

MINUTES OF THE COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMITTEE

HELD: Monday, October 7, 2024 – 4:00 p.m. - John J. Ash Community Center

ATTENDING: Mayor William Aiello
Jeff Belt
Tom Buttafaro
Keri Kerper
Reed McElfresh
Ryan Reed
Ron Richardson
Paula Snyder
Kelly Sweet
Tiffany Taylor
Adam Jester (via Zoom)
Eric Maurouard (via Zoom)

Project Team: Emma Phillips
Dan Riker
Molly Vendura
Tom Voigt

1. Comprehensive Development Plan Schedule

Ms. Phillips explained the next steps are to finalize the document, which will then go before the County and Common Council. Ms. Phillips noted the sooner edits are done the better, and she hopes to wrap this up before the New Year. Ms. Phillips explained this process started last summer and in the time since the committee has worked through an inventory of existing conditions and analyses, community outreach and development of vision and goals, identifying policy preferences, and putting together the draft plan.

Ms. Phillips explained she hopes to receive feedback on the draft plan during the public meeting tonight, and then the document can move forward.

2. Updated Land Use Plan and Projects

Ms. Phillips explained the purpose of the Land Use Plan is to provide strategic direction of land uses necessary to continue development goals of the City and community members. Ms. Phillips explained during discussions regarding the Land Use Plan, they heard it should continue protection and enhancement of the core downtown and natural resources, allow for development of diverse residential in all parts of the City, and maintain land dedicated to manufacturing and industrial uses as well as community services. Ms. Phillips explained their approach to the Land Use Plan was to stay flexible, yet provide direction. Ms. Phillips explained we do not want to end up with a plan where the Council or Zoning Board feels locked in.

Ms. Phillips explained several changes have been made to the Land Use Plan based on comments during the last committee meeting. Ms. Phillips explained a historic district overlay was added, the color was changed to the industrial district, the downtown core was extended along West State Street, and the residential neighborhood in the northwest corner of the City was included in order to preserve the residential neighborhood. Ms. Phillips explained this plan is not the end all, be all and explained the document is a guide for development while assisting in maintaining land uses.

Ms. Snyder asked if the County Legislators from the Olean district are aware of the draft CDP, and explained she would hate to see the plan shot full of holes after being sent to the County because they were not aware. Mayor Aiello explained we have a representative from the legislature on the committee and Ms. Sweet noted they should be receiving all of the email updates regarding the plan. Ms. Kerper explained the plan will be forwarded to the County Planning Board, and noted approval is not required by the legislators. Ms. Kerper indicated the legislator on the committee was supposed to be sharing the plan and updates with the rest of the legislature. Ms. Snyder explained this will be the working document for when various boards meet to approve or disapprove projects that come before them so it is important everyone is on the same page. Ms. Phillips explained a more concise package than the entire CDP document was sent to the Common Council, who reviewed and gave feedback which was incorporated into the document where it made sense. Ms. Phillips advised it will not be a complete shock when the CDP goes in front of the Common Council. Ms. Phillip explained she hopes a lot of committee members have been talking about this process and letting other board members know what is coming down the pipeline. Ms. Snyder explained everyone should use this document as a standard moving forward.

Ms. Phillips explained one of the big updates that came from the discussion of the draft Land Use Plan was the desire to see an example of an infill project at 2211 West State Street. Ms. Phillips explained the concept consists of two or three-story mixed use buildings with a retail first floor and office / residential upper floors, a large-footprint building that is naturally lit with tall ceilings, expansive windows and light wells, and parking lots with landscaped interior islands and minimum 10' wide landscaped rear and side setbacks. Ms. Vendura explained smaller buildings would be placed towards the roadway with larger buildings in the back area of the parcel. Mr. Buttafaro explained he likes the way the buildings being placed up to the roadway make the area feel city-like. Ms. Phillips explained with the language in the Land Use Plan section of the document, there will hopefully be a push in the direction towards this type of infill. Ms. Phillips noted the City has applied for funding for a zoning update, so hopefully after the adoption of the CDP the City can update the zoning code as well to require this type of infill.

