

[AS AMENDED AT THE SEPTEMBER 2007 MEETING]

In attendance were Jonathan Walters, Larry VanBrunt, John Fishman, Pete Nelson, Jim Beal, Gil Raab and Al Wassenhove and acting Chairman Frank Mendelson. Also in attendance were Town Attorney Ted Guterman, Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning & Environmental Associates, Don Meltz of Don Meltz Planning and GIS and Town Engineer Ray Jurkowski of Morris & Associates.

Absent from the meeting were Mark Clarke, Janice Fingar, Jim Galvin, Aaron Groom, Nick Tipple, Phil Trowbridge and Kyle Wilber.

Acting Chairman Mendelson opened the meeting at 7:09 p.m. Referring to last month's meeting, he pointed out that the Committee was not formed to act upon one subject, such as the 'rail trail.' Rather, to collect and define all public issues and allow for the presentation of various/differing viewpoints, in a civilized manner.

Committee member Mr. VanBrunt, who also sits on the Town Board, stated the members of the Ghent Town Board believe the issue of rail trail is sufficiently addressed in the survey without the inclusion of Question 37. The Town Board, Mr. VanBrunt said, is opposed to the inclusion of specific rail trail questions in the survey. He referenced the 06 August 2007 e-mail sent to Committee members over the signatures of Messrs. Walters, Mendelson and Groom.

Acting Chairman Mendelson reiterated the Committee's previous consensus of its role; to act in the best interests of the Town of Ghent, even though the actions may not reflect the individual Committee member's personal views. It was noted by Mr. Walters that the charge of the Committee is to listen to public and to set personal issues aside.

Town of Ghent Engineering Consultant Ray Jurkowski made a presentation of the various mapping available to the Town, since it joined GIS earlier this year. It was noted that the existing zoning mapping can be readily updated. Mr. Jurkowski will confirm changes with Town Attorney Ted Guterman and Zoning Enforcement Officer Gil Raab before new maps are issued. The Committee reviewed the mapping.

Additionally, Mr. Don Meltz will develop a map of all existing agricultural lands, a map based upon the collected workshop data, as well as mapping indicating sites that can sustain build-out. It was noted that such mapping will be invaluable to the Planning Board. The possible mapping of Village of Chatham water services areas on Roxbury Road and State Route 66 was queried.

Committee members reviewed the 'Update/Profile Data Still Needed' request sheet presented by Ms. Stolzenberg. They were requested to bring the information to the September meeting, in order that the Town profile may be completed.

ITEM	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE MEMBER
1	Col Cty Airport	Galvin
2	Village of Chatham police service for Ghent	Walters
3	fire dept info for both volunteer stations	Walters
4	Art Omi	Raab
5	Whittier Nursing Home	Beal
6	2007 Town of Ghent budget summary	Barrie

7	identify ag/farmlands	Raab, Walters, Nelson, Clarke
ITEM	BRIEF DESCRIPTION	ASSIGNED COMMITTEE MEMBER
8	Commerce Park	Galvin
9	library used by Ghent	n/a
10	historic sites/bldgs	Meltz/Barrie
11	county roads located in Town of Ghent	Mendelson – Knox
12	EIS for Commerce Park	Galvin
13	land-use and related laws	www.
14	Planning Brd duties, role	Walters
15	photos used in 1973 Master Plan	Walters – Pitcher &/or Dunbar
16	Village of Chatham water fees	VanBrunt

Ms Barbara Barrie reported on the development of the Town's web site. It is anticipated the site will be completed by early September. As requested, Ms Barrie will report back on the possibility of providing Planning Board-related mapping data on the Town's web site.

Committee members discussed what formula to use for the distribution of the survey. Possible resources included Real Property tax roll, voter registration, or a combination of the two. Should one survey per household or one per each and every resident? Methods of distribution were also discussed; mailed, hard-copy surveys, or electronic forms available at the Town's web site. It was noted that while an electronic, on-line format would more efficient and less costly method, the potentially large number of non-computerized homes in Ghent needs to be taken into consideration. There was a discussion of the merits and of coding/numbering the surveys. Ms Stolzenburg said that the coding of the questionnaires allows for the sampling of information.

It was suggested that surveys, with a cover letter, be mailed to property owners.

Mr. Mendelson offered to write and distribute a press release regarding the survey, and its distribution. He will include information for residents, who rent property, to request copies of the survey. It was agreed that the recommendation of the Ghent Comprehensive Planning Committee to the Town Board be to distribute one numbered, paper format survey to each household, via the postal service. A cover letter will advise people to telephone the Town Hall and request any needed additional copies.

Ms Stolzenburg will confirm the number of surveys to be printed and coded, along with the costs for same. She also offered to contact a mailing house, she has worked with in the past, and have them distribute the materials. Ms Stolzenburg will provide a sources estimate to Ms Barrie, to be passed along to the Town Board. It was confirmed that the printers will directly bill the Town of Ghent.

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Ghent Comprehensive Planning Committee will be held Tuesday, 04 September, 2007. At that time, Ms Stolzenburg will provide members with a 'final draft' copy of the survey and cover letter.

Committee members concluded that the best time to mail the survey to residents is Monday, 24 September 2007 – prior to Ghent Community Day, being held Saturday, 29 September 2007. This will provide Committee members with an opportunity to attend Community Day and answer residents' survey-related questions.

Attention was then turned to survey question #37, relating to the possible development of a 'rail trail.' Acting Chairman Mendelson observed that this is a long-standing, contentious issue. He requested Mr. Walters read aloud the 06 August 2007 e-mail sent by Committee members Walters, Mendelson and Groom to other Committee members.

"A group of us has been discussing the issue of the rail trail question on our survey. It's our sense that we don't want the survey to be confused with or viewed as a referendum on the rail trail. The survey is meant to be an information gathering exercise -- a way to channel community interest and wishes our way. So in discussions with a couple other members of the committee, including Pete Nelson, Larry VanBrundt, John Fishman and Gil Raab here is what we suggest in lieu of current question:

Include a short description of the rail trail and then ask:

Are you aware of the Rail Trail proposal to go through Ghent? **y/n**

Would you like more information on the pros and cons of the Rail Trail proposal **y/n**

If there was a non-motorized Rail Trail how often might you use it:
(never, twice a week, etc.)

We feel this set of questions honors the wishes of the committee that the question of a rail trail be addressed directly, but avoids having the survey become a political football that distracts us and the community from the real goal here, which is to come up with a document that tries to pull community consensus together, not fracture it."

There was a discussion of the wording of the rail trail question. Mr. VanBrunt suggested that there not be a separate rail trail question.

It was noted that the survey questionnaire should be weighted in accordance with issues raised at the two workshops. Acting Chairman Mendelson charged Committee members with reviewing the materials and being prepared to revisit the question at the September meeting.

Mr. VanBrunt said the rail trail question will be discussed at the next Town Board meeting, being held Thursday 16 August 2007. He noted that it would be helpful if Committee members would attend the meeting. Mr. Walters offered to be present. Mr. Nelson pointed out that the Committee's charge is to gather information; there should not be any further disruption of Committee or Town Board meetings.

The Committee heard comments from attending members of the Public that included concerns about the effects a rail trail might have on winter outdoor activities and/or the restricted use of 4-wheel vehicles on adjacent lands.

It was agreed the next Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, 04 September, 2007.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.