

Village of Hastings on Hudson
Comprehensive Plan Committee

Minutes of Meeting No. 6
January 9, 2008 at 8:00 pm

Main room of the James Harmon Community Center, 44 Main Street

Present: Ellen Hendrickx, Betsy Imershein, Bob Mayer, Jim Metzger, Rebecca Strutton, Kathy Sullivan, Harry Thomas, Richard Bass (arrived later during meeting), Steve Corrigan, Carolyn Summers, Lynda Merchant

Planning Board Representative: Patricia Speranza

8:20 pm. The meeting was called to order, and the minutes of the 12/19/2007 meeting were accepted.

Reports:

1. Update on Economic Development Committee Meeting of 1/7/08. Betsy started by summarizing that the EDC invited a county level person (Terri Waivada) to talk to the EDC about economic development currently ongoing in Westchester County.

Terri's thoughts were that the EDC needs facts, for example who owns the properties and what are the rents of properties in the village, along with what the community wants down town. Betsy noted that there are five store fronts currently vacant downtown. She wondered whether the village has any regulatory power over storefronts/rents. Harry added that Terry is from the Westchester County Industrial Development Agency (WCDIA). He said that Terry said:

- that part of the WCDIA's mandate is to find companies that want to settle in Westchester, but not on the village level;
- that the Village is not ready to apply to the WCDIA for help
- that a lot of villages in Westchester have too big a downtown,
- that it is hard to sustain a large downtown
- that the community members need a "benefit" to go downtown. How to engage residents.

Jim added that we may need to make sure that people (especially landlords) realize that there is a problem in downtown, and the EDC needs to know what rents in the town are, and vacancy rates.

Jim added that Nina Cangiano co-chair of the EDC, sent out 7500 questionnaires regarding the downtown, and only 100 were returned. The EDC also gave out coupons at the winter farmers' market, but only 12 were used. But it was noted that the farmers' market attracts a lot of people to Hastings. Jim also noted that the lack of responsiveness on questionnaires underscores the need to have public meetings instead of surveys.

The board then discussed the Farmers' market noting that its development should be core to downtown. The Farmers' market had a simple survey that tried to determine where people came from, how they traveled there. Conversation about how the downtown could become a draw for people from out of Hastings as well.

Steve asked what the EDC's mission is.

Harry added that Nina Cangiano's view of the Chamber of Commerce was negative – that the Chamber of Commerce is inactive, not welcome by the businesses in town, that there are only two active members of the group.

There was discussion about how the village government and administration needs to also focus on how to help the economy of the downtown.

Betsy asked whether the town could give financial support for shops in the village, or provide rent control. There was general group discussion regarding market forces that will drive down currently sought rents for empty stores. Terri Waivada's comment during the EDC meeting was that "the thermostat (rent rate) needs to be reset" by market forces.

Kathy noted that this was an excellent start to learning about village issues and believed that the discussion would be picked up later, perhaps as part of a subcommittee.

Vanessa Merton noted that Industrial Development Agencies (IDAs) in general have a checkered past as to whom they really help out.

2. *School Budget Forum 1/15/08, 7:30 at JHCC.* Kathy announced there is a school budget meeting next Tuesday the 15th. The school board wants to open up the budget process for next year to the public.

3. *Westchester County Comprehensive Plan Update Meeting – 1/16/08 at the WC County Center* - Kathy announced there is a Westchester County Comprehensive Plan Update Meeting scheduled for next Wednesday at the Westchester County Center to discuss updating the WC comprehensive plan, currently called Westchester 2025.

Kathy announced that she has handouts on both of these meetings with locations and times for anyone interested.

4. *Elder-rich Survey.* Lynda announced that there is a survey on Hastings becoming an elder-rich community – questionnaires for senior residents that is on the village website and also went out in the village calendar.