3. Final Outreach and Committee Activity

Ms. Phillips explained the final public outreach will occur later this evening. Ms. Phillips explained the public presentation will give a brief overview of how we got to where we are today with the vision, strategies, goals and policies developed. Ms. Phillips explained there are boards that list strategies, policies and projects for the community to see and determine if there is anything that was missed. Ms. Phillips explained this committee will look at these boards to determine what strategies, policies and projects they feel most passionate about, how will they or how are they

currently working with the City to move these forward, and if there is anything missing from the draft plan, which is the same activity the community will complete during the public outreach.

Ms. Phillips asked the committee to share their responses. Ms. Taylor explained she will continue to work with the Common Council and City officials to ensure legislation aligns with the goals of the CDP. Mr. Reed explained he will be heavily involved in a potential zoning update as well as capital improvements for building inspections and updates. Mr. Buttafaro explained St. Bonaventure University will work with City leaders to benefit everyone academically, culturally and economically. Mr. Buttafaro explained at any given time their expertise changes depending on the new faculty they may have or a new academic feature they are doing, and that would continue to grow and change with the City at any given time. Mr. Richardson explained it is important to support Olean General Hospital and try to have meetings to encourage increased emergency room efficiency. Mr. Richardson explained right now people are in the halls waiting for possibly a full day before being seen. Mr. Richardson advised the hospital recently received a mental health grant and he would like to see more done with mental health care as there are currently a lot of mental health issues that can result in homelessness or other issues. Mr. Richardson explained he would like to continue to work towards security cameras in parks, even though proposals had come in much higher than anticipated, because he feels this would be a great asset. Mr. Richardson explained he would also like to continue to update law enforcement equipment, and noted the department just received new laptops.

Mr. McElfresh explained he would like to see support for development of diverse housing stock and brownfields. Mr. McElfresh explained we should support these projects and push them forward within the guidelines laid out. Mr. McElfresh explained in regards to the replace existing engines goal if it should instead read something more along the lines of “continue to replace existing engines.” Ms. Phillips explained we can change that language to state “maintenance and updates of existing fleet” and explained Mr. Belt had a question about that as well and how we want to approach improvements for different departments. Ms. Phillips explained they did not want to change the language departments had given them until they had received feedback from those departments. Ms. Phillips asked how it makes sense to feed this language into the CDP and asked if this only applies to the fire department. Mr. McElfresh explained this could also apply to the police department, and explained although Mr. Richardson indicated new laptops were just purchased, this is not something we want to purchase every 20 years and we want to ensure we replace them as needed. Ms. Phillips explained the goal in each department is to ensure updates to and maintenance of equipment and fleet to ensure the departments have necessary equipment to best perform for the community.

Mr. Belt explained on behalf of Sol Epoxy he is an investor in Olean supplying jobs and exporting products, while Sunny Olean will continue to invest in and advise some stewardship in the 100 block of West State Street. Mr. Belt explained he is fully invested in Olean. Mr. Belt explained he would like to build on what Mr. McElfresh suggested for the police and fire departments and suggested something that states “within the next 20 years under the CDP, develop a public safety master plan for Olean’s fire and police departments to understand tasks associated with changing demographics and allocate appropriate resources to ensure a high quality of life for residents.” He

explained this public safety master plan itself though is for another forum to discuss and determine what resources are needed for the fire and police department. Mr. Belt explained he feels that plan would be more a consultant-informed facilitative process. Ms. Phillips asked how Mr. Richardson feels about a master plan for the police department and Mr. Richardson responded he feels this would be beneficial. Ms. Phillips explained if the department supports this, then it should definitely be included in the CDP as something that should be achieved.

