

MINUTES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMITTEE

HELD: Thursday, February 8, 2024 – 4:00 p.m.

ATTENDING: Mayor William Aiello
Jeff Belt
Tom Buttafaro
Bob Forness
Jennifer Forney
Keri Kerper
Lenny Liguori
Reed McElfresh
Ryan Reed
Paula Snyder
Kelly Sweet
Tiffany Taylor
Adam Jester (via Zoom)
Destiny Portlow (via Zoom)
Melissa Keller, Department of State Representative

Project Team: Emma Phillips
Dan Riker
Tanya Mooza Zwahlen
Molly Vendura

1. Comprehensive Development Plan Schedule

Ms. Phillips explained the process started last summer with the inventory and analysis, and during the fall outreach and the development of a vision and goals occurred. Ms. Phillips explained we are now in winter 2024 and are ready to identify strategies, projects and policies. Ms. Phillips explained by Spring we hope to have a draft Comprehensive Development Plan completed for the City to use when applying for CFA funding for projects on the horizon. Ms. Phillips explained the draft will be finalized by Fall and will be ready to move forward to the final version to be approved by the City and Common Council. Ms. Phillips explained we are currently on track and doing well.

2. Updates on Outreach

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained the outreach information is posted on the Comprehensive Development Plan section of the City of Olean's website. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained this is the playbook for how the project team will be engaging with the community and during what point in the process this will occur. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained stakeholder interviews have been conducted, the survey has been completed and the first public meeting has occurred. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained pop up events will occur in the future as well as another public meeting.

a. Online Survey Results

Ms. Phillips explained there is a lot of information on the slides being presented, and explained she will forward the information to the taskforce members after the meeting. Ms. Phillips explained there were 337 responses to the survey, which she feels is fantastic for an online survey. Ms. Phillips explained a majority of the respondents live in Olean, 44% live and work in Olean, 17% only work in Olean, and 10% own businesses in Olean. Ms. Phillips explained a majority of those who responded were 50 to 64 years old, and the next highest group that responded was those 20 to 39. She explained only 2 people under the age of 20 responded, and she suggest a possible pop up and extra outreach to students as well as looking into opportunities to target those 65 and over as well. Ms. Phillips explained a majority of respondents choose to live in Olean or visit Olean because of nearby family and friends, their neighborhood and local community, the location within the region, and walkability.

Ms. Phillips explained the survey asked respondents to rate the quality of life in Olean, and explained 43.16% identified the quality of life as good or excellent. Ms. Phillips explained nearly 15% rated the quality of life as poor, and when respondents were asked why they rated it as poor, they indicated it was due to property taxes (52.3%), availability of shopping and amenities, business expansion, social issues and racism. Preservation of community character, and new housing. Ms. Phillips explained when asked about future development, respondents indicated they would like to see infill development, industrial and light manufacturing, mixed use development, and preservation of open space. Ms. Phillips indicated only 2.5% indicated they did not want to see any new development, and explained a majority of respondents want to see Olean continue to grow in the way that it should grow. Ms. Phillips explained one of the most interesting questions and answers was how respondents would like to describe Olean in 20 years, and almost all of the respondents answered "safe." Ms. Phillips explained she has never heard that from a community and this should be taken into consideration for the vision statement and goals.

Ms. Snyder explained she would like to know what social issues are defined as, and Ms. Phillips explained a definition of social issues was not provided because she did not want to limit people not to answer. She explained social issues can include unemployment, low income, housing, mental health care, medical care, and food scarcity. Ms. Snyder explained this really drills down into specifics the committee needs to know, as the general idea doesn't really help. Ms. Phillips explained she will tease this information out in future outreach. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained she saw mental health mentioned at prior meetings as well, and when things are stated numerous times, we really want to pay attention to that.

Mr. Belt explained when it comes to property taxes, the school and county taxes are an issue as well. Mr. Belt explained he has a home in Buffalo with the same assessed value of his home in Olean, and the taxes are 2.5 times higher in Olean than they are in Buffalo. Ms. Phillips explained that might be a tough thing for a Comprehensive Development Plan to alleviate, especially with tax increases correlating with the timing of the survey. Mr. Belt explained with the population declining, we need more taxpayers, and that is how we can handle the property tax issue. Mr. Belt explained we should consider strategies for economies and intermunicipal collaboration. Mr. Belt explained the county is not really helpful, and continues to divest in municipalities and invest in sprawl. Mr. Belt explained this plan will not help that issue, as this is a plan for the City of Olean,

not Cattaraugus County. Ms. Phillips explained she will note the need for increased collaboration and shared services, but we will not include that the City should decrease taxes as that is not a realistic strategy on our part. Mr. Belt explained if population increases, it would be huge for the school and the City.

