

MINUTES

In Mr. Galvin's absence, Mr. Mendelson acted as Chair and opened the meeting at 7:05 pm. The following Comprehensive Plan Committee members were in attendance: John Fishman, J. Aaron Groom, Jonathan Walters, Larry VanBrunt, Gil Raab, Pete Nelson, Nick Tipple and Al Wassenhove. Also in attendance were Town Attorney Ted Guterman of Guterman, Shallo & Alford PLLC and consultant Nan Stolzenburg of Community Planning & Environmental Associates.

Absent were Committee members: Kyle Wilber, Jim Galvin, Jim Beal, Phil Trowbridge, and Janice Fingar.

OPENING REMARKS

Acting Chair Mendelson opened the meeting by reflecting on the Committee's progress and its role to identify and protect a vision for a way of life in the Town of Ghent. He recognized the Committee's new set of responsibilities of formatting the Comprehensive Plan and introducing it for public input. He stated his respect for those members who left the Committee, apparently unable to subscribe to consensus building as terms of agreement, which is how the committee agreed to make decisions. Acting Chair Mendelson noted that in building consensus, each individual member of the committee comes to expect ideas to be rejected at times, and rely on the wisdom of their colleagues to introduce ideas better than their own. He reminded the Committee that bringing the Plan to the public and eventually the Town Board requires that individual Committee members speak with one voice, the voice of the Committee, and withhold personal opinions at public forums. Committee members Pete Nelson, Larry VanBrunt and Jonathan Walters endorsed both the value of the committee's work by consensus, and the role the committee members take during public forums.

WELCOME TO PUBLIC

Mrs. Joan Wassenhove's presence was acknowledged. She did not wish to speak at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the 11 November 2008 minutes as presented was made by Mr. VanBrunt, seconded by Mr. Walters and unanimously approved.

DOCUMENT FORMATTING

Ms Stolzenburg provided members with three (3) different formats for presenting the Committee's findings. She pointed out that there are two (2) sets of information to be presented – background information and collected data. Possible document formats and the reasons why for were reviewed.

Fundamental functions of the document are to provide for public understanding of the presented information and recommendations and the feasible implementation of the recommendations by the Town Board, if so determined.

It was agreed to place immediate emphasis upon the presentation of the Committee's Vision Statement, Goals, and Strategies recommendations. (Present a goal, explain how the issue relates to Ghent and recommended action.) All support data, including the Town's history and profile information, summary of issues garnered from workshops, public information and analysis, and definitions will be presented in appendices. (References can be made to the appended documentation.)

Committee members observed that there is a tremendous amount of information for the Town Board to review. It was agreed that a checklist of short-term and long-term strategies, along with tools for using the presented charted information should be included in the Committee's report.

Mr. Walters pointed out the need for affirmation from the public. In consideration of previous Master Plans, it was agreed that it is imperative for the Plan to receive Public affirmation.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLE SENT OUT BY ACTING-CHAIR MENDELSON

There was a general discussion regarding the preservation of open space, including whether it should be considered as income-earning, working open space or as 'static' parklands in which resources are not available. It was noted that the value of protecting open space should be viewed as an asset and not a detriment. Acting Chair Mendelson requested Mr.

Tipple prepare a paragraph concerning 'open space' and proposed forms of protection, that can be included in the Committee's land-use summary.

DRAFT DOCUMENT

Committee members were requested to review the draft strategies and goals document, along with the latest-approved vision statement and contact Ms Barrie with any suggestions, no later than December 29, 2008. Ms Stolzenburg will format the reviewed information, and provide members with copies prior to the January 2009 meeting.

The reviewed and approved document will then be posted on the Town's website.

PUBLIC INPUT

Several different avenues to the receiving of public input were reviewed. It was noted that the Committee must host a minimum of one (1) Public Hearing before presenting its findings to the Town Board. Ms Stolzenburg suggested the Committee decide upon the type of public input.

It was agreed to hold two (2) formal, legally-noticed Public Hearings, one on a weeknight and one on a weekend day. Prior to the commencement of each Public Hearing, the Committee will hold informal meetings during which time information and highlights of the Plan can be presented. The public should be advised of procedures, including the Committee taking its recommendations to the Town Board. The Town Board will then holding its Public Hearings. It is at this point, the Town Board determines whether to accept or reject the Committee's Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Walters stated the importance of Committee members, whether attending informal or formal functions, to engage in a non-confrontational manner with residents – to 'hear' what is being said. Mr. Nelson noted the value of residents feeling involved.

Ms Stolzenburg presented the idea of a bulk mailing of postcards to Ghent residents. They could include information as to the availability of the Committee's report and scheduled informational/Public Hearing meetings. It was agreed to check costs and available budget.

REVIEW

Ms Stolzenburg will provide a cover-to-cover document draft and draft postcard. The draft document can be reviewed at the January 2009

meeting. It was requested that a page be created on the Town's website for the Comprehensive Plan and all factual background material. Acting-Chair Mendelson offered to prepare a draft press release, providing an update along with some of the major goals and strategies, with distribution to co-incide with the availability of the Committee's Plan on-line and in hard-copy form.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 pm.