LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 8
FEBRUARY 8, 2017

Members Present:

(x) Jim Sharpe, Chairman
(x) Beverly Kinney, Town Board
(x) Mary West, Economic Development
(x) Pete Marston, Planning Board
(x) Paul Leuchner, Parks & Recreation
(x) Dan Drexelius, Citizen-at-Large
(x) Diane Evans, Conservation Board
(x) Eric Fiebelkorn, GI Chamber of Commerce
(x) Betty Harris, Traffic Safety
(x) Peter Coppola, Citizen-at-Large
(x) Marion Fabiano, Zoning Board of Appeals
(x) Sharon Osgood, Citizen-at-Large

William Koch, Historic Preservation

Members Excused:

(x) Martha Ludwig, Citizen-at-Large

Members Absent:

(x) Deborah Billoni, Citizen-at-Large

Guests:

Sharon Nichols, Historic Preservation
Catherine Steffan

X indicates voting members

I.  CALL TO ORDER:  7:10 p.m.

II.  MINUTES

A motion was made by Diane Evans / Paul Leuchner to APPROVE the January 11, 2017 LRPC Draft minutes as written.

Ayes: All in favor.
Motion carried.
III. JIM SHARPE – RECAP PLANNER INTERVIEWS

- LRPC has chosen Clark, Patterson & Lee (CPL) as our planner
- The County has signed off and has sent a contract to the Town Board and requested that the Supervisor sign the contract with the County to move forward.
- At the last Town Board meeting, the contract with the County was tabled due to concern with specific wording in the contract.
- Once the contract is signed, the County will call for a planning session with the LRPC and CPL.

IV. SOLAR LAW

- Bev started working on the solar law in February of last year, after much hard work by many, as well as input from the public, the Town Board unanimously passed the new solar law.
- The law has two separate sections, one, (1) considered a minor project for residential, to help offset your electric bill and one, (1) considered a major project for commercial, i.e.: a solar farm with power sent to the power grid.
- Pete shared a map with an overlay of potential solar farm sites. In speaking with the developers of solar farms he learned that they are interested in parcels that aren’t in sewer districts, parcels that cannot be subdivided, perhaps have wet lands, in essence, generally less desirable land. They make the property work, these parcels would not generate tax revenue any other way, plus we are getting clean energy. Some areas were eliminated because they weren’t in close proximity to a power grid.
- Major solar projects will need a site plan and must apply for a Special Use Permit. The permit will be in conjunction with the current zoning – the zoning of the property remains.
- Jim stated that the reason the solar law is being discussed with the LRPC is that solar power, fossil fuel and clean energy will be part of the LRP, we will need to determine how, or if, we want to incorporate them into the LRP.
- Solar parks will have a fifteen (15) year tax cap incentive, with their assessment staying at land value only. The owners may enter into a contract with the Town for a PILOT agreement which will be negotiated per project. After the PILOT expires the value will be based on performance – output of power. Any new buildings which become part of the solar farm will be taxable.
- The community benefit of solar law will be in form of an Interconnect Contract with the solar companies. We can negotiate that the Town will have first rights to the power generated to the grid.
- Eric requested information regarding the solar law so that the Chamber of Commerce can issue a press release.

- Jim stated that the town has started to work with UB on an application for a clean energy community which has a grant of up to $100,000. There are five (5) associated criteria which must be met to be awarded the grant. Jim thinks we can complete two (2) of the steps right away and with the Master Plan and solar law, we will complete two (2) more which leaves one (1) more which is looking at what we can do with our street lighting.
V. RIGHT – to – FARM & Agriculture and Markets

