

Village of Cayuga Heights Planning Board
Meeting #111
Monday, April 24, 2023
Marcham Hall – 7:00 pm
Minutes

Present: Planning Board Members Chair F. Cowett, J. Leijonhufvud, E. Quaroni, M. McMurry, R. Segelken
Code Enforcement Officer B. Cross, Attorney R. Marcus, Deputy Clerk A. Jacot, Alternate Member M. Johnston, Mayor L. Woodard

Item 1 – Meeting called to order

- Chair F. Cowett opened the meeting at 7:03 pm.
- Chair F. Cowett stated that all Planning Board members are in attendance, but J. Leijonhufvud is attending via Zoom due to illness for which she had given four days notice; Alternate M. Johnston is welcome to sit with the Board and participate in the meeting, but cannot take part in any votes; also, R. Kawecki, Bousquet Holstein PLLC, is observing the meeting via Zoom.
- Chair F. Cowett further stated that the proposed conversion of the sorority at 509 Wyckoff Road to an apartment building is not on this meeting’s agenda because the developer has decided to discontinue the project; this decision had nothing to do with the site plan review process.

Item 2 – March 27, 2023 Minutes

- The Board reviewed the minutes of the March 27, 2023 meeting.

Motion: M. McMurry

Second: E. Quaroni

RESOLUTION No. 379
APPROVING MINUTES OF MARCH 27, 2023

RESOLVED, that the written, reviewed and revised minutes of the March 27, 2023 meeting are hereby approved.

Aye votes – Chair F. Cowett, J. Leijonhufvud, E. Quaroni, M. McMurry

Abstain – R. Segelken

Opposed – None

Item 3 – Public Comment

No members of the public wished to speak.

Item 4 – Comprehensive Plan Discussion

- Chair F. Cowett provided background for the Comprehensive Plan discussion: New York State law requires that municipal zoning laws be adopted in accordance with a comprehensive plan; Chapter 64 § 7-722.4 of New York State Village Law states that “The village board of trustees, or by resolution of such village board of trustees, the planning board or a special board, may prepare a proposed village comprehensive plan and amendment thereto;” in 2010, the Cayuga Heights Board of Trustees directed the Village’s Planning Board to draft a comprehensive plan for the Village; assisted by consultant G. Frantz, the Planning Board drafted a plan which was then adopted by the Trustees in February 2014 and the Village’s Zoning Law was subsequently revised in accordance with the Comprehensive Plan and adopted by the Trustees in 2018.
- Chair F. Cowett further stated that Chapter 64 § 7-722.10 of New York State Village Law states that there should be periodic review of a comprehensive plan, but does not state what that period should be; the Village's 2014 Comprehensive Plan states that the Comprehensive Plan should be reviewed and revised as needed in ten years; additionally, the Comprehensive Plan assigns lead responsibility for the review and revision to the Planning Board; at their April 19, 2023 meeting, the Village’s Board of Trustees passed a resolution requesting the Village’s Planning Board to review the 2014 Comprehensive Plan and advise the Trustees as to whether the Plan should be revised; the task currently before the Planning Board is to review the Comprehensive Plan and, based upon that review, make a recommendation to the Trustees as to a revision; the Trustees will then decide whether to accept or reject the Planning Board’s recommendation; if the Trustees make a finding that the Comprehensive Plan should be revised, they can either revise it themselves or direct either the Planning Board or a special board comprised of Trustees, Planning Board members, and/or residents to draft a revision; the most likely scenario is that the Trustees will direct the Planning Board to draft a revision, in which case the Trustees will then decide to accept, reject, or revise further the Planning Board’s revision; if additional revision is required, the Trustees will likely appoint a special board to draft that revision.
- Chair F. Cowett further stated that there is no deadline for the Planning Board to complete its review; the question is how to proceed; the Board could, for example, begin by reviewing the Goals and Objectives section of the Comprehensive Plan and assess whether they reflect the Village’s needs and facilitate the continued provision of services to Village residents; he asked Board members for their opinions about how to proceed.