5. *Status on Village Website - Ellen Hendrickx*

Ellen handed out the welcome statement that she has written and invited comments. Bob commented that although he likes what Ellen has written, he thinks the statement should really "scream for help".

Betsy commented that she doesn't think that we're really ready for help yet.

Bob said he will redraft the statement to make it more of a plea for people to help. The committee agreed to post what Ellen has done so far so that the website can move ahead but that we'll review what Bob writes when it is done and consider updating the site.

Kathy has confirmed with Fran Frobels that the CPC can use the village email list to communicate, i.e. an email announcing that the website is ready.

6. Email Distribution List.

Kathy added that she had a point to add to the agenda. She asked the board to recall the web address that was created for internal use among us to email each other, and the email address (that has yet to be) created for the public to send us comments. Kathy told us that the email distribution list that we have been using as an internal communication device has had people added to it that were not on the original list given to the village nor was the CPC notified that these addresses were added. She noted that the intention was that this list would be as a distribution list for emails facilitating the transfer of information between meetings. She said she would like to discuss with the board that this should be an address for the eleven voting members only, or go back to a privately created list of names. She noted that the addition of other people to the CPC distribution list happened early on. She added that the Board as a group had decided that that address was going to be used only for the eleven voting members, but that it was her understanding that other people were added when the list was formed because they thought it would help them stay involved.

Patricia Speranza commented that she requested that she be added to the email list because she was interested in the committee's work and that she thought that she should be on the list as a non-voting member of the group.

Kathy responded that she would like to talk to Jerry Quinlan and Fran Frobels. The Village Board was not clear about the relationship of the board liaisons to the CPC when the committee was established. The CPC is in an awkward and unclear position and needs clarification on the intent of the Village Board.

Patty responded that she initially wanted to be on the email list so that she could stay involved, and so that she could have any distributions that were made by email so that she would be prepared for meetings. Patty noted that she is the official liaison from the planning board, but that other members of the planning board have been attending meetings because she has not been able to attend them all.

Betsy added that maybe we need two layers of communications, one for us, and one for the broader community.

Ellen added that the goal with the distribution of the minutes is for the committee to review the minutes, that other boards don't open up their minutes for comment from outside. There was a discussion of our note taking process and why we don't yet have anyone taking notes for us and/or transcribing the tape. It was noted that Fran Frobels has

been interviewing for the position and that he has identified someone who will be available in a few months.

Rebecca suggested that the website eventually be a repository for all documents as a distribution system to address Patty's concern.

Harry expressed his opinion that non-voting members should sit with the committee. Committee noted that this has not been formally addressed.

Jim noted that liaisons to other committees don't sit at the table.

Kathy said she will follow up with Jerry Quinlan and Fran Frobel. She added that at the next meeting our agenda is pretty full with two guests, but that hopefully we can address this issue after they leave.

7. Response to Public Email Comments/Queries. Patty, as a separate issue, noted that we should have a protocol for responding to emails.

Kathy responded that the committee got a question and didn't know how to respond to it from a practical matter. The CPC feedback email that Jackie was going to set up has not been set up yet. A non-CPC member answered the question. Kathy poised the question regarding if the public asks a question, should the question go to one person or the group.

The committee received an emailed question earlier this week. In earlier meetings the committee tabled resolution on how to designate someone responsible to respond.

Ellen noted that with regard to the board of trustees, when they get a general question, one of the trustees answers.

Betsy and Carolyn noted that the CPC had agreed in the past that we would alternate months being the "go-to" person to allocate incoming questions. We noted that we can tie this in with the person who is co-chair. This person will only screen emails and "direct" them to an appropriate person to answer the question. Committee agreed.

