LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 11
June 14, 2017

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:
Jim Sharpe, Chairman
Eric Fiebelkorn, GI Chamber of Commerce
Diane Evans, Conservation Board
Mary West, Economic Development
Betty Harris, Traffic Safety – (Alternate)
Marion Fabiano, Zoning Board of Appeals
Peter Coppola, Citizen-at-Large
Dan Drexlus, Citizen-at-Large
Martha Ludwig, Citizen-at-Large
Pete Marston, Planning Board
Beverly Kinney, Town Board
Paul Leuchner, Parks and Recreation
Brian Graham, School Superintendent

NON-VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT:
William Koch, Historic Preservation
Stephen Birtz, Ags and Market
Brian Kulpa, Clark Patterson Lee Planner
John Butler, Architectural Review

GUESTS PRESENT:
Sue Tomkins, Conservation Board
Melanie Anderson, Clark Patterson Lee
Justin Steinbach, Clark Patterson Lee

VOTING MEMBERS ABSENT:
Deborah Billoni
Sharon Osgood

NON-VOTING MEMBER ABSENT:
Nathan McMurray, Town Supervisor
Ray Billica, Councilman
Chris Aronica, Councilman
Mike Madigan, Councilman
JT Tompkins, Highway Superintendent
John Whitney / Bob Westfall, Engineering
Doug Learman, Building Department, Code Enforcement
Elias Reden, Erie County Planner
Shirley Luther / Sharon Nichols, Historical Society
Bernie Rotella, Town Grant Writer
Jaqueline McGinty, Secretary to LRPC
I. CALL TO ORDER
7:07 p.m.

II. MINUTES

A motion was made to approve the May 10, 2016 LRPC draft minutes as written.

Ayes: All in favor. Motion carried.

III. CONSERVATION BOARD

Diane Evans and Sue Tompkins presented the Conservation Board’s goals and priorities, pertaining to LRP.

1) Develop a tree policy to include three things.
   First, a tree inventory to develop a plan for replacing trees on town-owned streets. Second, hire a forester, who could oversee a sapling nursery. (Note: budget for removal of ash trees is an immediate problem.) Third, draft a tree ordinance, with procedures for neighbor tree disputes and clearcutting.
   - DD added that if a tree is in a right-of-way owned by a homeowner, the homeowner holds responsibility if the tree is half on his/her property, and can cut it down if it presents a hazard.
   - It was also noted that in Amherst, tree disputes are solved by sending a form letter to both parties. If they do not work together and solve the issue, the town removes the tree and adds the expense onto the taxes of both residents.

2) Protect streams and shorelines. (Note: waiting on a grant to start restoring the Spicer Creek Wildlife Habitat.) Create a buffer ordinance for future developments incorporating native plantings to prevent erosion, flooding, and pollution. Create living shorelines to help establish wildlife corridors. Remove fish barriers, monitor water quality (with Riverkeeper), test water chemistry, and educate the public.

3) Conduct an open space inventory. Review and update the Open Space Index, along with Parks and Rec, to categorize non-park open space with the intent of assessing for special features of each parcel. For example, with the trapping issue, there were 32 open spaces, but only 3 could be trapped on. Establish use limits and put up appropriate signage. For example, the conservation easement at Gun Creek needs signs to prevent ATV use.

4) Pollution concerns to educate public about: Tonawanda Coke Soil Survey and UB 10-year Health Study, I190 air pollution, and septic upkeep.

IV. BRANDING

Melanie presented the logos designed by CPL for the outreach plan. Four options were presented: two round monochrome emblems (1&3), and two multi-colored Island-shaped logos (2&4). Nine members favored logo 3, and 7 favored logo 1.
Suggestions for the next draft included: incorporating green as a nod to eco-tourism; using the Grand Island school blue, as opposed to navy; reworking designs to be less busy and more modern; using slogans such as “bridging the future” or “heart of the Niagara”; making the bridges a welcoming image; and reshaping the logos into an Island shape.

