

JEFFERSON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The regular meeting opened at 7:10 pm. Committee members present were Dan Singletary, Bill Parker, Diane Fischer, Margie Hait, Gregg Sheehan and Linda Vroman. Also present were: Jennifer Murray; Schoharie County Planning Board, Tom Shepstone, Shepstone Associates, and Dick Kuhn, Jefferson Town Supervisor. Member not in attendance was John Treadwell. Our chairman, Dan Singletary, requested that the Town Board appoint another individual to replace John Treadwell since he has been unable to attend any of the meetings to date. There was a large turnout of members of the community since this is the first public hearing to keep everyone interested up-to-date with what the committee has been doing.

Dan made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes, seconded by Diane, passed unanimously.

Dan introduced the members of the community along with a little bit of their background. He also introduced the other individuals involved and their background. He presented Tom Shepstone's history with Schoharie County Planning Board and other projects his company has completed.

Dan then gave a brief overview of what the committee hopes to accomplish. A comprehensive plan is not required by the state. A comprehensive plan is necessary whenever a township or municipality needs/wants to do something with land use, either controlling it or, for that matter, not regulating land use. A comprehensive plan basically takes an inventory of **we, the people**. Who are we, where do we want to go, what do we like about our town and what we don't like about our town, where do we want it to go in the future? **The comprehensive plan produces no regulations, merely recommendations** to the town board for them to make regulations. We have the opportunity to make a document that will take into consideration everything about the town. At this point we have 3 working farms, some being replaced by small, unique, individual enterprises. Dan then covered some of the information that is available on Tom's website, including demographics and other statistics. Dan covered the number of full time residents and the number of seasonal residents, who may in the future intend to become full time residents. Among other things, we need to plan for the services that will be needed in the future. This includes fire, rescue squad and highway, all of which are the major expenditures for our town.

Dan then introduced Tom Shepstone. His plan is to present a program about what the whole process is all about, a little bit of background information and then devote about one-half the meeting to public input and questions about the information presented.

A comprehensive plan includes cooperation not only within the town of Jefferson, but also with Schoharie County's planning board and Shepstone Management Company. He noted that in this area we have a situation with three-quarters as many houses as we do people. This is not typical of this area and indicates a large number of second

homeowners. As higher-income people move into the community we are seeing higher per capita income compared to our neighboring towns within the county.

We are still in the process of gathering information. The comprehensive plan will be a study and report on the town, providing extensive background information and a set of recommendations. It will also be a plan, not a law. The adoption of this document does not enact any change in regulations. It may recommend some. It may offer samples, but it will not change any rules in any way. It is an action guide. It spells out specific recommendations that not only set forth long-term plans, but also give examples of the implementation of such plans. Town law says that the town board may prepare a comprehensive plan. It is optional provision so far as if a comprehensive plan is implemented, who prepares it. While it is not mandatory to do a comprehensive, town law states that all town land use regulations must be in accordance with the town's comprehensive plan. Regulations must be part of the overall look of the town.

Purposes include, gathering information about the history of the town and putting it into context as to what it means to the future of the town. Also, gathering demographics to understand what is happening in the town, what is influencing growth and what type of changes are likely to happen in the future. Thirdly, studying the natural resources. By having the county involved we have access to the geographical information system (GIS), which allows us to get very fine maps showing our natural resources. Can be generated at various scales, etc. Fourth, this plan can be a policy guide to help the town board in the future. Also, it provides a foundation for local laws. The plan gives us the ability to defend any local laws the board enacts. The NYS Municipal Home Rule Law and General Municipal Law also come into play and are related to the comprehensive plan.

The comprehensive plan is also a position statement of the town in respect to what the state and county does. It is also a tool when applying for grants to show how the comprehensive plan supports the activity that the grant will be for.

From the comprehensive plan we develop goals and objectives of where we want to go. We try to develop specific plans of what we want for our future and one of the things we have done to help that is the survey that was mailed to property owners and registered voters.

We then have to develop specific plans of how we are going to get there. So, first we start where we are, define where we want to go and then we develop plans on how to get there. These are the basic steps no matter what type of plan you are developing.

Specific plans we have in mind are dealing with land use and how the town should develop – where we can correct growth and where we may want to restrict growth. We want an overall plan for those types of things and how to accomplish it. Also, we will look at community facilities, including recreation, the town buildings, transportation, highway situation. Also, an economic development plan is needed to have a sense of balance in the community. Economic development is primarily handled at the county

level but it is important that the town protect the farming aspect of our community. Right to farm legislation is an example of keeping the balance.

This town is growing at a modest rate (8%), but higher than NYS (5.5%) or Schoharie County (lost population). The country overall has experienced 13% for the same period. Housing is up significantly more than population. He noted that there was a strong increase in second homes. He considers this to be a harbinger of future permanent growth. History in other areas indicates that there will be a conversion of second homes into primary homes, with new second homes being built. It is an area for concern because it can bring rapid growth. The income from the second homes should be carefully spent because when second homes become primary homes there is a sudden obligation for additional services. Construction represents 9% of all jobs. It is a significant number and translates into economic development and jobs for residents. New residents have different expectations as to what services come with the house, area, etc.

Tom then briefly reviewed the results of the survey so far. The results can be found on his web page. Draft documents will also be posted to the web site as we go along. Tom also explained that site plan review is planning for commercial development. This includes signs, trees, parking, etc. to keep things looking as intended.

Before taking a break he explained an audience participation game. People were invited up to put stickers on a map of Jefferson, showing what they like (yellow) and don't like (blue) about our town. Tom showed several examples of commercial site planning and how it can be used to complement the area. At 8:00 PM we took a short break.

After the break the floor was open to the public for comments and questions. A lively discussion followed covering such hot topics as the junk yard law, the value and enforcement of the laws already on the books, "correctional facility" type lighting, roads and right of way on the town roads, preserving the older trees along the roadways, wind mills, balance between commercial/industry and residential, how to promote a dialogue between the residents of the town (web page, bulletin board, newspapers, newsletter), recreation and home business. Those that attended the meeting offered many insightful thoughts and ideas. A more detailed narrative is affixed to the minutes.

Tom closed the meeting by outlining the steps to be taken at this point: tabulating the surveys, mapping, another public hearing in three to four months setting forth our goals, drafting specific plans and a third public hearing at that point.

The hearing was adjourned at 9 PM. The meeting was adjourned immediately thereafter.

Diane Fischer