- Last year fifty (50) parcels joined an agricultural district.
- This year there are approximately 24 – 25 parcels pending approval by the County which will be decided in October. The Town doesn’t have control over the decision.
- These parcels must still adhere to town codes and zoning laws where it is reasonable and does not affect farming operations. We can still enforce our codes, however, if the property owner does not agree with our enforcement, they can appeal to the County who will then decide if our code is reasonable or not.
- The town is applying for a grant from NY Agriculture & Markets to complete an Ag & Market Plan. The intent is to have an Ag & mkt overlay map for the town which will define the parcels located within an Ag district.
- The Town Board will appoint an Ag & Mkt committee to work on a town plan
- After a plan is established, there will be an Ag & Mkt advisory board which will be established by the Town Board
- A member of the Ag & Mkt committee will be appointed to the LRPC, they will not be a voting member. Once an Ag Board is established, they are going to make a presentation about their focus and needs to the LRPC committee.
- Time line for Ags & Mkt plan is one (1) year – definitely before next October, which is the time the County reviews applications for Ag District approval.
- We are applying for a grant of $25,000 which will have two (2) stages and matching funds and will allow us to use in-kind services – we will have engineering working on data to offset our contribution. What they are looking for is $1,600 of actual money contributed by the Town.
- After we complete the AG & Mkt Plan, we will be eligible for a $15,000 grant to re-write our code to implement the Ag-Mkt Plan.
- If you produce $10,000 a year on your farm you can apply for an agricultural exemption, however, once a parcel is in an Ag District, it must remain in the Ag District for eight (8) years, if in the eight (8) years you do not generate $10,000 then you are removed from the Ag District, if your use is allowed within the town code, then you may be able to continue operation with a Special Use Permit. Parcels may be removed from an Ag District after five (5) years.

VI. ROUNDTABLE:

- Question regarding whether or not the LRPC will address the youth of Grand Island, and having activities for them to take part in. Jim stated that in addition to NY State building a Welcome Center on Grand Island, we have also issued an RFQ for a community center which may house a senior center, a library and a health and wellness area, this will also provide benefits for our youth. The RFQ will lead to a feasibility study which gets sent to the public for input on what they would like to see. One of the first steps in our Master Plan is a survey which gets sent out to residents, the community center may be a part of that survey.

- Also, a key finding of our walk about was that we have no draw to the center of the Island. Without building more apartments on GI Blvd, or more residential expansion on GI itself, how are we to build critical mass in the center of town? Stated within the report from Partners for a Livable WNY, until a building of stature is erected within our Town Center, we won’t be able to generate critical mass. We need to pull our services to the center of town, which will bring the mass so that businesses can start to develop.
• Marion is on the Community Education Board and has met with the Superintendent and his idea is to utilize the schools and their facilities more.

• Eric stated that adaptive reuse of eighty (80) – ninety (90) year old buildings doesn’t work, there has to be an investment made in new structures. Having open schools are a security risk.

• River Keeper has applied for a $500,000 grant through Great Lakes Revitalization to implement the strategies they have suggested for Spicer Creek. Another grant is through the DEC to do a complete tree inventory on town roads and major areas of the town.

• Jim stated that the reality is that the Ash Borer is here and it’s affecting every resident of the town. We need to give direction and assistance to the population on Grand Island in how to best tackle this problem. We are working with Niagara Mohawk and National Grid, marking trees that are to be taken down within the next year. Some of the trees are rotting and falling and taking out power lines.

• Per Jim, Riverkeeper and DEC have a few larger projects they are working on around the Island. One (1) of them is Blue Water, the resurrection of the grass area along the River Oaks area.

• Diane shared concern about the Northern Access Pipeline Project – she will be attending a public hearing at NCCC. Paul stated that he worked on the permits for the pipeline when he worked with the Corps of Engineers. The pipeline is a high pressure pipeline that is being underutilized, the pipeline solved the gas pressure power on the north end of the Island.

• Jim stated that we received a grant of $33,000 and there are matching funds for the LWRP. We will be sending out an RFP for the LWRP. The LWRP is embedded in the LRCP and vice versa. The LWRP encompasses the entire shoreline of Grand Island and all of paths, bikeways and trails.

• Jim has met with the planner for the LWRP and Comprehensive Plan for the City of Tonawanda and the shoreline plan for the Town of Tonawanda. Our committee will be having joint meetings with the other towns that have shoreline facing each other.

• Currently, we are discussing a bike and walking ferry which will connect Grand Island and the City of Tonawanda. This project came out of the City’s LWRP, you can implement while still planning.

• Paul inquired when the Town Board will approve the contract with the County. Bev stated that it will be on their next workshop agenda. Mike M. stated that they did not receive the contract until 5:00 pm the night of the Town Board meeting, and they did not have time to read it.
VI. NEXT MEETING: Meeting # 8

Wednesday, March 8th, at 7:00 pm.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Bev / Eric to ADJOURN at 8:51 pm.

Ayes: All in favor. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline McGinty
LRPC Recording Secretary