

Chairman Jim Galvin opened the meeting at seven o'clock. This being the first meeting of the Committee, members introduced themselves: Mr. Jim Galvin, Columbia County Partnership; Peter Nelson, Sr., Ghent Town Board; Larry Van Brunt, Ghent Town Board; Aaron Groom, Ghent Planning Board; Al Wassenhove, Ghent Board of Ethics; Jim Beal, United Way; Mark Clarke, Teacher at Taconic Hills School; Gil Raab, Ghent Zoning Enforcement Officer; John Fishman, Attorney; and Nick Tipple. All are residents of the Town of Ghent. Attorney for the Town of Ghent Ted Guterman, was also present. Later, Town Supervisor Larry Andrews Jr. was available for questions from Committee members.

Documents distributed to Committee members included:

- a definition of 'comprehensive planning'¹
- list of services provided by Community Planning & Environmental Associates (CP&EA) of Berne, New York
- CP&EA flier entitled 'What is a Comprehensive Plan?'
- Columbia County Baseline Populations Projections²
- Town of Ghent Comprehensive Plan Update dated 10 October 2006
- brochure from The Cottage Company, a residential development company located in Washington State
- survey used by neighboring Town of Athens, Greene County when developing their comprehensive plan.

Town Attorney Guterman informed the members that the Ghent Town Board, on behalf of the Committee, interviewed two prospective consultants to aid in the development of a Master Plan. The Town Board recommended Nan Stolzenburg (CP&EA). When queried, Attorney Guterman offered that the Town Board has the authority to hire a consultant.

The question of funding was raised. The Town of Ghent applied for and received a \$7,500 Hudson River Valley Greenway Grant. According to Town Supervisor Andrews Jr., there is assigned funding in the 2006 budget for consulting services relating to the development of a new Master Plan. There also is a contingency fund. Monies have also been allocated in the 2007 budget. Town Supervisor Andrews Jr. suggested consultant services might be required for a 12 to 18-month period. Chairman Galvin will have the Town's budget, as it pertains to the development of a Master Plan, distributed to Committee members.

Maps of possible commercial sites in the Town of Ghent, such as the State Route 66 and State Route 9H area that includes the Columbia County Commerce Park, located to the east of the Columbia County Airport, and the area commonly known as the '9H Corridor,' will also be distributed to Committee members.

There was a forum-style discussion of the direction to be taken by the Master Plan Committee. Attendees agreed it is essential that the Committee, in addition to addressing present-day issues, consider the Town of Ghent's long term priorities during the coming

fifteen to twenty-five years. Suggested subjects of discussion included, but were not limited to:

- updating of the Town of Ghent Zoning Code
- the possibility of Ghent becoming a commuter bedroom community
- availability of low-cost and middle-income housing, in a rural setting
- meeting the present and future needs of Ghent's changing populous
- existing and potential local commercial development
- local utilities and services such as sewers, water, roads and schools.

Input from the Town's inhabitants will be essential to the Committee's formulation of recommendations. A questionnaire will be distributed to Ghent residents as soon as is feasible. It's anticipated that there will be several mailings to local residents and businesses. Additionally, the Committee will be holding numerous Town Hall meetings, workshops and other venues to ensure all who work and live in the Town of Ghent are able to offer suggestions.

The Committee recognized that the greatest, yet unknown, factor to be considered in the development of the Master Plan is the present and future economy of both the Town of Ghent and the County of Columbia. One of the Committee's major efforts will be to facilitate economic solutions in order to frame the Town of Ghent's future. Ghent needs a sustainable tax base.

It was agreed Ms Nan Stolzenburg of CP&EA will be invited to attend the November meeting of the Town of Ghent Master Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

WORKS CITED

- 1 Nolan, John – Well Grounded – Shaping the Destiny of the Empire State
- 2 Warren et al – Baseline Populations of New York State Counties: 2000-2003,
Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research, Cornell University,
September 2002