

MINUTES OF A MEETING AS HELD BY THE
TOWN OF AURORA PLANNING & CONSERVATION BOARD

February 5th, 2020

Members Present: Donald Owens, Chairman
Laurie Kutina
Douglas Crow
David Librock
Timothy Bailey

Alternate Member: Alice Brown

Absent/ Excused: Norm Merriman
Jerry Thompson
Richard Glover

Also Present: Elizabeth Cassidy, Assistant Code Enforcement Officer
Greg Keyser, GHD
Luke Wochensky, Town Board liaison

Chairman Don Owens presided over the meeting which began at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall, 300 Gleed Avenue, East Aurora, NY. He led the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Doug Crow made a motion to accept the minutes of the September 4th, 2019 meeting. Seconded by Dave Librock. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

Introductions and discussion with new Town Board liaison to the Planning Board, Luke Wochensky.

Don Owens opens the meeting by welcoming Luke and asks for board members to introduce themselves and talk a bit about their background. Introductions follow.

Don Owens discusses his background and the background of the Town Planning Board, which is an advisory board.

Luke Wochensky briefly discusses his background. Luke also asks for some input from board members for suggestions or any requests of more support from the Town Board, etc. At this time his biggest concern is the absence of an adopted Comprehensive Plan. Luke asks for opinions on the absence of a comprehensive plan, leaving aside the costs, etc.

Doug Crow has the opinion that it's Best Practice to have and to follow an adopted plan. He also discusses what seems to be the Planning Board's role in recent years, i.e. reviewing exceptions to the Town Code/Zoning Code on a case by case basis.

Don Owens discusses how the Town is rural and development restrictions.

Luke Wochensky discusses the long term, thinking about possibilities for the long term future, i.e. changing technologies for sewer systems (private treatment plants), etc.

Further discussion about being prepared for the future and how having a master plan would be beneficial.

Luke Wochensky discusses the work from the Regional Master Plan and how a lot of it referenced "preserving the rural character" of the area.

Laurie Kutina states that one of the struggles is not having a sense of what people want as a community. There is a lot of sense of what some individuals don't want, as that's what is heard most often (complaints). In order for a long term plan to work there needs to be a lot of conversations regarding what is wanted rather than not wanted. Laurie thinks there is a lot of opportunity to have those conversations.

Doug Crow brings up Rails to Trails. There is further discussion regarding that program and possibly being prepared for the future of that to make its way through Town.

There is further discussion regarding community input, knowing where the Town wants to be in the future, opportunities, etc.

Luke Wochensky asks for opinions on what types of disadvantages would there be in creating a Master Plan?

Don Owens states that it is desirable but politically it doesn't seem to be moving forward. A Master Plan would set a roadmap of what should be done in the future, then zoning would be based on that.

Doug Crow states that currently most zoning is based on what is already in those zones.

There is further discussion about the Regional Master Plan and the historical/possible historical properties/sites that were noted. There is no historical committee for the Town and the properties listed in the Regional Master Plan are suggestions.

Discussion about how a Master Plan may affect the Building Department and discussion regarding how the Mill Rd. subdivision is taxed/maintained. Having a Master Plan may also attract development (subdivision) based on identifying specific areas where that would be allowed.

Laurie Kutina notes that part of the challenge to development is the geography of the area, storm surge problem areas from an environmental point of view. Something to think about is the impacts from those issues.

Luke Wochensky asks if part of the Master Plan would include discussion about infrastructure.

Laurie Kutina and board members believe that would be a good discussion, adding standards for infrastructure, etc.

Luke Wochensky would like to possibly have an environmental committee of some sort.

There is further discussion on environmental topics in the area and environmental preservation.

Doug Crow discusses how the process can be made easier for the public to go through the meetings.

There is further discussion on the idea of going to the Planning Board first because it's advisory to cut out some steps for the public. Planning Board looks at the environment, safety and the public. Facts can be summarized so the Town Board can make decisions.

Recap discussion: Begin thinking about implementing a Master Plan/Comprehensive Plan, meet with the Town Board at a work session sometime in the summer to begin some informal discussions. Planning Board welcomes anyone to approach them for informal review and recommendation. Begin to also think about making the process easier for residents by them coming in at the idea phase/be the first stop.

Doug Crow suggests the Town Board make a clear list of items they would like the Planning Board's advice on so time is not wasted and can be directed to the Planning Board first. Could be informal, simply noted on the website.

Liz Cassidy notes that verbiage in the new Village Zoning Code has been added to include suggestions to meet with a board in an informal capacity in the planning phase. The Town could look at that as an example.

Greg Keyser notes that the Town of Eden has something similar, a "pre-submission conference", they require every applicant who will potentially submit a project to go before the Planning Board, explain what they want and get a sense for what things to add/include/change, etc. It

helps to streamline the review process to where the applicant will then have about 90% done by the time they start their official submittal process. It's frustrating for an applicant to go to 5 or 6 meetings, it takes months, they miss the building season, etc.

Luke Wochensky asks if it's something that could be put together for the next meeting to submit to the Town Board for an ordinance?

Laurie Kutina suggests that it may be beneficial to have an informal policy to test out first?

Luke Wochensky asks to put this item on the next agenda for further discussion. It sounds like we have a few things to think about for the next meeting and looking forward to working with the Planning Board.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Tony Rosati notes that it was announced Christ the King Seminary will be closing. Would it be a good opportunity to be proactive to think about re-zoning this property for future use?

Discussion about the Seminary's Knox Rd. property zoning, water issue, possible future development. What's the best use of that property in the future if it's sold? What stance should the Town take to make sure the property is utilized in the best way?

Tony Rosati's opinion is that this is an opportunity to grow revenue as long as we encourage development rather than discourage it. The more the Town can lead people in a direction, then development can be attracted if specific areas are noted for certain types of development.

Luke Wochensky states that the Town should get ahead of it so the Town can encourage what should be there.

Don Owens states that the property needs to be looked at, the buildings need to be looked at, would redevelopment even be possible, etc?

Discussion on current conditions, property isn't for sale yet.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

A motion was made by Doug Crow and seconded by Dave Librock to adjourn at 7:12PM.

**THE NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING WILL BE WEDNESDAY March 4th AT 7:00 P.M.
AT THE TOWN HALL, 300 GLEED AVENUE, EAST AURORA, NEW YORK**