. This process will focus on land use.

The community must answer these questions: "Who are we?" Where do we come from? What do we want to be?

We can build on work that has already been done such as "Imagine Rochester" and the TOR survey that was completed last spring.

The plan follows an ambitious one-year schedule to accomplish these steps: project initiation, review documentation, draft goals, public outreach, draft final plan, adopt the plan, update priority zoning, draft zoning, present zoning, apply SEQRA.

The community's role in this process is to get involved as participants, as ambassadors, as critics and as information gatherers. The more people involved, the stronger the plan.

According to 2000 census data, Rochester is a medium sized township in Ulster County, but it is *the fastest growing town in the county*.

Change is coming, Can we respond to it in a way that protects what we value about Rochester?

The following dates were scheduled for upcoming meetings:

February 8 and 22
March 8 and 22
April 10 and 26
May 10 and 24
June 14 and 28
July 12 and 26
August 9 and 23
September 13 and 27
October 11 and 25
November 8 and 20
December – to be decided.

All meetings will be held at the Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise decided

Questions and Responses

Where did the demographic data come from?

Mike Baden did the analysis from 2000 Census data. That data and the “Imagine Rochester” and town survey results will be put on the town website.

(<http://www.townofrochester.net>)

Is this a good group to introduce the Cost of Community Services Study that Francis Gray and Marge Bonner have authored?

Yes, certainly. On January 23 at 7:00 in Town Hall, Gray and Bonner will present the results of the Cost of Community Services Study. This study is a snapshot of what it costs the town to service three types of land, residential, commercial or industrial, and open or farm land.

Can we see an example of another town and what the process was like?

On Fairweather’s website (<http://www.fairweatherconsulting.com>) go to Projects, go to Comprehensive Plans, go to Plattekill, Gardner or Wawarsing, and you can see examples of the process.

Fairweather explained, “I’ve worked with Marbletown and I predict that the debate will be keeping and retaining open space vs. preserving property rights or local vs. weekender. We must be careful to avoid the community feeling as if something is being crammed down their throats. We’ll need an Ambassador/Outreach committee to help educate and answer questions and concerns.”

What’s the normal time frame for how often a town must update the comprehensive plan?

Normal time for updates is every 5-10 years. Many communities have plans that date from 1969 because that’s when the government made funds available to generate housing and urban development. All communities with old plans are seeking to keep their plans current.

What will happen to our existing sub-committees (Economic and Rural Character)? And what about the Environmental Conservation Committee?

The Economic sub-committee has been dormant for some time now, and the Rural Character subcommittee is working on a photographic exhibition planned for early summer to showcase our town. (We are looking for suggestions of categories to use in

order to classify images. Last year, we used the categories of farming, people, natural spaces and animals. Please send any suggestions to David Curtis or Walter Levy.)

Dan Davis said that the Environmental Conservation Committee is actively engaged in a Ground Water Protection Plan which should be ready by July. They will have a conversation with Peter Fairweather on their work of the Natural Resource Inventory.

As a consultant, are you or the process benefited by a moratorium?

Sometimes yes; sometimes no. Having a moratorium causes people to focus and get the job done. Without a moratorium, the community can spend the time necessary to thoroughly evaluate the town resources and what to preserve.

Can we run some side conversations with the public as the process evolves?

We can have conversations as needed. That's a good topic for the next meeting. We should begin thinking about what topics we want to devote more conversation to. We'll need representation from the other stakeholders such as the school and the fire department.

Walter Levy introduced a measurement tool to be used at each meeting. He asked all participants to answer these questions on an index card: What emotion do you have right now? What issue or concern do you have right now? Responses will be tabulated and shared with the group. The responses will help the committee grapple with the issues and emotions the group is feeling.