V. DEMOGRAPHICS

Justin stated that most master plans include approximately 10 pages of demographic info. The 2015 Community Profile Supporting Information outlines six sections:

1) Population has been steadily increasing since the mid-1900’s, at a much higher rate than that of Erie County, which can be perceived as good or bad. The average household size follows the national trend of decline. The median age is stable, resting at ~41, but the percentage of seniors over 65 is rising, which points to an influx of younger residents.

2) The majority of land (about 70%) is zoned residential, but only 41.4% of total land is in use. Land zoned commercial makes up 3.9% of total land, and 3.1% is in use. 5.1% of land is zoned industrial, but industrial use is only 1.1% of total land use.

3) The rate of housing growth is in decline, but there is a 7.5% increase in housing units. Most housing is single-family detached homes. 96.7% of housing is occupied, and rentals make up 20.4%, which is a slight increase, likely due to seniors and young adults who do not want to own a home. Most homes were built prior to 1990. Housing values have risen nearly 52%, to an average cost of $181,500.

4) Income is on the rise; median family income is $92,039. Over 95.6% of the workforce has a high school diploma, and over 42% earned a bachelor’s degree or higher.

5) The unemployment rate is 3.9%, and 67.7% of persons over 16 are in the workforce.

6) 88.3% of people drive to work alone, and the average commute is 20 minutes. (Note: get data on percentage of residents who work on Island vs. those who commute off-Island)

Jim pointed out that we should consider the impact of land use on tax base. For example, residential is $1.10/$1.00, but commercial is $1.00/$1.00. Thus, we need to balance commercial land use with residential use in order to prevent a sharp tax increase.

The members and planners agreed that it is important to subsidize the tax base with businesses. The perception of developers as evil villains can impact personal preferences, but responsible development is key to a balanced town.

VI. HUB AND SPOKE EXERCISE

The Island is divided into nine sections (spokes), not aligned with roads, radiating from the town center (hub). This creates a cross section of the community, allowing participants to note what change, if any, they would like to see in certain areas. This exercise was continued from the last meeting, starting with Spoke 5. Only two of the anticipated five spokes were completed; the remainder will be covered at the next meeting.

Spoke 5 starts at town center and ends just south of Whitehaven Road of the west side of the Island. It was cited as a prominent spoke for development, particularly if the potential welcome center is placed along it. Main points included road improvement, particularly a widened shoulder or bike path, and limited disruption of the low-density residential areas. Ideas/thoughts about points along this spoke:
West waterfront
  - kayak/boat launch
  - signage and historical representation
  - benches and information kiosks

Nike Base
  - public restrooms (or at Big 6)
  - dog park
  - trails (pedestrian and ski/snowmobile)
  - act as a trailhead or central rec center for area

Branches campground
  - model of amenities and programs many want
  - promote and help thrive
  - issue: lack of signage?

Town Hall Terrace
  - encourage upkeep subsidies on older properties to increase property value
  - apartments are attractive to seniors and millennials (two of the largest demographic groups)
  - will a housing bubble form as seniors die and millennials buy homes?

On-off ramp at I190
  - needs realignment
  - difficult to navigate safely
  - welcome sign here?

Spoke 6 starts at town center and ends just north of Whitehaven on the east side of the Island. This spoke is mainly residential, although proximity to the waterfront and to Scenic Woods could lead to development.

East waterfront
  - shallow boat launch
  - Bicentennial Park/Scenic Woods
  - bike ferry/trails

The Landings
  - resort-style housing
  - wooded
  - close proximity to golf course, marina, etc.
  - promote this

Rod and Gun Club
  - family-oriented outdoor recreation
  - fishing contests, shooting
  - fall zone for towers is a lot of empty space
  - fall zone is a sensitive environment, B1 zoned
  - what to do when towers are outdated?
  - rezone now, let them exist non-compliant, avoid potential big-box store swooping in?
Utility right of way
    - potential trail connections
    - connect features via trails

VII. NEXT STEPS
A public kickoff will be scheduled via email. Brian suggested the high school auditorium as a possible venue. The next meeting will be July 12 at 7 pm in the conference room.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to adjourn at 8:58 pm
Ayes: All in favor. Motion carried.