8. Hunter Studio Curriculum - Richard Bass. This discussion was tabled as Richard had not yet come to the meeting.

Topics:

1. Summary of Topic assignments - Rebecca Strutton. Kathy invited Rebecca to discuss allocation of CPC members among various topic groups. Rebecca read off the list of who is assigned to which topic groups. The results were:

A: COMMUNITY BACKGROUND AND HISTORY & PLANNING HISTORY: Lynda and Richard

B: DEMOGRAPHICS: Steve, Richard and Bob [*Note, Steve was originally in Economic, but volunteered to move to this group as there were four people in Economic.*]

C: REGIONAL AND LOCAL SETTING & INTERGOVERNMENTAL & MUNICIPAL STRUCTURE: Betsy and Kathy

D: TRANSPORTATION & INFRASTRUCTURE: Steve, Rebecca and Betsy

E: COMMUNITY FACILITIES & CULTURAL RESOURCES: Lynda and Harry

F: COMMUNITY SERVICES & SCENIC RESOURCES & HISTORIC RESOURCES & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES & NATURAL RESOURCES: Carolyn, Jim and Harry

G: ECONOMIC: Ellen, Rebecca and Bob

H: SUSTAINABILITY: Ellen and Kathy

I: LAND USE & ZONING: Carolyn and Jim

There was discussion regarding the procedure to start working in subcommittees/interest groups. Kathy noted that the next meeting starts at 7:00 and will have two guests coming. She suggested that we could have time after they leave to break into groups. Jim noted that two meetings from now we could have a work session, potentially one hour for each group, two groups meeting that night. The committee agreed that the first meeting in February should be a work session.

Public comment: Cindy Travis asked a question the use of volunteers. She asked how subcommittees will meet – at different times or during our normal meeting time? She asked what the time commitment to be on a sub-committee will be.

Harry responded that the groups need to prepare to talk to the people of Hastings. We need a first round of these sub-areas.

Carolyn added that the sub-groups need to report to each other and update the committee and that we'll need a time to accomplish that.

2. Community Outreach Meetings - Possible template and organization

Betsy Imershein. Kathy invited Betsy to discuss Community Outreach Meetings.

[Richard joined the meeting during this discussion]

Betsy explained her idea of community outreach meetings – that instead of starting with a large community meeting, the idea is that we start with small meetings in people's homes, and have specific questions. These would be "coffees", the goal of which would be to get feedback and ideas. She suggested that we have a fixed set of questions that should be raised at all of these coffees, and noted that this is the first place where we

could use volunteers, volunteers to notify neighbors and offer to host the meetings in their homes. It would be neighbors asking neighbors to have a conversation.

There was a question regarding the time frame for these meetings, and Betsy replied that maybe we could do them in six weeks, or spread them over 2-3 months. Then we could open the full community meeting with a report to the community and get people to volunteer.

Richard asked how many people in the village receive village emails?

There was a comment about using HoH TV to reach people.

Rebecca raised a question regarding whether we should ask people to give up more of their time to attend a coffee as opposed to trying to tap into existing meetings of people in temple, church, other meetings already occurring in the community to network with people for feedback.

There was a question [from Carolyn?] regarding whether the Board of Trustees would have an issue with Betsy's approach, having meetings in peoples' homes, and whether these would be subject to open meetings laws. There was a comment that as long as there was not a quorum of CPC members it should be ok but that we should check.

Patty added that for bigger communities, we could use the fire houses as venues.

Kathy noted that the next meeting may include conversation with John and Megan about community meetings. She suggested that we could have time to discuss further.

3. *Hunter Studio Curriculum - Richard Bass.* Kathy invited Richard to discuss the Hunter CP Studio. Richard said that the studio starts on January 30th. He will give the students a skill base evaluation. Richard wants a walking tour of Hastings on the 2nd or 3rd of February. He looked to Jim to organize.

Jim added that we may need to get a bus as the community is hard to cover by foot in a day. Jim will prepare a proposed tour route for review and comment.

Richard proposed 10AM on Sunday morning.

Richard said that we need to consider what we want the students to accomplish. There will be 12-13 class meetings.

