

**TOWN OF JACKSON
PLANNING BOARD MEETING
September 19, 2023**

The Town of Jackson Planning Board met on September 19, 2023 at 6:30 pm at the Town of Jackson Town Hall for a working Planning Board meeting to discuss the Town Comprehensive Plan. The following people were in attendance-

Board Members:

- Kelly Donahue
- Amy Maxwell
- Erik VandenBerg
- Steve Chuhta
- Irene Headwell

Others Present:

- Washington County Planner Pamela Landi
- Former Planning Board member John Tully
- Lou Steele
- Nancy Krauss
- Howard Freed
- Peter Chuhta

INTRODUCTIONS

Kelly Donahue opened the meeting at 6:30 pm by introducing herself as the new Chair of the Planning Board. She precluded the discussion by explaining the Town is returning to the preparation of the comprehensive plan, using the 2014 draft of the plan as a jumping off point. Kelly advised that County Planner Pamela Landi is present at the meeting to provide logistics of plan creating and advise on how the Town can best move forward with execution. Board member Chuhta spoke at this time to ask residents in attendance to introduce themselves. Nancy Krauss, Louis Steele and Howard Freed introduced themselves as citizens for the Battenkill, Peter Chuhta followed and stated he is present to receive his merit badge for the Boy Scouts of America, John Tully introduced himself as a former member of the Planning Board who was present for the original creation of the draft in 2014.

PAMELA LANDI – DISCUSSION ON COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

Pamela Landi, who advises many towns in Washington County through her position with the County Planning Department, began with asking the Board why they have now decided to revisit the plan. Chair Donahue stated that the PB met with the Town Board following the approval of the solar law, where future goals for the Town were discussed. Board members all agreed that a beneficial place to start would be a comprehensive plan, as it's a good way to prepare the Town for future development. Board member Maxwell agreed that the most natural step to have taken

after the solar law would be the comprehensive plan. Board members VandenBerg and Headwell added that incorporating renewable energy into the plan may be beneficial to the Town, as many trainings on solar they've attended include comprehensive plans in the discussion on agricultural land protection. Board member Chuhta stated that not having a plan for the future can directly impact the Town's ability to receive grant opportunities.

Pamela then asked the Board why the original plan had stalled out. Former Planning Board member John Tully spoke to advise that there was little community involvement during the 2014 preparation of the plan. Surveying had produced few responses and more people seemed interested in a site plan law. Resident Lou Steele stated that he was involved with the process as a resident. Mr. Tully agreed with this statement but still felt overall, there was little engagement from the community.

Pamela provided Board members with a training packet for comprehensive planning that she proceeded to go over. She explained that a comprehensive plan is a living document that defines a town's vision and provides a process for the community to be involved in that vision. While not a legal document or regulation, the plan can create a legal foundation that aligns and strengthens town regulation or law. Outside agencies may refer to the plan for any proposals or initiatives and grant organizations like to be able to see what a town's priorities are when receiving grant applications. Pamela stated that it is recommended a plan be updated every 5 years, 10 years maximum, with a 7-year plan as a fair compromise. Comprehensive planning can help to anticipate what may be around the corner and help protect the character of the community. Pamela noted there are several different types of town plans such as the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities plan, Environmental Revitalization plan, and Agricultural Protection plan, among others. These plans are slightly different than a comprehensive plan but towns can take pieces from different plans and include them in one collective document. Different types of plans have different focuses for each unique community so it should be well articulated which type of plan the Town is willing to emphasize. Board member VandenBerg asked if there is a plan specific for renewable power communities. Pamela said no, but there are sections in grant applications that question if a municipality has an Environmental Revitalization plan, which are typically more for villages. Pamela stated that the 2014 draft is more of a community profile with an inventory and statistical data, than a typical comprehensive plan.