Mr. Belt asked how respondents perceive safety, and Mr. Phillips explained it was used to describe how respondents want to describe Olean in 20 years. Ms. Phillips explained they used phrases such as safe, less drugs, less crime, and homelessness. Ms. Phillips explained homeless does not necessarily correlate with safe but it could correlate with the perception that it is not safe. Ms. Vendura explained in the public meeting she heard a lot about parks and being safe in parks, including lighting on the Allegheny River Valley Trail and Olean Creek. Mr. Belt explained at a meeting a couple of nights ago, it was discussed how unsafe West State Street had been and that it has gotten incrementally better with the road diet. Mr. Belt explained there is a plan to make safer with the entire project paid for by the value of safety improvements. Mr. Belt explained rarely does he find anyone in Olean who identifies the streets as a cause of poor safety. Mr. Belt explained he has heard people identify those who look like vagrants as being unsafe, but he hasn't heard of vagrants hurting anyone in Olean. Ms. Phillips explained this is surprising to the project team as well, although the 337 respondents for the survey is definitely not the entire City of Olean. Mr. Belt explained he has not seen as much homelessness before as we have now and there is clearly a rising problem of homelessness in America. Mr. Belt explained the appearance of homeless people doesn't make him feel unsafe, though. Ms. Phillips explained it doesn't make her feel unsafe either, but it might make other people feel unsafe, and explained we need to consider the perception.

Mr. Liguori asked if safety was indicated as a problem or something respondents wanted to continue. Ms. Phillips explained respondents were simply asked how they want to describe Olean in 20 years, and they responded safe. Mr. Liguori explained safety could be a trend that is on the rise, and respondents want to see Olean continuing to be safe. Ms. Phillips explained this question did not give choices and was open-ended. Mr. Buttafaro explained if people follow on Facebook what police and others post, then they could think we are drug-ridden. Mr. Buttafaro explained that could be the perception that Facebook gives of Olean, and he feels that is what the respondents are talking about. Ms. Forney explained over the Summer homeless people were camping on the levee and then news stories about crime are posted on Facebook. Ms. Forney explained it could be all the timing as well, and explained it could just be on the forefront of respondent's minds. Mr. Buttafaro explained it is also the exact same for every city in the state.

Ms. Snyder explained we get a bird's eye view, but some people on the street can be terrifying. Ms. Snyder explained she has seen parents cross the street with their children to avoid people. Ms. Snyder explained there is a particular individual who we have accepted and feel terrible for as we watch him all day, but it can be scary for those who don't know him. Ms. Snyder explained if you visualize the situation and the mental health issues, and are a mom with kids, you will avoid walking on that side of the street. Mayor Aiello explained in the big scheme of things, you could ask just that question and not any other question on the survey, and people are going to want Olean to be safe, attractive, welcoming, affordable, and viable. Mr. Buttafaro explained just because

people want to see Olean as safe in 20 years does not mean they feel it is unsafe now. Ms. Forney explained safety can mean a lot of things, like multiple use paths, safety in parks, and low crime, and can come from a lot of different aspects. Mr. Jester explained he feels a little more spotlight has been shined on this topic recently with the unhoused and mentally ill. Mr. Jester explained this is more on the forefront as you walk through our downtown. Mr. Jester explained he feels a lot of this is due to bail reform and the effects trickling down to communities like ours. Mr. Jester explained it also didn't used to be so easy to get information on what is going on across town, but now with social media, as soon as someone does something on the west end everyone in town knows. Mr. Jester explained this can create more of a perception that there is a safety issue, and that may be why it came up more frequently on this survey. Mr. Jester explained he thinks a n issue is the easier access to more information.

Mr. McElfresh asked if we know where respondents found information on the survey, and Ms. Phillips explained she was unable to get that information. Ms. Phillips explained information on the survey was posted on the City website, and Ms. Kerper explained the City posted and would refresh monthly the information on X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, and on the City's website. Mr. Buttafaro explained he put the information on the notice board at St. Bonaventure. Ms. Phillips explained this is something that can be discussed more such as during the popup with students. Ms. Phillips explained this is something we should pay attention to, but should not be the forefront of the document. Mayor Aiello explained there is a government class at Olean High School who are attending Council meetings now because it is a requirement of the class. Mayor Aiello explained this survey could be sent to that class to be taken, and Ms. Forney suggested it be sent to all area schools. Ms. Phillips explained they could also sit in during the next committee meeting, and explained she will look into this more.