- R. Segelken replied that the Goals and Objectives section would be a good place to start the review.
- M. Johnston asked how many of the Objectives have been implemented.
- Chair F. Cowett replied that some Objectives have been implemented and some have not.
- E. Quaroni stated that some Objectives might be omitted in a revision due to their implementation since 2014 or due to the changing needs and priorities of the Village.
- Chair F. Cowett asked Attorney R. Marcus how many changes to the Comprehensive Plan would constitute a revision.
- Attorney R. Marcus replied that the bar for a revision is low; omitting an Objective would be a revision, as would a change in a Goal, Objective, or Recommendation; most any change to the Comprehensive Plan would constitute a revision.
- M. Johnston asked Chair F. Cowett if G. Frantz used a template in structuring the Comprehensive Plan.
- Chair F. Cowett replied he did not know if a template had been used, but G. Frantz had worked on other comprehensive plans prior to working on the Village's plan.
- M. Johnston stated that the standard topics for a comprehensive plan are present in the Village's Plan which is good; any revision should consider how changes in the underlying data and themes since 2014 would dictate revisions in those topics; an example of a change in theme would be energy conservation technology which has improved dramatically.
- M. McMurry stated that updating the underlying data, such as demographic data, might change the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan, such as those for Housing.
- R. Segelken stated that some of the Comprehensive Plan language, such as that related to density and affordable housing, is "mushy" and should be rewritten.
- M. Johnston stated that the language is broad and flexible because the Comprehensive Plan is thematic and a living document.
- E. Quaroni stated that some of the Plan's Objectives might be impractical and never be implemented, such as creating a trail system in the Village, while others, such as a management plan for invasive species, haven't been implemented yet and should be prioritized.
- M. McMurry stated that, on reading the Comprehensive Plan, she was struck by how much good stuff it contains that hasn't been implemented; it's a good plan and this review will put it back on the Village's radar.
- E. Quaroni stated that the Comprehensive Plan is idealistic and reviewing it is a valuable exercise.
- J. Leijonhufvud stated that stormwater management is a topic that has become of increasing concern to the Village since 2014; it is important to formalize a process, such as obtaining input from Village residents, whereby the Planning Board gets a sense of what things are working well and what things are problematic.

- M. McMurry stated that much of the work that needs to be done in the Village is already contained in the Plan; it's more about implementation and analyzing what is preventing that work from getting done.
- Attorney R. Marcus stated that it is important to remember that the Comprehensive Plan is aspirational and that zoning flows from the Plan.
- Chair F. Cowett stated that the immediate task before the Board is reviewing the Comprehensive Plan and advising the Board of Trustees as to whether the Plan should be revised; he asked Board members how they wished to proceed.
- M. McMurry stated that she supports dividing up the Goals and Objectives sections between the Board members; each Board member can lead a discussion as to whether the Goals and Objectives of the section have been met and implemented, and whether the ones that have not been implemented should be updated, changed, or kept as is.
- R. Segelken asked if there are areas where the Comprehensive Plan has not worked.
- M. McMurry replied that the Plan has some contradictions, such as advocating for more housing options when the Village has very few vacant lots.
- Attorney R. Marcus stated that the Plan did not fully anticipate the development in the Village's Commercial Zone that has occurred since 2014; since there are very few vacant lots, the Commercial Zone is the area most susceptible to redevelopment and it warrants a greater degree of input in any future revision of the Plan.
- E. Quaroni asked about the vacant residential lots on the east side of West Remington Road between East Shore Drive and North Sunset Drive.
- Code Enforcement Officer B. Cross replied that he has received very few inquiries about developing these lots; reasons given for why these lots have not been built on include the steep terrain, too much noise from Route 13, and the lack of natural gas availability.
- Board members divided up for review the Goals and Objectives sections as follows:
 - Quality of Life – Cowett
 - Community Character – Leijonhufvud
 - Ecology and Scenic Assets – Quaroni
 - Economy – Cowett
 - Housing – Segelken
 - Transportation – McMurry
 - Public Services and Utilities – Johnston
- R. Segelken stated that the main complaint he detected in reading the Comprehensive Plan was Cayuga Heights becoming a pass-through community to Cornell; if so, the Village should be grateful not to have more serious issues.
- E. Quaroni stated that there is an element of snobbism in the Plan.
- M. McMurry stated that the Plan's tone can be modernized.
- Chair F. Cowett stated that the Plan was written by a different Board at a different time; he looks forward to this Board's review of the Plan and the findings it will make.

- Code Enforcement Officer B. Cross stated three areas of concern he would like to see addressed in any revision of the Comprehensive Plan; the first is a change in the pride of ownership and shifting attitudes towards property maintenance, such as acceptance of lesser maintenance as being more ecological; the second is the future of fraternities and sororities which may be on precarious financial footing and what will become of those properties if vacated; the third is advocacy in New York State of increasing the housing stock which, if it becomes State policy and given the Village's lack of vacant lots, may be difficult to achieve in a way consistent with the current Village.
- M. Johnston stated that low-mow meadow landscaping is touted as promoting ecological restoration, but he is unsure that this is really so.
- Attorney R. Marcus stated that advocacy of meadow landscaping in the Village comes entirely from owner-occupied properties.
- M. Johnston asked if the New York State Property Maintenance Code can be used to enforce property maintenance in Cayuga Heights.
- Code Enforcement Officer B. Cross replied that it can.

Item 5 – New Business

- The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 22, 2023 at 7:00 pm.

Item 6 – Adjourn

- Meeting adjourned at 8:17 pm.