Board member Maxwell pointed out that words like 'planning' and 'zoning' may carry bad connotations in communities, as they sound more commanding. She stated that a 'recreational economy plan' sounds more engaging than a 'comprehensive plan'. Board member Chuhta questioned why so many other Town's are devising comprehensive plans now. Pamela stated that solar has been a major factor for many agricultural communities to adopt a plan. Board member Chuhta questioned how far a plan goes in protecting a town. Pamela stated that it can be a complicated issue with solar as there is state level solar planning at play, but a comprehensive plan can help towns to negotiate what they want. Board member VandenBerg asked if a plan can help with litigation. Pamela stated that although they are non-binding, they would be referenced with strength when enforcing laws and regulations.

At this time, Ms. Landi went through several different types of plans on the computer. She pointed out that good pictures as well as mapping go a long way in these documents. The Board reviewed plans from the Lake George Regional Planning Board and the Town of Greenwich. Pamela stated that Greenwich is currently working on a brownfield plan, a streetscape plan and rewriting their zoning laws. The Town of Hampton is finishing up an agricultural protection plan and Easton is working on a vision plan. The Board then reviewed Washington County's Agricultural Farmland Protection Plan, a great resource for developing a plan in agricultural communities such as Jackson. Pamela stated that a plan can be structured however the Town sees fit, it would not have to be 300 pages like many of the reviewed plans. It can be succinct and approachable.

Pamela pointed out that forming a Special Board to tackle a comprehensive plan might be beneficial for the Town, so the regular Planning Board meetings can be more focused on day-to-day projects. A Special Board could have members of the Planning Board and Town Board as well as residents of the Town. The Board discussed grant opportunities through the Hudson Valley River Greenway agency, which has a prerequisite for Towns to become a 'Greenway Community'. Board member Maxwell asked what it means to become a Greenway Community, as the Board had trouble finding what the criteria is. Pamela pointed out the five criteria points; Natural and cultural resource protection, regional planning, economic development, public access and heritage and environmental education. Chair Donahue asked for a copy of the HVRG contract before the Board would proceed with a resolution to become a Greenway community. Pamela stated there are several different grant opportunities in the area, although most with a 50/50 grant match. All grants require grant administration as well, which Pamela offered to give her guidance through if the Board does indeed decide to apply.

The Board reviewed the 2014 draft of the comprehensive plan with Pamela. Pamela stated that the 18-page document is a good outline and inventory that can guide the Town, but reviewing other plans may spur some inspiration moving forward. The Board agreed that other plans have a lot more to work with and their next step should be figuring out how to incorporate more. Board member Headwell pointed out that there is not a lot of recreation in the Town that is free, and maybe focusing on recreation and bringing communities together would be beneficial. Board member Maxwell stated that perhaps the Town should focus more on what our strengths are with an agricultural protection plan. Board member Chuhta asked to review the Hampton ag. plan to see if the Town should begin with a plan like that as opposed to a comp. plan. Board member Maxwell agreed and stated that Jackson is a combination of woods, naturalization and farming and defining that may be the answer to finding the goals for the future. Pamela stated that some communities have started with original visionary documents before plans to answer some questions about a community's future. Resident Nancy Krauss spoke to say that protecting the river and waterways in the Town would be vital. Howard Freed agreed and added that the Town should address more common issues that could bring the community together. Resident John Tully spoke to say that Jackson is a unique community that would require unique comprehensive planning. There are no hamlets in the Town and little business, but lots of natural resources that need to be preserved. Fly fishing, camping, tubing, kayaking, and golfing make up some of the

several recreational activities in the Town. The Town is home to a few lakes and the Battenkill flows through. John added that the values of the Town are farming, recreation and beauty rather than business.

Chair Kelly Donahue thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and Pamela for all of her helpful insight with the project. Chair Donahue closed the meeting at 8:05 pm.

Next Regular Meeting: Tuesday, October 3rd, 2023 @ 6:30 pm

Adjourned: @ 8:05 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Molly Dixson, Town of Jackson