Mr. Belt explained he has been in Olean 13 years or so and has been pushing this boulder up a hill beginning in 2011 with the Walkable Olean Vision document. Mr. Belt explained he looked at Olean as not safe with long crossing distances, few bump outs and few crossing signals. Mr. Belt explained East and West State Streets were four lane roads on too little space. Mr. Belt explained he was on the hospital board for nine years and almost no emergency room admissions were due to crime. Mr. Belt explained there were a few occasional domestic incidents, but most admissions were from accidents at home and out in the public domain. Mr. Belt explained everyone loves Olean because we are a little country city, but all of the roads need to be rebuilt. Mr. Belt explained roads were constructed years ago in favor of commuters, and now shortening the crossing distance for students is way more valuable than convenience for trucks that probably shouldn't be in the City anyway. Ms. Sweet explained she agrees with the crime situation and explained she thinks social media and a 24 hour news cycle can give the perception of increased crime. Ms. Sweet explained she feels awareness has increased more than the actual crime level. Ms. Sweet explained she used to walk to work and cross Union Street four times a day for almost 12 years, and she never came close to getting hit by a car. Ms. Sweet explained she feels some pedestrian awareness is lacking.

b. Public Meeting 1 Review

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained on November 1, 2023 the first public meeting was held for this process and 21 people attended. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained a meeting summary will be sent to the committee after this meeting. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained participants were asked what they love about the City of Olean, and they responded walkability, people, and small businesses and local organizations working together. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained participants were asked what the most important characteristics of the City are to protect and develop, and answers included the downtown, housing, universities, and historic buildings. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained participants felt the main aspects or areas of the City that need improvement are housing and Code Enforcement, celebrating diversity, the need for jobs, and outdoor activities. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained participants were also asked what the biggest opportunity is for the City, and respondents answered outdoor recreation, business, lower housing costs, and leveraging people. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained she believes leveraging people means to allow others to contribute to the betterment of the community through volunteering. Mayor Aiello noted he knows we need better paying jobs, but almost every business has a sign in the window that they are hiring.

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained a brief presentation was done, and then the participants broke out into the World Café exercise. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained after the exercise was complete, each participant had an opportunity to comment on each topic area. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained the vision for parks and recreation included all ages, multi-modal access, safety, access to river dikes, revitalizing what we have, and more programming for youth. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained the vision for environment and sustainability included more street trees, addressing aging infrastructure, planning for electric vehicles, wind, and solar, and addressing storm water. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained when the participants discussed the vision for transportation, they included the importance of multi-modal infrastructure such as sidewalks, transit, and bike lanes, organizing and promoting ride share, marketing transit better, and focusing on safety of pedestrians and bicyclists such as with rapid-flashing crossing beacons. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained the vision for economic development consisted of leveraging universities, maintaining industrial properties, promoting and supporting small business, recruiting companies, and decreasing empty storefronts. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained the vision for neighborhoods determined by the participants was addressing zombie homes, preserving residential areas, City-wide broadband, addressing food deserts, supporting neighborhood watch, increasing police on bikes, planting more trees, and attracting remote workers. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained the vision for housing includes increasing high quality options, senior housing and assisted living, increasing maintenance on existing housing stock, and housing first for unhoused.

Mr. Jester explained he was pleasantly surprised on the focus for sustainability. Mr. Belt explained there was some discussion less about the built environment and more about how public service would be delivered such as police on patrol. Mr. Belt asked if this is for a 20 year plan, and explained it was mentioned extensively. Ms. Phillips explained it absolutely is. Mr. Buttafaro explained the idea of policing used to be going and mediating between people, and those days are gone. Mr. Buttafaro explained now they are trying to protect people from bigger crimes and he doesn't know if we ever can go back to the way it used to be. Ms. Vendura explained she sees in the paper where police are back on the streets having better success dealing with drugs and crime, and Mr. Buttafaro explained he would like to see more of it and would like to know how we can

help. Mayor Aiello explained it's all well and good to put into the plan, and explained when he was first hired in 1974 they walked beats. Mayor Aiello explained the calls for service now don't allow for an officer to be in a particular area. Mayor Aiello explained there were around 25,000 calls last year. Mayor Aiello explained this would be good to put into a plan because in the future you don't know what is going to happen, and if the population grows perhaps the police department can grow as well. Ms. Phillips explained including this in the plan shows that this committee supported this.

