

JEFFERSON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
June 19, 2006

The regular meeting opened at 7:05 pm. Committee members present were Dan Singletary, Diane Fischer, Margie Hait, Gregg Sheehan and Linda Vroman. Also present were: Jennifer Murray; Schoharie County Planning and Development Agency, Tom Shepstone, Shepstone Associates, and Dick Kuhn, Jefferson Town Supervisor. Member not in attendance was Bill Parker. There were several members from the community present.

Dan made a motion to dispense with the reading of the minutes, seconded by Marge, passed unanimously. He then asked for comments as to how everyone thought the hearing went last month. They were all positive. Tom commented that the more hearings and meetings we have, the more people will be coming out to find out what is going on within the committee.

Dan reported that committee members are attending other meetings and trainings hosted by the state and various other agencies. These meetings cover a variety of topics and are excellent opportunities to learn and keep up to date on new laws and other issues that we will face. Windmill regulations and zoning are two items that will have to be addressed. There are ways that zoning can be uniformly enacted and then a board of appeals can be set up to deal with all the variances. As long as landowners have a means for appeal if zoning restrictions are too burdensome for their particular situation it can work.

Dan asked if Jennifer could use the GIS to show where hydrological sensitive areas are and where the various sections of Jefferson drain. Dan believes that the County has a list of appropriate sites for windmills that would be informative for future planning.

Tom Shepstone then reviewed the results of the survey to date. We've received 449 surveys back to date, out of about 1100 mailed out, and have 250 tabulated. This is approximately a 40% return on the mailing. As a rule, what the survey reveals at this point generally follows through with the balance. The 40% return reflects a high level of interest in what we are doing. When the tabulation is complete, he will break out what second homeowners thought compared to full time residents. First we will concentrate on a few of the questions. The survey is designed to find out factual data and opinions, as well as who has answered the survey. The first question related to how long have you lived here. The top answer was >25 years, second highest was second home owners and the third was people who have been here <5 years. This works because we are getting a good cross section of the population. Questions 8, 9, 10 & 11 addresses the facts of where you lived before moving here, where you work and your age. The majority of the people come from NYC/Westchester/Rockland/Long Island, followed by elsewhere in upstate NY and then elsewhere in the US or outside the US. There are a surprising number of people who are not natives to the Jefferson/Schoharie area. Tom said that if someone comes from an area where they are used to a lot of

regulations it reflects in their responses. The committee's job is to give as many inputs as possible so that the Town Board can make a decision. Dan added that ultimately we are really looking at the people who are the voters within the town (and future voters). There has to be a balance between the second homeowners and the people who live here and are the voters. Everyone pays taxes. #9 covers where people work. The top category was elsewhere in NY, followed by the town of Jefferson (due to the lack of employment in Jefferson this would indicate a large number of self-employed individuals), and a large number work in Delaware County. The 4th location of where people work is elsewhere in Schoharie County. Dan stated that a five county grant (including Schoharie) was turned down because the census report considers Schoharie a bedroom community of Albany, not a farming community. #10 covers the ages of principal householder. The distribution of the population is good. The majority falls between 40-69 years of age so there is a pretty good mix. #11 addresses the careers. The top category is retired, followed by professional and executives. Tom is not surprised by this since he has done this many times but it reinforces that this area is populated by many people who have jobs elsewhere. This explains the fact that incomes are higher in this area and also the good return of our questionnaires. People with more time on their hands and who are better educated typically answer questionnaires. We have to keep in mind the particular cross section that answers questionnaires.

Next Tom discussed the questions that solicited opinions. #2 covers what influenced your decision to live in Jefferson. The overwhelming top choice was the rural nature and farmland, followed by being close to friends and relatives, inexpensive housing, land, low taxes and conversion of 2nd home to primary residence. Diane pointed out that questions #1 and #2 tie together with 2nd home conversion and the fact that 16% of the respondents to date live here less than 5 years. This is already influencing the character of the community and will continue to. Gilboa is similar to us in this respect and Conesville is not yet at this point. The vast majority of people feel that Jefferson has not changed noticeable in its desirability as a place to live. There are people who feel it's less desirable. What people like least is cost of services/taxes, lack of shopping and poor job offerings. This is something from a political standpoint has to be taken into consideration when planning the town's future. #5 addresses the issues of various aspects of development and what is considered most important. In order of importance are: junkyards & property maintenance, scenic impact, impacts on streams, impacts on right to farm, mobile homes & parks, and proximity of commercial development to homes. This indicates that ascetic issues are more important than environmental issues. People are interested in preserving the farms. Question #6 addressed modern technology and ease of travel making it possible to conduct more business from home. 20% of the respondents have home-based businesses. Of the home-based businesses, 27 selected Other. This includes, insurance, real estate, repair service, e-bay business, and art type businesses. Tom will include a breakdown in the final report. #7 questioned where people want their tax money spent. People want to add or increase support for town road maintenance and special property cleanup days. Continue as is included ambulance services, fire protection, and recreational facilities or programs. #12 rates the quality of services. Fire and ambulance services were 1st and

2nd as high quality services, followed by state highway maintenance and state police protection. Poor quality included town road maintenance, overall town code enforcement and county road and health care. Those that are included in the poor quality are probably reflecting where people are coming from and what their expectations are. Jen questioned why people consider code enforcement to be poor quality. Tom pointed out that people not know what codes and ordinances cover in this area, again because of where they are coming from. # 13 covered what issues people feel the town should establish or improve local controls. Again, the leader is regulating junk vehicle storage, followed by mobile home parks, construction cellular communications towers, site plan review of commercial uses, the right to timber, updating subdivision regulations and regulating wind power generation facilities. People made comments about cell towers at the hearing (scenic impact).