Mr. Belt explained one board listed instituting a bed tax, and he questioned if this could be reworded to “investigate the pros and cons of a bed tax to fund tourism and marketing.” Mayor Aiello explained the bills for the bed tax in Olean are currently waiting for the Governor’s signature. Ms. Phillips explained not everything included on the posters came from this committee, and explained they also received ideas from department heads, stakeholder interviews, and the community. Ms. Phillips explained this committee came up with thoughts and ideas but there were also initiatives from City officials they wanted to make sure to include.

Ms. Sweet explained she will work as a continual liaison and make sure there is a member of the Zoning Board to work with Code Enforcement and Community Development since both the Zoning Board and the Planning Board work with these departments quite a bit. Ms. Phillips explained the Zoning and Planning Boards will be carrying out a lot of what is in this document, as well as what comes from the zoning update. Ms. Sweet explained Code Enforcement is being heavily resourced, and they need resources to assist in implementing what Zoning, Planning, and the Council do.

Ms. Snyder explained for her, she is focused on the entrepreneurial piece. Ms. Snyder explained she thinks this entrepreneurial piece is important, especially for the downtown and surrounding areas. Ms. Snyder explained the St. Bonaventure Innovation Center, the JCC Hatchlings Entrepreneurship Program, and the Chamber of Commerce’s Business Incubator Center are all assisting in growing entrepreneurship in the City of Olean. Ms. Snyder explained she would also like to see a focus on senior, 55-plus housing for older adults who are still able to live alone but do want to downsize into a smaller home with less maintenance, and she feels a lot of people her age would like to see the same thing. Ms. Snyder explained transportation is also something she is very passionate about and explained with a college downtown, she sees students having a tough time getting to where they need to go unless they have a vehicle. Ms. Snyder explained she loves the walkability, and that piece should be continued in the City.

Mr. Buttafaro explained no one seems to understand the importance of trees, and explained if you drive through Lackawanna it is a wonderful City, but it is lacking with no trees and almost looks apocalyptic. Ms. Snyder explained another piece she wants to mention is the hospital, and explained we want to support Olean General Hospital with every grant that we can get. Ms. Snyder explained the police department’s hands are tied and we should do anything we can to increase grants to help the police and hospital with people who have behavioral health issues. Ms. Phillips explained she has heard the hospital mentioned several times and that could be drilled more into the community services section for existing conditions as well as the importance of a hospital for community services in the Land Use Plan. Ms. Snyder explained the behavioral health piece is especially important.

Ms. Phillips explained the Executive Summary is not currently included in the document; however, they know there will be people who do not want to read the entire document and the final CDP will have an Executive Summary to be used as a marketing tool for the City of Olean. Ms. Phillips explained they did not want to create the Executive Summary until the committee meetings and public meetings were completed. Ms. Phillips explained this Executive Summary can be sent to people who want to live here, move here, and start businesses here to give them an overview of the City of Olean and its future plans.

Ms. Kerper explained her department will be there over the next twenty years to assist where appropriate and where accepted to help with any of the tasks listed. Mayor Aiello explained when we get the bed tax, or occupancy tax, which is estimated to be around \$100,000 based on what the County is receiving, the funds are to be used for economic development so hopefully the Council will stick to that plan to help the Economic Development office. Ms. Snyder asked if there are restrictions on the money, and Mayor Aiello explained once the Governor signs the legislation, the City of Olean will proceed with a local law, and included in that will be restrictions on what the funds can be used for. Mayor Aiello explained when the City approached the Senator and Assemblyman regarding the occupancy tax, it was listed the funds were to be used for economic development in the City of Olean.

Mayor Aiello explained there is a good group of people on this committee and from what he has seen, everyone is here to make Olean a better place. Mayor Aiello explained he hopes members of the public show up at tonight's outreach meeting and explained he spoke about it on the radio this morning. Mayor Aiello explained after this we will go through the process to have the Common Council adopt the plan, and follow it moving forward. Mayor Aiello explained a lot of things from the past CDP have been accomplished and this is what we want to come out of the new plan, for whatever we put in the document to be accomplished. Mayor Aiello explained there are a lot of things happening and we need to continue that and this document will continue things forward for the next 20 years. Mayor Aiello explained in his tenure, he has had the pleasure of working with a lot of good people who are all here for the City of Olean.