3. Review of Updated Existing Conditions

Ms. Phillips explained there are some substantial changes to the existing conditions, and explained the project team really tried to elaborate more based on what was heard during the last meeting. Ms. Phillips explained Western New York was added to the region setting, and additional poverty rate information and median household income details for Cattaraugus County and New York State were included. Ms. Phillips explained they included additional details about public and private employers as well as a breakdown of Olean's industry in comparison with New York State. Ms. Phillips explained she obtained this information from Ms. Yanetsko and went through it with Ms. Kerper. Mr. Buttafaro asked that Allegany be spelled correctly throughout the document, and explained the Village, Town, and County are spelled Allegany, while the river and mountains are spelled Allegheny. Ms. Phillips explained she will adjust the document accordingly. Ms. Phillips explained they included information regarding Olean's daytime population to show details about how it is coming in and leaving during the day, which shows the daytime draws people into Olean to eat, shop, run errands, and things like that. Ms. Phillips explained they added additional details about the Olean City School District recreational facilities such as playgrounds and gyms available to the community, as well as added the Bartlett Country Club, which is a major user of Olean land use.

Ms. Sweet explained Gargoyle Park is listed and asked if more information should be added about amenities such as the giant pavilion, restrooms, and trail access, in addition to the disc golf which is already mentioned. Ms. Vendura asked if Gargoyle Park is outside the City limits but is a City park, and Mayor Aiello explained it was donated to the City to be used as a park, and if we discontinue use of the area as a park, the land needs to be returned to Exxon Mobil according to the agreement when the land was donated.

Ms. Phillips explained the Basilica of St. Mary's was added to historic resources. Ms. Snyder explained the document states Territory of Seneca and Iroquois Tribe, and explained it is Iroquois Confederacy and Seneca Nation of Indians. Ms. Snyder explained the underground railroad was very active here as well, and she is not sure where the home of Sarah Johnson is, but she lived here in Olean when she was a practicing physician. Mayor Aiello explained the home is on Irving Street with a plaque in front of it, and he will provide the address for Ms. Phillips. Ms. Snyder explained Governor Higgins' home was where Community Bank now has a building on South Street, and explained the carriage home is still there. She explained this should be added to the historic area, and the Fannie E. Bartlett House should be added, if it is not already included. Ms. Phillips asked if this is a designated historic home, and Ms. Snyder explained it is not, but a short paragraph or sentence could be added. Ms. Vendura asked if the home itself was torn down and Ms. Snyder

confirmed the home was demolished but the carriage house is still there. Mr. McElfresh asked if the Conklin Mountain house will be renovated after the recent fire, and Mr. Reed explained it is highly unlikely. Ms. Phillips explained it is kept on the list because it is still registered as a historic home. Mayor Aiello asked if the library is included, and Ms. Phillips explained it is listed. Mr. Buttafaro asked if it should be called the Carnegie Library, and Ms. Phillips explained she listed it as what it is called on the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Buttafaro explained the building was built by Carnegie and he designed a series of Carnegie libraries all across the country.

Ms. Phillips explained new details have been included about sewer replacement and levee reaccreditation. Mr. Buttafaro explained the City is listed north of the Allegheny State Forest, and explained it is a National Forest, not a State Forest. Ms. Phillips explained there were edits about library parking to make sure the document doesn't say the library is limited in services and only that it has limited directly adjacent parking. Ms. Phillips explained she updated information to JCC to note both degrees and certificates, and Ms. Snyder explained it should state that the nursing program is to become a Registered Nurse. Ms. Phillips explained she added more details about St. Bonaventure and their contributions to recreation and entertainment at their facilities. Mr. Buttafaro explained we will want to mention that St. Bonaventure has Division 1 athletics.

