

MINUTES

In attendance were members: Jonathan Walters, Pete Nelson, John Fishman, Aaron Groom, Larry VanBrunt, Jim Beal, Janice Fingar, Gil Raab, Nick Tipple, Al Wassenhove and Frank Mendelson. Also in attendance were Town Attorney Ted Guterman of Guterman, Shallo & Alford, and consultant Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning & Environmental Associates.

Absent were members: Kyle Wilber Jim Galvin and Phil Trowbridge.

In Chairman Galvin's absence, Mr. Mendelson chaired the meeting. The meeting began at 7:04 pm.

PUBLIC INPUT

Attendee Joan Wassenhove introduced neighbor Hillary Corsun.

MINUTES

Members reviewed the 05 August 2008 minutes. A motion to approve the minutes, as presented, was made by Mr. Wassenhove, seconded by Mr. Walters and unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Fishman requested review of Goal 10, Strategy 'e,' specifically the zoning identification 'RA,' which presently means 'residential-agricultural.' There was a brief discussion.

A motion to approve the change in name from 'residential-agricultural' to 'rural-residential-agriculture' and to remove the last four (4) words, was made by Mr. Nelson, seconded by Mr. Walters and unanimously approved. Strategy 'e' now reads:

"Add purpose statements for each zoning district, especially the RA-1 and RA-2 districts to ensure that agriculture remains an important use to protect. Consider renaming the RA districts from Residential-Agriculture to Rural-Residential-Agriculture to help in conveying the purpose of protecting both the rural character and agriculture."

GOAL 11

Committee members reviewed Goal 11 – Provide for a diversity of housing opportunities for residents of all ages and income levels.

[please see attached addendum]

OLD BUSINESS, CONT'D

Committee members reviewed several Goal 10 strategies, discussion of which had been held over to this meeting.

Item M ii - ok with changes

Remove first phrase and begin sentence with 'Consider offering....'

Item M iii – consensus to remove

A motion to remove reference to ‘lease of development rights’ from strategies was made by Mr. Wassenhove, seconded by Mr. Walters and approved 9 votes to 2 votes.

Item M iv – consensus to remove

Following a discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee to remove this item.

REVISED VISION STATEMENT

Mr. Walters, on behalf of himself, Mr. Fishman and Mr. Mendelson, presented a revised version of the Vision Statement. Committee members reviewed the document. Mr. Walters discussed the intent of the Vision Statement – to serve as an endorsement of the comprehensive plan, the zoning code and the successful use of committees as a tool to protect the rural character of the Town. Town Attorney Ted Guterman also spoke in favor of the Vision Statement, as presented. While the document refers to surveys and meetings addressing the Town’s future, it emphasizes what the Town already does well – realizing the value of *ad hoc* committees to address a wide variety of issues. The Comprehensive Plan Committee unanimously approved the draft Vision Statement, with the condition that the dates of all town-wide surveys are double-checked and entered specifically.

[THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE TOWN OF GHENT - SEPTEMBER 1973]

[WORKING DRAFT - THE TOWN OF GHENT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: A PLANNING FRAMEWORK FOR THE 21ST CENTURY – JUNE 1994]

NEXT MEETING

It was agreed the next meeting of the Ghent Comprehensive Plan Committee will be held on Tuesday, 07 October 2008, beginning at 7 o’clock.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:48 pm.

GOAL 11 – PROVIDE FOR DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS OF ALL AGES AND INCOME LEVELS.

Strategies & Actions

Item 1 – ok with changes

Encourage additional affordable housing for people of average or fixed incomes when larger developments occur, consider adding “inclusionary zoning” provisions for major subdivisions. For these developments, the Town could require developers to dedicate a minimum of 10% of all units as affordable housing as part of their plan approval. As an alternative to mandatory “inclusionary zoning” requirements, Ghent could provide for positive incentives, such as density bonuses to encourage dedication of affordable housing units.

Item 2 – ok with changes

Encourage the development of additional senior (55+) housing opportunities in Town. Development is recommended in areas adjacent to services that can easily be accessed by senior adults, such as public transportation, retail shops, library, community center, etc. There is high demand for this type of housing and it should include both affordable units as well as market-rate units, to allow existing residents to downsize. Further market analysis should be conducted to identify other appropriate uses, including assisted living facilities or cooperative housing development. Consider offering density bonuses to developers of senior projects as an incentive for this type of housing.

Item 3 – ok as presented

Zoning should be updated to properly define “senior housing” and “assisted living facilities” and other related senior housing definitions.

Use <http://seniorhousing.state.ny.us/definitions/index.htm> as a base for obtaining accepted definitions. The Zoning should permit these uses by Special Use Permit with site plan review.

