

Chairman Jim Galvin brought the 01 July 2008 meeting of the Town of Ghent Comprehensive Plan Committee to order at 7:03 pm.

In attendance were: Al Wassenhove, Larry VanBrunt, Gil Raab, Nick Tipple, John Fishman, Jim Beal, Janice Fingar and Frank Mendelson, along with Town Attorney Ted Guterman and Consultant Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning and Environmental Associates.

Absent were Committee members: Pete Nelson Sr., Jonathan Walters, Aaron Groom, Phil Trowbridge and Kyle Wilber.

PUBLIC INPUT

Mrs. Joan Wassenhove questioned the Committee's recommendation regarding shared driveways. Town Attorney Guterman responded, noting that ultimately the issue would be determined upon Planning Board decisions.

GUEST SPEAKER

Mr. Mike Losa, Superintendent, Department of Highways, Town of Ghent, and member of the Ghent Volunteer Fire Company spoke to the Committee about the Town's roads. He stated his greatest concern was safety. Suggested safety requirements include roadways 22' in width to allow for emergency vehicles and road maintenance vehicles, including snowplows. Modern safety and maintenance equipment is larger. Mr. Losa informed members that the majority of calls received by the Ghent Volunteer Fire Company last year were auto accident-related. He noted that in the near future, State and Federal funding regulations will require grant monies to be spent on roadways no less than 20' in width. He also said that the Town of Ghent is intending to put through legislation requiring 22' wide roadways, plus shoulders. At present, the Town of Ghent maintains 160 miles of 'lane roadway,' excluding State and County-maintained roads.

Questions were raised relating to road safety, possible speed reduction, usage of stop signs. The issue of 'maintaining rural character,' was a major concern raised at the Committee's workshops last October. Ms Stolzenburg noted that street trees are the single most component of slowing traffic. Also discussed were the issues of bicycle riding along roadways. Road safety, including speed reduction and use of stop signs was briefly discussed.

Town Attorney Guterman informed the Committee that he had recently met with Department of Highways Superintendent Mike Losa, Town Engineer Ray Jurkowski and Town Supervisor Larry Andrews regarding road specifications. The consensus of those present was that new road specifications should require a minimum width of 22' and all trees be setback a minimum of 25' from the road centerline.

It was suggested that there are other ways to address safety issues that would allow for the retention of Ghent's prized rural character, of which tree-lined roadways play a major role. It was noted that, unless otherwise posted, the speed limit in the Town of Ghent is 55 mph. The concern of bicycle riding along town/county/state roads within the Town of Ghent, where there are no separate, paved lanes, was raised.

Ms Stolzenburg suggested the Comprehensive Plan Committee look at needs and goals and not be driven by policy. Roads are more than travel ways – they speak to quality of life and character - one size does not fit all.

Mr. Losa was thanked for appearing before the Committee. He departed at 7:45 pm.

Mr. Fishman raised the questioned of the Committee's role– to attempt to forecast policy, or follow policy. There was a discussion of roadway-related issues including, but not limited to: safety, needing to define 'rural' roads, aesthetics, concern from the community, reiteration of the point that 'one size does not fit all,' allowances for intended or projected uses, providing the Ghent Planning Board the ability to evaluate, based upon road traffic and anticipated usage.

CHANGE REQUESTS FOR GOALS 4, 5, 6, 8 & 9

Goal 5

A vote was taken as to whether the wording of Goal 5 should be changed to incorporate the idea that one size does not fit all and to review the wording.

in favor

Mr. Fishman, Mr. Mendelson, Mr. Beal, Mr. Tipple,
Mr. Raab and Ms Fingar.

opposed

Mr. Galvin, Mr. Wassenhove and Mr. VanBrunt,

It was agreed that Goal 5 should be changed to suggest that the Town not use a 'one size fits all' standard for roadways. It was noted that the Goal does not address safety issues.

Goal 5 Strategy 2.d

The following deletions and corrections received the Committee's consensus.

Change opening sentence to read 'Establish...appropriate for low traffic volumes and built so that they maintain the character of the area and are consistent with safety requirements.'

Remove the sentences

'Reduce current requirements....'

'Consider adding....'

'New collector....'

MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 2008 meeting and the June 2008 meetings, as presented, was made by Ms Fingar and seconded by Mr. Raab. All, with the exception of Mr. Fishman who abstained, approved the motion.

CHANGE REQUESTS FOR GOALS 4, 5, 6, 8 & 9 - CONTINUED

Goal 8 Strategy 4

There was a brief discussion.

Goal 8 Strategy 2

It was noted that the item had been removed at the June meeting.

Goal 9 Strategy 4

It was suggested it should be changed from 'The goal of Town zoning....' to read 'A goal of Town zoning....'

REVIEW VISION STATEMENT CHANGES

Mr. Mendelson informed those present that he was in the process of reviewing some changes made by Mr. Walters. Once he goes over the statement, he will return it to Mr. Walters for final review.

Chairman Galvin requested that Committee members be provided with a 'final' copy of the Vision Statement, in advance of next month's meeting.

DISCUSSION OF GOALS 10 & 11 PROPOSED STRATEGIES

Goal 10 Strategy a

It was agreed that the Town should play a role in the determination of active and dormant agricultural district farmland.

Goal10 Strategy b

It was recommended that the strategy be rewritten to state:

Consider establishment of development standards oriented to promoting and protecting agriculture. Residential density should be low and non-farm business limited and small scale. The boundaries of this district should include....

Item i

It was determined that an agriculture district should not be specific to a location
It was observed that in order to maintain agricultural/farmlands, it will be necessary to decrease density.

Mr. Guterman led a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of putting an agricultural overlay zone in place, and whether to have policies apply to any /all town lot. Mr. Raab noted that the mining overlay, as included the Town’s Code, places restrictions on developers. Discussion will continue at the next meeting.

advantage of zone

distinct boundaries
resource-based
easier to target to accomplish

disadvantage of zone

complicated
perception – other layer of regulation

It was noted that agricultural zoning could preclude a farmer from selling his land. Reference to residential density should be removed. Additionally, an agricultural district should not be specific to any location.

Item ii

remove reference to overlay

Item iii

remove

Item iv

ok as written

Item v

change to read ‘New structures should be placed outside of lands having prime farmland soils.’

Item vi

change opening sentence to begin ‘Allow as a permitted right...’

It was suggested that the definitions of ‘farm worker’ (to not include the term ‘migrant’) and of ‘farm worker housing’ need to be modified to provide for full-time farm labor housing, not just seasonal. Presently there are no standards.

It was agreed that labor housing would apply to the forestry industry, but not sawmills.

Item vii

Committee members agreed that this item should be incorporated into Item v.

The Committee will continue the review of Goal 10 at next month’s meeting

OLD BUSINESS

It was noted that discussion of Goal 4, Strategy 8, regarding a community center, had been tabled.

NEXT MEETING

The next regular meeting of the Committee will be held Tuesday, 05 August 2008.

Chairman Galvin adjourned the meeting at 9:27 pm. Chairman Galvin will be out of town next month