A summary of the answers from #14 is 57% feel private property rights are more important over the impact of development. People would rather see the community stay primarily residential in character (54%) over economic development and preservation of existing scenic character is more important (58%) than harvesting resources. Scenery is very important here in Jefferson. Tom says that Jefferson is much more interesting than his original impression. He had only been exposed to Route 10. Now he has traveled the back roads and understands the complex composition of Jefferson.

Question #15 covered zoning. 52% favored a very strong zoning law, 18% don't know enough about zoning and 15% support it but with a limited approach that balances property rights and development regulations. 15% view zoning as an infringement on private property rights. There is a lot more interest in this issue than Tom expected and needs additional analysis before any recommendation is made.

#16 questions where the people would like the town to go over the next 15 years. The top four were clean and green environment, preservation of remaining farms, Jefferson hamlet revitalization and the creation of more agricultural niche businesses. Once again the scenic values come up strong.

Tom handed out his outline of what the public hearing brought out. A copy is attached to these minutes. Each point needs careful consideration in our final recommendations.

Tom then passed around a rough draft of the comprehensive plan Section 3 – Goals and Objectives. This covered 7 different goals and a copy is attached to these minutes. Tom covered all the issues that we have discussed and only used the word zoning once when discussing the site plan review law. Implementing site plan review will not be without some controversy, but will need to be addressed. Dan stated that at some of the meetings we have attended there has been major discussion as to where a town like Jefferson falls in relationship to regulations as they come down from NYS. Site plan review laws are reasonably common. The Town of Gilboa has a home site ordinance. Tom told them that he feels that it goes beyond the limit of what you can do. If they called it a site plan review law and adopted it under municipal home rule law they could do it. Their attorney wrote that law and they are standing by it. Jen pointed out that if

there are zoning laws then the homeowner has a means of appealing if they are turned down for a variance. Legal or not legal is not the issue. The appeal system is what is important. Dan stressed that we need to have responsibility and set up laws that are clear, concise and reasonable that members of the planning board or a future review board can adhere to and not be set up for costly law suits. We need to set up a process that will take us down the road legally. Tom feels that a site plan review law is the way to accomplish this. Tom said that NYS already has a site plan review law that we could adopt to meet our needs. There was a question from the audience about how we set the laws. Dan explained that the comprehensive planning committee makes recommendations based on the results from the survey and it is up to the town board to adopt them or not. There will be future public hearings and comments. We are quite a ways off from even making recommendations. Dan then explained this difference between public hearings and referendums.

There was discussion about providing for the orderly growth and development of the Town. We have to offer incentives to developers and at the same time not incur any major costs for the Town. We have to require the developer be responsible for engineering costs to meet the site review requirements. Tom will make changes and additions too 3.2.1, and 3.5.2.

3.6 focuses on the economic revitalization of the hamlet of Jefferson. We may want to make this a broader area. Tom will expand on this. Tom also suggested adding business names to the bottom of our Welcome to Jefferson signs. Regarding 3.7, Dan commented that at this point we have no ag district in Jefferson. He would like to see more attention to this item. Tom would like to add something on scenery because the input from the survey identifies this as an important consideration.

There was a question from the audience about the historical little red schoolhouse. Dick Kuhn said that painting had been contracted out and we were waiting for the weather to cooperate. Walter also brought up the Maple Museum and all the artifacts that he would like to see preserved.

There was another question from the audience about following what is happening with the committee. When a public hearing is planned notification will be given. We meet the 3rd Tuesday of each month and all interested parties are encouraged to attend. We will try to get information around town about future meetings. Tom also reminded everyone that he keeps his web site as up to date as possible. The committee will also post results as we go along at Town Hall.

Alice Singletary brought up a possible thought process regarding junk. People don't see it because it accumulates slowly. She suggested putting together a list of people who would be willing to haul junk away and what costs are involved, and broadcast this information via a mailing or some sort of outreach. Tom thought it was a valid suggestion.

There was further discussion as to getting the information about the committee out to the public. Diane said that the results would be on Tom's website. Dan said that people could leave written comments at Town Hall if they can't make a meeting. Dan encourages involvement from the public.

Claire Lee requested copies of the survey results and also the minutes. Other people also requested copies, which were made and distributed to interested parties.

There was discussion about filling the vacant spot on the committee. Dan would like to see a student sit in, even in a non-voting capacity, to get input from the future generation.

A motion was made by Diane, seconded by Linda and unanimously approved to adjourn the meeting at 9:05 PM.

Diane Fischer