Item 4 – ok with changes - *need to define ‘commercial’ as it supplements this application*

To promote a variety of housing types, the Planned Residential District (PRD) (§190-6) should allow for a mix of residential housing types (including senior housing) as well as small neighborhood commercial uses. The PRD concept could be used to promote 'live-work developments' that are built in a manner consistent with the rural character of Ghent. These districts may best be suited for locations in and around hamlets and the Village of Chatham. PRD standards should require that the developments be designed in a "traditional" neighborhood style and provide appropriate landscaping, sidewalks and paths. Standards could also include architectural design, building form, and signage guidelines that serve to retain the historic development patterns found in Ghent's hamlets and the Village.

Item 5 – ok as presented - *requires change in town's philosophy – review general standards provision re special uses – need a set of specific standards for special uses*
Greater housing diversity and affordability may be achieved by revising zoning policies to eliminate both direct and "back door" prohibitions and to explicitly allow a range of housing types, rather than requiring a special review process for certain types of structures entirely.

Item 6 – ok with changes - *requires change in town's philosophy – land/property must be owner-occupied*
Town zoning should define and allow, by special use permit, accessory apartments (often referred to as 'in-law apartments') to provide alternative housing opportunities for the citizens of the community. A special permit process can ensure that such a use can fit in the neighborhood and that all water, septic, or other environmental issues can be met.

Item 7 – ok as presented – made minor grammatical/intent correction – *requires change in town's philosophy – meet roadway requirements*
Establish criteria for the use of flag lots. To avoid problems associated with flag lots but allow more flexibility in use of some parcels, consider establishing flag lot criteria for single-family, detached housing. Flag lots are not appropriate where a series of large lots could be converted or developed into flag lots, thereby raising the density and changing the character of an area. However, occasional use in a unique situation can add flexibility and create lots which may preserve open space or rural character in a specific location. Such criteria could include minimum parcel sizes for use of flag lots, orientation of buildings to the street, use of both front and rear yards, front yards that match neighborhood patterns, and use of common driveways.

Item 8 – ok with changes

8 a.

New housing units and neighborhoods located in or near hamlets should be consistent with existing neighborhoods with the same or similar setback distances from the main road.

8 b.

Major subdivisions or large residential developments should reflect that historical development patterns of the area and should avoid monotonous and repetitious architectural styles.

Item 9 – ok with changes

Consider seeking funding from federal and state sources to assist with rehabilitation of housing, facilitation of home-ownership for first time buyers, and to help restoration of historic homes. For example, the Town could apply for funding to establish a Homeownership Assistance Program. This can be used for down - payment assistance, a grant to buy-down the interest rate, or for rehabilitation assistance. Focus efforts to attract funding for development of affordable housing for households earning less than 60% of the County median income because that is the current focus of effort for many grant-making institutions.

Item 10 – ok with changes

Review and amend where necessary, definitions of housing-related terms. Add in definitions of manufactured houses, modular houses, and update mobile home definitions to be consistent with State and Federal definitions.

Item 11- ok with changes

Encourage a mix of residential and commercial uses in some areas, especially within the Hamlet of Ghent.

Item 12 – consensus to remove

Item 13 – ok with changes

Allow for greater density or lot coverage in hamlet districts to promote more affordable lots. Outside hamlet districts, consider allowing smaller lots (down to what could be expected to be permitted for water and septic) to promote flexibility and affordability. Establish a maximum lot size in some locations as well (see also the recommendations made similar to this for the agriculture section).

Item 14 - ok as presented

Engage in dialogue with the community about the requirements under which affordable housing can be successfully integrated within Ghent's many neighborhoods.

Item 15 – move item to environmental goal section

Promote The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ in Ghent. This program encourages and accelerates global adoption of sustainable green building and development practices through the creation and implementation of universally understood and accepted tools and performance criteria.

Item 16 – ok with corrections

Continue to use regulatory tools, such as conservation subdivisions and PRD, to encourage innovation and to allow flexibility in local design and land use. These policies do not have housing affordability as their core objective, but by facilitating development that might not otherwise be able to occur (cluster zoning) or facilitating economies of scale, higher densities, and more predictable approval processes (planned residential developments), these techniques can help to expand the supply of housing and reduce upward price pressures.

Item 17 – consensus to remove

Consider establishing open channels of communication with regional housing practitioners throughout the year – perhaps as part of the housing strategy taskforce process – to review and refine public policy to provide maximum support for these practitioners' efforts to expand the supply of affordable homes.

Item 18 – consensus to remove

Establish an ongoing advocacy and public education campaign to promote the need for affordable and workforce housing. Create a Community Housing Group, charged with the task of finding methods to educate the community about housing needs, progress made and finding funding sources.