Betsy requested that Richard give us some guidance on what the students can be expected to do. She suggested that Richard give us some ideas for us to pick from.

Ellen said that she'd like it if the students could put together a draft comprehensive plan. The committee was highly responsive to that suggestion.

Kathy said that she had been impressed with the Google Sketch-Up 3d modeling that Doug Alligood of the Waterfront Preservation Committee is using for modeling the waterfront and suggested that the students work on something similar if they are graphically oriented.

Harry noted that Sunday morning may not be a good time for a walking tour as the stores are all closed at that time. Richard agreed to move the tour to Saturday AM. He noted that classes meet on Wednesday from 5:30 to 9:30.

Betsy noted that if the group is “more unusual” [in their talents], maybe they should have a product that is graphic instead of a draft plan.

Richard noted that there should be give and take between graphic and written product on the class level.

Comment from the public (Unidentified) Regarding a walking tour, Jim may need to get approvals to get onto the waterfront. Jim initially said there may be no need to go to the actual waterfront, but then said he would talk to Stuart Cadenhead of the Waterfront Preservation Committee who has arranged walks there in the past.

4. Questions for John Dennehey, from the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area, Hudson River Valley Greenway and Megan Flanagan from Westchester County Planning Department regarding the Greenway Compact and the Westchester County Greenway Compact Plan, The Greenprint for a Sustainable Future.

Kathy reminded us that John Dennehey and Megan Flanagan are coming to the next meeting, and that Angie had requested that we share any questions we may have for them in advance of the next meeting. She noted that we will have about one hour with them, and asked the board members what questions we have.

Summary of Questions for John:

- a. Ellen raised a question about the Greenway. She notes that it has a focus on Inter-municipal Collaborative Efforts, interconnectivity, and that Hastings has agreed to review the plan for Greenway compliance. She wants to know what interconnectivity is and how it will affect our plan, and obtain his suggestions and examples from other Greenway communities.
- b. Carolyn would appreciate if John could focus on the Greenway community’s efforts and what economic development might result or arise from that connection.
- c. Jim wants to know how we can leverage our inclusion in this Greenway to benefit our community and other communities. He noted that Terry from WCIDA said we can’t rely on other communities.
- d. Betsy wants to know what we’re entitled to as far as his services are concerned.
- e. Ellen added that she would like to know what planning services for Hastings are available as a Greenway compact community.

f. It was noted that Hastings is a voluntary member of the community, and noted that we said that we'll abide by certain criteria in our development. A question from this observation was what criteria need to be met, and who judges compliance. How would the Comprehensive Plan need to reflect those criteria and how is the plan reviewed by Greenway?

g. how may the LWRP influence us a Greenway members?

h. what should we take into account as Greenway members?

Harry reminded the committee that the Greenway has given the village a matching grant of \$25,000 to hire a consultant. It was also noted that John had offered that Greenway can also offer other planning services at no cost.

Hi is interested in discussing the matching grant that the Village has received, the goals and timelines.

Harry added a question for John: Explain what the Compact Community is so we have an understanding of what it does, and what in his understanding is a comprehensive plan. Also we should ask if the \$25,000 grant expires

Betsy questioned the relationship of our plan to the county plan and what happens if there are inconsistencies between plans. Westchester County does not require that a village plan that doesn't meet their own plan criteria be modified to meet the WC plan. She wonders how this came about.

4. Kathy again mentioned the Westchester County Comprehensive Plan Update Meeting on the 16th of January and said she will circulate the information to see if anyone wants to go.

Public Comment

David Scolnik requested information on a means to provide feedback to the committee prior to the public comment email address being set up. Jim offered to provide his email and circulate comments to the group.

Other Business

Carolyn passed out an article that talks about a planned community in Florida exploring similar issues to those we face regarding land use and zoning.

Jim noted for HoH viewers the location of the Greenway publication on the Westchester website and that our next meeting is on January 23, 2008 and will start at 7:00.