Ms. Phillips explained there was a breakdown of vacant properties and the brownfield overlap, as well as the addition of the reservoir at Mt. Herman under Public and Community Services land use. Ms. Vendura explained the Farmers' Market should be added here and under parks. Ms. Phillips explained there are 21.25 acres dedicated to public parking and church and school parking. Ms. Phillips explained a note was also made regarding the Form-Based Zoning Code eliminating the parking requirements in a portion of the downtown. Ms. Phillips explained the conditions referenced transportation but did not talk about the infrastructure and explained this was discussed during the first meeting and should be listed. Ms. Phillips explained she has included a new infrastructure section discussing water and sewer, gas and electric, and telecommunications. Ms. Phillips explained they have also added details regarding Local Highway Inventory miles, city efforts regarding milling and paving, Complete Streets Policy, the Sidewalk Program, and transit. Ms. Phillips explained information about transit riders shows additional needs for transit services requiring a partner or sponsor which is vital to expanding services.

Ms. Phillips asked that if there are additional edits that the committee get them to her in two weeks or less.

a. Draft Key Takeaways

Ms. Phillips explained they took all of the data in these sections and explained they needed to see what it all means. Ms. Phillips explained the takeaways are supposed to be a broad setting to allow us to go more in depth with the vision, goals, and strategies. Ms. Phillips read the draft takeaways, as follows:

- Olean's regional position makes it a prime location for those moving to the Southern Tier area or major employers looking to expand or relocate;

- Housing vacancy in Olean has remained relatively low since 2010 and is expected to continue to decrease as home ownership rises, which will likely cause a demand for new housing;
- The City is an employment and commercial hub that offers important goods and services to surrounding rural areas;
- Olean's low home value may be representative of its older housing stock and need for repairs or updating;
- Olean's median household income is considerably lower than that of Cattaraugus County and New York State; the City also suffers from high poverty rates, which may suggest a disconnect between need of local employers and the existing labor force;
- The City maintains an abundance of park space and provides access to natural resources and outdoor recreation but lacks year-round recreation amenities to draw in regional visitors;
- The existing high amount of vacant and underutilized land throughout the City points out the need for a rezone of areas to allow for new development and land use such as infill development and middle housing; and
- The City provides access via robust transportation infrastructure but still shows a need of improved streetscaping and reconstruction of roads.

Ms. Phillips explained these are big generalizations, but will help Ms. Kerper when she applies for grants. Mr. Belt asked if a more positivity could go into the data, and explained he thinks there is a lot of good things about Olean such as affordable housing, the community is safe, compact, and walkable, there is a very diverse economy, and we have retained more manufacturing in Olean and our manufacturing population is diversified over many different companies and industry sectors. Ms. Phillips explained the existing conditions make Olean look both needy, for grant purposes, and wonderful. Ms. Phillips explained the introduction and executive summary will show Olean is already a great place to live, work and play. Ms. Phillips explained she can put more positives in here, but this is pretty blunt, to the point and factual, and will be used in a blunt, factual way. Ms. Phillips explained we can add more detail and committee members can make recommendations to her via email, but the introduction and executive summary are where Olean will really shine. Mr. Riker explained a number of things come out of the CDP, one of which are grants. Mr. Riker explained it is a grant writer's job to make the reviewer cry and make it look like the worst place that needs the grant, and at the same time, the CDP is also made to make Olean look like the best place ever. Mr. Riker explained the job of the CDP is to do both things at once. Ms. Phillips explained this is such a small part of the document and explained other parts of the document make Olean look better.

Mr. McElfresh asked if the Olean Airport in Ischua should be mentioned, and Ms. Phillips explained it can be mentioned and explained an airport is a huge deal.

4. Visioning Session

a. Review of Draft Vision

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained we will use this session to review three draft vision statements and choose one to refine, and then review eight draft goal statements and discuss those as well. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen began by reading the three draft vision statements, as follows:

- In 2045, Olean is the pride of the Southern Tier. Our community is a central gathering place for the region, and we are known as a friendly and accessible place that embraces its history and unique assets. Our abundant natural resources are protected and celebrated, our housing is affordable, and our infrastructure is well maintained.
- In 2045, the City of Olean is a historic, vibrant, and friendly community that embraces its history and capitalizes on our unique assets. We promote a balanced and sustainable mix of residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. Historic homes and districts are preserved to honor our past while contributing to our future. Our community is a regional hub of activity and culture. The City's natural resources are protected and celebrated, fostering resiliency and sustainability for generations to come.
- In 2045, Olean blends historic charm with modern development, creating a stable yet diverse urban environment. Housing initiatives preserve our heritage while introducing sustainable living solutions. Our downtown thrives as a cultural and commercial hub, supporting local businesses and fostering community. Transportation planning enhances connectivity for all residents. Olean's commitment to preserving natural resources strengthens its resiliency and sustainability, setting a model for responsible regional growth.