Ms. Vendura explained Ms. Snyder mentioned public transportation, and explained a recommendation should be to continue to provide public transportation with the OATS system and ensure its continued feasibility. Ms. Phillips explained the goal is for the City of Olean to find an appropriate sponsor for the OATS so the City will no longer be the sponsor. Ms. Vendura explained under parks and recreation a comment was supposed to be edited and include the newly developed Blue Way Concept, and a goal should be to develop boat launches in accordance with the Blue Way Concept. Ms. Vendura explained the Safe Streets for All program is also important to include in the plan. Ms. Vendura explained the City currently can't apply for funding until there is a plan in place and the City will first need to apply for a planning grant to develop a Safe Streets for All Plan. Ms. Vendura explained once this plan is complete, the City can apply for Safe Streets for All funding for the construction of Front Street streetscape improvements. Ms. Phillips explained there is a lot of money in this grant program the City could apply for and utilize.

Mr. Jester explained page 48 of the document should not include the Chamber of Commerce under manufacturing and tax incentives, since they don't have the ability to offer tax incentives. Mr.

Jester explained the Urban Renewal Agency should also be added as a partner on page 49 as the URA has sold their anchor properties, and now the body will start to focus on commercial acquisition, development, and sale. Mr. Belt explained he liked the Brownfield Tax Credit being included in the plan and asked if we should also include Historical Tax Credit and develop Historical Tax Credit education materials. Mr. Belt explained there is a historic district in the City and he doesn't think many people apply for this credit. Ms. Kerper explained she does provide this information to people but they don't apply. Mr. Belt explained in Buffalo people apply for that tax credit like crazy but here in Olean they don't seem to. Ms. Kerper explained she does tell people about the credit and she has materials regarding this, but it doesn't go anywhere. Ms. Phillips explained we can add the Historical Tax Credit to the plan.

Ms. Phillips explained we have covered a wide range of what people feel passionate about and want to move forward in the CDP. Ms. Phillips explained it is always good to have more people involved and explained they call these people "local champions." Ms. Phillips explained the more people who are involved that care about the community, the more things get done, and we should try to bring people in who are passionate about these topics. Ms. Phillips asked the committee to look at the document and send her thoughts and edits, as well as typos, blurry photos and duplicates, etc. Ms. Phillips explained they have looked at the draft so much they are not seeing these things anymore, and they want the document to be in tip top shape before it is forwarded to boards and the County for review. Ms. Belt asked if the foreword was changed and Ms. Phillips explained the new forward was reviewed and approved by Ms. Kerper, but it has not been updated yet in the draft plan although she will ensure it is. Mayor Aiello explained there is an issue between pages 17 and 18 where page 18 says "education" but above it, shows only houses. Mayor Aiello explained he hates seeing a newspaper putting in a photo of a sports team with a story about a different sports team. Ms. Phillips explained we want the photos to be relevant. Mayor Aiello explained on page 27 the photo of the fire station is not good, and we should have one done of Central Fire with all of the doors open to show the apparatus, which the City can provide.

4. Next Steps

Ms. Phillips explained the next step is the final public meeting tonight. Ms. Phillips explained after the document is in final draft form the State Environmental Quality Review will need to be done to make sure the plan does not dramatically impact the environment. Ms. Phillips explained they will then finalize the draft and send it to the County Planning Board and Common Council where it will hopefully be approved and adopted. Ms. Phillips explained after that, the City can make things happen, and take the document and run with it to put things forward that are important to the community, City, and committee.

5. Additional Discussion and Questions

Absent additional questions or discussion, the meeting ended at approximately 5:15 p.m.

MINUTES PREPARED BY TIFFANY TAYLOR