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen asked which of the three statements resonates with committee members, as well as what could be better and what is missing. Ms. Snyder and Ms. Forney expressed they both like the third statement the best. Ms. Forney asked if 2045 is used because that is the end of the plan and this is where we build our future direction towards, and Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained this is correct. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained the goals are used to show what we commit to achieve, and what we are committed to working on. Ms. Forney explained she likes the phrase "generations to come" in the second statement, as well as the phrase "regional growth." Mr. Buttafaro explained he likes the word friendly, but feels we should also include the word "inclusive" or something similar. Mr. Jester explained the only word on the whole page that gives him pause is "urban" because he doesn't know if that accurately depicts Olean. Ms. Snyder agreed that the word "urban" should be removed. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen asked about the phrase "diverse, inclusive environment" and Ms. Portlow explained she likes the word "diverse." Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained she really likes the phrase "Olean is the pride of the Southern Tier," but it already is today. Ms. Forney suggested adding the wording "continues to be," which Mr. Buttafaro agreed with. Mr. Forness explained he likes the word "welcoming" rather than "friendly."

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained what she is hearing is that the third statement is the favorite of the group, and things should be added such as continuing to be the pride of the Southern Tier, that we are welcoming and we are thinking about generations to come. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained we will also look at including safety and inclusive. Ms. Phillips explained we might have to cut the

statement in other places to add these things. Mr. Forness explained since it is a vision statement, we have already enacted the initiatives and the statement should be phrased accordingly, otherwise it seems that we are still striving to achieve our vision. Mayor Aiello explained in the existing conditions section we set the regional setting as the Southern Tier Region of Western New York, and it should state the same in the vision statement. Mayor Aiello explained a lot of the time, the Southern Tier can mean Binghamton. Mr. Buttafaro asked if “leader in workforce development” should be included and Ms. Snyder explained she feels workforce is important as current employers really want to see that stability.

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained she has six or seven comments that she will weave into the statement.

b. Review of Draft Goals

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained there are eight goals which are intended to say how we are going to get to this vision and to the desired result that we are committing to achieve. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen read the draft goals as follows:

- **Housing and Neighborhoods:** Improve housing diversity through infill development and enhance neighborhoods by fostering a sense of community, promoting livability, and ensuring sustained property value and mix of housing options (heard a lot about need for senior housing).
- **Parks and Recreation:** Develop recreational facilities and safeguard open spaces to enrich the well-being of our current residents while preserving the natural legacy for future generations in Olean.
- **Economic Development:** Continue to redevelop Olean’s downtown into a vibrant, walkable, pedestrian-friendly retail hub featuring a blend of housing, shopping, dining, services, and cultural amenities, reinforcing its status as a thriving economic center.
- **Transportation:** Cultivate an efficient, secure, and well-connected transportation system in Olean that aligns with current requirements and anticipates future growth. Prioritize economic viability and responsiveness to adjacent land uses.
- **Land Use:** Promote optimal land utilization in Olean, enhancing both the physical and economic landscape by encouraging efficient land use practices that benefit the community.
- **Public Service and Infrastructure:** Improve and maintain robust local infrastructure to meet the needs of current and future developments in Olean. Ensure safety and adaptability to growth while providing responsive and adequate public services and facilities for residents and businesses.
- **Quality of Life:** Uphold and enhance the overall quality of life in Olean by addressing key areas such as public safety, housing, recreation, economic development, and community engagement to create a well-rounded and fulfilling living experience. Cultivate a positive and engaging relationship with stakeholders in Olean, actively encouraging citizen participation and involvement in shaping the community’s future.

- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Prioritize sound financial management in Olean, ensuring responsible allocation of resources to support sustainable development and growth while maintaining fiscal prudence and accountability.

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen asked what resonates with committee members, as well as what could be missing. Mr. Forness asked how we came up with these eight, and Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained these were determined by reviewing existing conditions, public meeting and survey responses, reviewing taskforce discussions, and looking at themes that came up over and over. Mr. Forness explained this is very comprehensive. Mr. Buttafaro asked if this is cookie cutter, and Ms. Phillips explained some of it is, such as economic development which everyone talks about, but this was created by the project team. Ms. Kerper explained under “Economic Development” it references the downtown, but we are undertaking different main arterial commercial corridors such as East State Street, South Union Street, West State Street and Wayne Street. Mr. Forness suggested saying “Olean” and not being too focused. Mr. Riker suggested replacing “downtown” with “economy.” Mr. Forness explained he had to google infill and Ms. Phillips explained it means to fill in vacant property with development. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen suggested not using that word.

Mayor Aiello explained Olean’s movement has been called the Olean Renaissance, and Mr. Belt explained he definitely thinks he’s onto something. Mr. Belt explained we want people to choose Olean and we want to attract people from outside the area. Mr. Belt explained we need to be welcoming to people who didn’t grow up here while also showing kids around here that there are indeed opportunities in New York. Mr. Forness explained we have a lot of what he calls scar tissue from the last however many years from places that have shut down, and this has resulted in parents and grandparents being affected and telling their kids to leave. Mr. Forness explained things are changing and there are a lot of things driving that change. Mr. Forness explained the goal is to change the narrative and change the perception or feeling about Olean, as it is hard to get people out of that negative space. Ms. Phillips explained this happens everywhere and she had heard this everywhere. Mr. Forness explained this should somehow be incorporated to flip this narrative.

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained if we are going to add growing and retaining the population, it should be the first goal and have the other goals flow from it. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained these are short, concise goal statements with a narrative behind them. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen suggested adding verbs to the goal statements, and Ms. Vendura explained there are several different verbs in the narratives behind the goal statements and she is unsure if she could choose just one verb to use for each. Mr. Liguori explained he thinks rebirth needs to be included, like a new beginning, in the vision. Ms. Vendura explained she thinks this goes with the Mayor’s vision of renaissance and rebirth. Mr. Belt explained he personally thinks the purpose of the plan is to achieve growth, and the number one thing Olean needs to do is simulate population growth and rebuild the population. Mr. Belt explained he thinks it is possible to achieve because we are now in recognition that we are in competition for people. Mr. Belt explained these initiatives are undertaken in the plan to acknowledge people have choices in Olean, and we need to be competitive with those things where Olean has lost population. Mr. Belt explained there is no greater investment than when a person invests their time into your location and that is the competition that he believes we can begin to win. Mr. Belt explained he does not see these as goals, but rather as initiatives.

Ms. Vendura explained these goals are supposed to support the vision, and explained we want goals to support growth so we need to include growth in the vision. Ms. Phillips suggested refraining from using exact numbers in the vision statement since while the vision has descriptive words, it is not honing in on specifics. Ms. Phillips explained that is where goals come in as well as strategies and policies to achieve those goals. Ms. Forney explained growth is included in the third vision statement, and Mr. Forness recommended removing the word “stable.”

Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained these goal statements are going to turn into chapters with plans, initiatives, and programs under each. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained another thing to talk about with this committee when we think about a plan being worked on is if there should be a chapter on growing and retaining the population. Ms. Vendura explained she likes that idea. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained she will take the comments she has received on the goal statements to work on them, and explained they will be sent out for review prior to the next committee meeting.

Mr. McElfresh explained there are a lot of comments in existing conditions about aging housing stock and maintenance of existing housing stock, and asked if that could be worked into improvements to existing housing stock. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained she would add this. Ms. Phillips explained she will send these to the committee when they are ready to be reviewed, and if anyone feels passionate they can get on a call or Zoom meeting with her to talk more about these details. Mr. Riker explained the biggest thing for everyone is population growth and regrowth, and asked if it makes most sense for that to be the first sentence of the vision statement. Mr. Belt explained we want to make sure we are undertaking initiatives that are beneficial to those already living in Olean. Mr. Belt explained it sounds dire, but Olean is on the cusp with taxes and demographics, and we need to break that and we need to be able to attract people back to Olean. Mr. Belt explained this is the plan on how we do that. Mr. Riker explained people’s perception of Olean needs to be that it is a place they want to be. Ms. Mooza Zwahlen explained she will make revisions and get them back to the committee for review.

5. Next Steps

Ms. Phillips explained she will make the final edits to the existing conditions, and Ms. Mooza Zwahlen will make the additional edits to the vision and goals and have them sent to the committee prior to the next meeting. Ms. Phillips explained they will then begin the development of strategies, policies and projects to be discussed during meeting #4 in April.

6. Additional Questions & Discussion

Absent additional questions or discussion, the meeting ended at approximately 6:00 p.m.

MINUTES PREPARED BY TIFFANY TAYLOR